

03\24

2 CBRNE



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE

*Dedicated to Global
First Responders*

DIARY

March 2024



PART A

**Breakthrough in
anthrax prophylaxis**

Are Plague and Leprosy back?

**New International
Biosecurity Organization**

**Moscow
massacre**

An International CBRNE Institute publication

C²BRNE DIARY-2024[®]

March 2024

Website: www.cbrne-terrorism-newsletter.com

Editor-in-Chief

BrigGEN (ret.) Ioannis Galatas MD, MSc, MC (Army)

Ph.D. cand

Consultant in Allergy & Clinical Immunology

Medical/Hospital CBRNE Planner & Instructor

Senior Asymmetric Threats Analyst

Manager, CBRN Knowledge Center @ International CBRNE Institute (BE)

Athens, Greece

➔ Contact e-mail: igalatas@yahoo.com

Editorial Team

- **Bellanca Giada, MD, MSc (Italy)**
- **Bossis Mary, Ph.D. Intern/EU Studies (Greece)**
- **Hopmeier Michael, BSc/MSc MechEngin (USA)**
- **Kiourktsoglou George, BSc, Dipl, MSc, MBA, PhD (UK)**
- **Photiou Steve, MD, MSc EmDisaster (Italy)**
- **Tarlow Peter, Ph.D. Sociol (USA)**

International CBRNE Institute

Rue des Vignes, 2
B5060 SAMBREVILLE (Tamines)
BELGIUM

Email: info@ici-belgium.be

Web: www.ici-belgium.be

●► Cover photo: Russian CBRN warfare unit

ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



DISCLAIMER: The C²BRNE DIARY[®] (former CBRNE-Terrorism Newsletter), is a **free** online monthly publication for fellow civilian/military CBRNE First Responders worldwide. The Diary is a collection of papers and articles related to the stated thematology. Relevant sources/authors are included and all info provided herein is from **open** Internet sources. Opinions and comments from the Editor, the Editorial Team, or the authors publishing in the Diary **do not** necessarily represent those of the International CBRNE Institute (BE).

●► Occasional advertisements are free of charge.

ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



Topics that attracted attention!

EDITOR'S CORNER





Editorial

Brig General (ret.) Ioannis Galatas, MD, MSc, MC (Army)

Editor-in-Chief
ICI C²BRNE Diary

ICI
International
C²BRNE
INSTITUTE



Dear Colleagues,

The situation remains the same: two wars (one proxy; one terrorist) and one new front (Yemen), an (ongoing) pandemic, and endless stupidity due to indifference to peace.

US-China tension: Fierce attack by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin against the US: "You have caused all the wars on the planet and sowed pain and death". The absolute truth in one sentence!

Proxy War: US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin gave a disturbing response to Putin's comments that if NATO troops were moved into Ukraine "we will have a nuclear war" and said he "really believes" that if the Ukrainians lose the war, then NATO will have to fight against Russia. "Frankly, if Ukraine falls, I really believe that NATO will be at war with Russia,"



Austin told a House Armed Services Committee hearing. It seems that his personal health [problem](#) makes him not give a damn for the future of humanity! In addition, French President E. Macron (aka Napoleon Bonaparte) is trying to drag the whole of Europe into the "abyss" of the war in Ukraine and against nuclear Russia, asking to send troops to Ukrainian territory, stressing that "we must not be cowards"! "The war in Ukraine is of existential importance for the EU - If we lose, we are lost," says the new French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné. History is taking notes on who would be responsible for WWII. One more statement from a member of the "Club of the Brave": Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs R. Sikorski: "Let's not rule out the sending of troops against Russia in Ukraine!" ([or not?](#)) And of course, the infamous British Finger: the British Foreign Minister N. Cameron proposed to deliver the Taurus KEDP 340 cruise missiles (500km range) from Germany to

Britain, which in turn will send them to Ukraine (targeting the Kerch Bridge in Crimea) – but no boots on the ground ... In addition, another member of the Club German Education Minister Bettina Stark-Wächinger made a shocking statement: "Schools have a responsibility to prepare students, in the context of civil protection, and for the possibility of war!" On the other side of the ocean The Biden administration announced another package of military aid to Ukraine worth up to \$300 million on Tuesday after months of warning there was no money left, with officials saying the new funding became available as a result of savings made in weapons contracts. The new package includes much-needed artillery ammunition, anti-aircraft missiles, anti-armor systems, and more.

UN and Cyprus: The annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner on the situation in Cyprus is a shame and disgrace for the entire Western world. Volker Turk, turning black into white and provoking Hellenism throughout the world, which for more than 50 years has been "bleeding" from the illegal occupation of Northern Cyprus, dared to speak about disproportionate discrimination against the Turkish Cypriots. The high



commissioner, crossing all limits, turned into the representative of the Turkish settlers, the Tatar pseudo-state, and of the "Sultan" Erdogan, shedding tears for the oppressors but not for the oppressed. Perhaps his last name explains his rhetoric.

US Democratic Insecurity: A high wall around the US Capitol was raised with strong police forces guarding the place, while foreigners (illegal immigrants) are passing through the southern border unmolested.



Olympic Truce: Once upon a time there was something called "Olympic Truce"! It would be a brilliant idea to apply this both in Ukraine and Gaza but at the same time shipping weapons to Kiev and launching rocket attacks should be stopped as well! If this does not work, it will signify the time to change the name of the Games – could be something like "World Games" or "Planet Earth Games" that could include more of the stupid modern additions like breakdancing and skateboarding... Especially when Russian Greco-Roman wrestling Olympic champion Musa Evloev is not allowed to participate in the qualifying tournament for the 2024 Olympics in Paris because of a photo with a "No to Nazism" poster while the International Olympic Committee announced that Russian and Belarusian athletes will not be allowed to participate in the opening ceremony. What an Olympic Spirit!

Gaza War: It seems we forget that asymmetric war and ethics are not synonyms!

BREAKING 1!: The deployment of NATO troops in Ukraine resulted in Moscow converting the "special military operation" to protect the Russian-speaking people of Ukraine into a "**declaration of war**" [first time since 1945] against the Western countries involved in the Ukrainian conflict. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov's phrase "we are in a state of war" means that even the **use of nuclear weapons by Russia is possible**. Something that so far could not formally happen since a declaration of war must precede the use of nuclear weapons.

BREAKING 2!: Terrorists burst into a large concert hall (Crocus City Hall) in Moscow on Friday (22/3) and sprayed the crowd with gunfire, killing over 100 people (143), injuring more than 100, and setting fire to the venue in a brazen attack. Many speculations on who organized the attack but no concrete evidence for the time being. Russia's FSB security service said the four people were arrested 340 km south-west of Moscow in Bryansk near the border with Ukraine and had contacts in Ukraine.

The Editor-in-Chief



The Lies the United States and Media Told About Iran

By Mehdi Alavi

Source: <https://www.fairobserver.com/world-news/us-news/the-lies-the-united-states-and-media-told-about-iran/#>



Feb 23 – The media's relationship with the US government significantly shapes public perceptions of international events, particularly regarding Iran. Concerns about the objectivity of information arise due to the media's tendency to amplify the government's narrative. This amplification is achieved through sophisticated content disseminated across various platforms, from television and radio to press releases, online platforms and mobile devices.

This content fosters an insatiable demand for information, yet the desire for unbiased perspectives often faces a significant obstacle. Much of the readily available alternative content online merely recycles the dominant narratives established by the mainstream media, highlighting the media's substantial influence on public discourse and the challenge of readily accessing diverse and objective viewpoints.

In relation to Iran, the media has consistently adhered to a particular narrative. It has neglected to critically examine US claims, choosing instead to echo US propaganda. This has resulted in Iran being depicted as a pariah state, ruled by a dictatorship and involved in supporting terrorism. These portrayals are often accepted without the necessary critical scrutiny.

Nonetheless, a discernible shift is occurring. A growing number of Americans are becoming aware of the [interconnectedness](#) of their government and media, recognizing the presence of biases and the influence of [powerful entities](#), often linked to the so-called "deep state." This newfound consciousness was evident in a recent [interview](#) in which Russian President Vladimir Putin, speaking with Tucker Carlson, described the US "deep state" as the American 'elite' with the power to overrule the US president and dictate the country's policies.

Déjà Vu in the Middle East: is the US destined to repeat history?

The January 3 [terrorist attacks](#) in Kerman, Iran, targeting a gathering at the burial site of Qasem Soleimani, resulted in a significant loss of life (84 reported dead) and injuries (284). This tragedy raises the specter of another potential conflict in the Middle East, with concerns escalating about Iran's potential [retaliation](#) against Israel, given the Islamic State's [claim](#) of responsibility and the possibility of Israeli involvement.



As a staunch ally of Israel, the United States faces a delicate decision. Historically, US involvement in wars has often resulted in widespread casualties and destruction. Examining interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Vietnam reveals a pattern of initial engagement followed by gradual withdrawal due to unforeseen challenges, potentially eroding US global credibility.

Furthermore, concerns exist regarding the dissemination of misinformation by the US government and media. The echo chamber [effect](#), where media narratives align with government pronouncements, is particularly concerning. Historical examples, such as the Vietnam War, highlight the devastating consequences of such deceit, costing over [3 million](#) lives, including approximately [60,000](#) Americans. The media's complacency in events like the Cambodian Genocide and the Iraq War, where questioning of US actions often lagged behind public opposition, further underscores its role in facilitating government actions.

The post-9/11 invasion of Afghanistan aimed to remove the Taliban, resulting in substantial casualties and destruction. However, the Taliban's [return](#) to power after a staggering [financial](#) and human cost exposes the futility of such interventions. Similarly, the Iraq War, based on false claims of weapons of mass destruction and [connections](#) with al-Qaeda, resulted in hundreds of thousands of [Iraqi deaths](#) and immense [financial expenditure](#). The lack of accountability for those responsible, such as US President George W. Bush and his administration, remains a troubling aspect.

Iraq is not alone in bearing the brunt of US intervention. Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen have all witnessed the repercussions of US involvement in various conflicts. The instigation of regime changes and interventions in democratic governments, exemplified by the overthrows of [Mohammad Mosaddeq](#) in Iran and [Salvatore Allende](#) in Chile, have proven to be costly and destabilizing endeavors.

The global cost of war, two decades after the US invasion of Afghanistan, has reached an estimated [\\$8 trillion](#), with approximately one million lives lost. This contributes to heightened anxiety and poverty, particularly among Americans.

In the case of Israel, media support predates the nation's inception, marked by the [Nakba](#) and associated violence. The media's historical alignment with the US and its recent support for Israeli actions, resulting in nearly [30,000](#) Palestinian casualties, raises ethical questions. The International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s examination of *South Africa v. Israel* has globally exposed the potential crime of genocide in Gaza, implicating Western powers, especially the US. The ICJ's [preliminary ruling](#), acknowledging Israel's actions as potentially falling under the Genocide Convention, places a moral imperative on the US and its media to critically examine their positions and align with international standards.

A historical paradigm of misrepresentation

Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, a recurring motif in US foreign policy has been an inclination towards [conflict](#) with Iran. This approach has been driven by a narrative, often amplified by media portrayals, [depicting](#) Iran as on the precipice of acquiring nuclear weapons, harboring terrorists and colluding with al-Qaeda. However, this narrative stands in stark contrast to demonstrable evidence: Iran has actively participated in combating terrorism, as evidenced by its crucial role in [defeating](#) ISIS in Iraq. Furthermore, while the US and media often label Iran as an authoritarian regime under the Mullahs, a closer examination [reveals](#) a system remarkably similar to the US itself and one that actively promotes regional democracy.

While historical timelines do diverge, with Iran's [civilization](#) boasting a legacy exceeding [2,500](#) years, compared to the US's 250 years, their differences cannot justify misconstruing realities. Notably, the US has historically engaged in acts of [aggression](#) against numerous nations, with the [oppression](#) of Native Americans serving as a stark example. Further, the US, alongside Britain and Russia, has participated in suppressing Iranian aspirations for over a century, exemplified by the recently imposed draconian [sanctions](#).

In stark contrast to US backing Arab [authoritarian](#) monarchies, Iran's foreign policy demonstrably favors alignment with the downtrodden. This principle, enshrined in Article 154 of its [constitution](#), directly guides its active support for oppressed nations like Iraq and Syria in their fight against terrorism. While the US actively [backs](#) Israel, whose treatment of Palestinians remains a concern, Iran stands firmly in support of the oppressed Palestinian people. Notably, Iran [recognizes](#) Hamas as legitimate and raises concerns regarding Israel's disproportionate retaliatory measures, not only in response to the October 7 incident but also in previous instances. On the critical issue of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), while significant global powers, led by the US, maintain stockpiles of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons, Iran adheres to a demonstrably higher moral ground. It explicitly prohibits the production of WMDs, citing their indiscriminate and unacceptable impact on human life. Iran's commitment to this ethical principle is further underlined by its restraint from utilizing chemical weapons in retaliation against Iraqi forces during the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq War, despite facing the [deployment](#) of such weapons.

The October 7 Hamas attack on Israeli citizens incited a response from Israel. The US-backed Israeli state, which a UN human rights expert [accused](#) of apartheid policies, has waged a war that has resulted in significant casualties, predominantly among Palestinians. While the US and mainstream media have focused on the objective of neutralizing Hamas, concerns regarding civilian casualties and potential human



rights violations have received less attention, potentially reflecting [Western biases](#). Furthermore, media narratives align with the US in attributing the Hamas attack to Iranian training, a claim Iran acknowledges but does not explicitly endorse as pre-planned. This framing could serve to strategically prepare the public for potential US involvement in a broader conflict with Iran. It potentially diverts attention away from concerns regarding Israeli actions in Gaza. In support of Israel, media [reports](#) often cite a statement by an Iranian Revolutionary Guard official linking the October 7 attack to the assassination of Qasem Soleimani. This suggests a potential retaliatory motive, but the extent of Iranian involvement remains unclear.

A new approach to US–Iran relations

The current state of US–Iran relations is characterized by a pervasive climate of mistrust and hostility. This atmosphere, shaped by governmental pronouncements and media narratives, has [instilled](#) profound anxieties and insecurities within the American public. To ensure a more stable and equitable global order, a paradigm shift is required. This necessitates a concerted effort from both the US government and its media apparatus to engage in open and transparent communication with the American people.

Firstly, there is a pressing need for the US to abandon its reliance on demonizing narratives directed towards Iran. The persistent rhetoric of [regime change](#) has demonstrably yielded counterproductive outcomes, furthering tensions and fostering animosity. Instead, the US should consider pursuing a diplomatic approach based on mutual respect and understanding.

Some analysts argue that Iran is currently the most influential [power](#) in the Middle East. Recognizing Iran's regional influence presents an opportunity for the US to engage in strategic collaboration. A crucial step in this process involves acknowledging and apologizing for the [1953 coup](#), an event that undeniably shaped the trajectory of US–Iran relations.

A promising avenue for diplomatic progress lies in recognizing and endorsing Iran's stated [opposition](#) to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). Collaborative efforts with other WMD-possessing nations, focusing on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, could prove highly beneficial.

Transitioning from belligerent postures to collaborative frameworks is essential for safeguarding US interests. Exploring possibilities for peaceful partnerships with other nations, potentially aligning with Iran on issues of global concern, offers a more sustainable path forward.

However, this transformation cannot be achieved solely by governmental actions. The active participation of the American public is crucial. This necessitates the cultivation of critical thinking skills, demands for transparency from governmental institutions and selective engagement with media sources. By doing so, American citizens can empower themselves to shape a narrative that prioritizes justice, collaboration and global well-being.

[Mehdi Alavi](#) is an author and also the founder and president of Peace Worldwide Organization, a non-religious, non-partisan charitable organization in the United States that promotes human rights, freedom, and peace for all. Annually, it releases its Civility Report, reporting on all countries that are members of the United Nations. The report also evaluates the performance of the United Nations and the United Nations Security Council.

Vantage | Why Somalia asked Turkey to defend its territorial waters

Source: <https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/vantage-why-somalia-asked-turkey-to-defend-its-territorial-waters-13741325.html>

Feb 24 – The deal could “convince” Ethiopia to back down. As Turkey is a NATO member, an attack on one member is an attack on all of NATO

In Somalia, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has made a strategic play. The Somali government has approved a maritime security pact with Turkey. Ankara has been authorized to build up, train, and equip the Somali navy. Not just that—they will also defend Somalia's territorial waters.

Turkish warships could be patrolling Somalia's coast, and they could be active in the Indian Ocean for the duration of ten years.

There are many reasons why Somalia selected Turkey. Somalia has been dealing with a terror insurgency for almost two decades. Recently, there has been a rise in piracy along the Somali coast. Also, there is chaos in the Red Sea with the Yemen-based Houthis disrupting global trade.

All these are important reasons, but Somalia's primary target is different. Ethiopia is Somalia's neighbour and nemesis. The maritime deal is aimed at countering Ethiopia and stopping it from executing its port plan.



Multicultural Sweden



Klaus Arminius

@Klaus_Arminius · Ακολουθήστε



Sweden: Two Muslim immigrants killed a Greek father of 3 out dining over mistaken identity

The beloved husband and father in his 30s was shot twice when he came out of a restaurant after having dinner with his friends.

The 2 immigrants have been sentenced to life in prison.



DOMESTIC

**Mohamed and Mahamed
murdered the wrong
person - sentenced to life**

8:28 μ.μ. · 24 Φεβ 2024



1 χιλ.



Απάντηση



Αντιγραφή συνδέσμου



North Korea Continues to Commit Gross Human Rights Abuses

Source: <https://editorials.voa.gov/a/north-korea-continues-to-commit-gross-human-rights-abuses/7499973.html>

Feb 23 – Ten years have passed since the release of the UN Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The report documented evidence of systematic, widespread, and gross human rights violations by North Korea. And it asserted North Korea has committed human rights violations and abuses that amount to crimes against humanity.

Unfortunately, a decade later, this is still the case. According to a joint statement by the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea commemorating the tenth anniversary of the UN Report, North Korea remains one of the world's most repressive regimes, imposing severe restrictions on freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association, religion or belief, and movement. These violations and abuses are well-documented, as is the inextricable link between them and North Korea's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs.

North Korea's use of food distribution policies that favor the military, have led to chronic malnourishment among its citizens. Its widespread denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms ensures it can expend inordinate resources, much of which are generated through its illicit cyber activities, on the development of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs.

Last August, during the United States' Presidency, the Security Council held its first open briefing since 2017 on the human rights situation in North Korea. Fifty-two Member States and the Delegation of the European Union demanded the Council's continued focus on North Korea's human rights violations and abuses. "This year, we will work to ensure the Security Council remains seized with this issue of international peace and security," the joint statement said.

The U.S., Japan, and South Korea called for a "reinvigorated effort to bring justice to victims of human rights violations and abuses in [North Korea]. And we urge [North Korea] to abide by its obligations under international law, take immediate steps to end all human rights violations and abuses – including the immediate resolution of issues involving abductees, detainees, and unrepatriated prisoners of war – and engage with the UN's human rights experts for that purpose."

The joint statement calls on all member states to join in holding North Korea to account for its human rights violations and abuses by implementing the recommendations of the UN Commission of Inquiry.



Fire Jens Stoltenberg Now Before It Is Too Late!

Source: <https://weapons.substack.com/p/fire-jens-stoltenberg-now-before>

Feb 24 – Jens Stoltenberg, a former Norwegian Prime Minister and now Secretary General of NATO should be fired now, before it is too late. He [announced he is giving Ukraine "permission"](#) to use its soon to be delivered F-16s to launch attacks inside Russia.

This is equivalent to a NATO declaration of war. It is an irrational and dangerous move that needs to be quashed as soon as possible.

Not only is Stoltenberg an uber hawk, but he totally misunderstands NATO's purpose. If he is allowed to stay in office, he will lead NATO into a European war that might well include nuclear weapons. Above all, Stoltenberg doesn't grasp that NATO is a defensive, not an offensive, alliance.

NATO has been drifting in the wrong direction for years. It has got involved in wars outside of NATO's defensive domain, based on a rude sort of politics that gratifies the US and Europe's otherwise inert and short sighted leaders. These wars, that now include Ukraine, are draining NATO's defenses and weakening the core responsibility of the alliance, which is to protect the territory of its members. There are no provisions in the NATO Treaty authorizing offensive, outside-the-boundary operations.

Now the [Russians are saying](#) that many of the so-called "mercenaries" in Ukraine are, in fact, highly trained NATO soldiers. They wear Ukrainian uniforms with national patches identifying them. They are "necessary" to operate the high tech weapons NATO has sent to Ukraine. When the Russians



recently took over Avdiivka they found [bodies of these mercenaries](#), some American and some Poles. Earlier, they killed at least 60 French mercenaries in a hotel in Kharkiv. The French [denounced the attack](#) saying it was disinformation. But the French also called in the Russian ambassador [to complain about French deaths](#) in Ukraine.

The Ukraine war is being rapidly turned into a NATO war, not only through the supply of intelligence, troop training and armaments, but the supply of experienced technicians. It is simply impossible for Ukraine to operate air defense systems such as Patriot and NASAMs, rocket launching systems like HIMARS, or support British and French Storm Shadow cruise missiles, without considerable outside assistance.

Most of the deaths of NATO personnel are covered up. When they are reported at all, they generally say that the "volunteer" was providing medical assistance.

Now the Russians are starting to believe that the F-16s delivered to Ukraine (probably operational by early summer) will be operated by NATO pilots.

The Russians make this claim based on their own past performance. Russia [dressed their pilots up in Chinese outfits](#) to fly Mig-15s in the Korean war. In the war of attrition in 1970 between Egypt and Israel, [Russian pilots flew missions](#), sometimes openly (as only Russians could fly the Mig-25) and sometimes pretending they were Egyptian pilots.

It is extremely dangerous to use NATO pilots in Ukraine. But now Stoltenberg has "given permission" to Ukraine to fly its F-16s over Russian territory. The war has [already been expanded](#) with NATO-made drones, cruise missiles and rockets attacking targets in Russia. Adding the F-16 is a qualitative expansion because F-16s can attack Russian cities.

Russia won't content itself trying to shoot down F-16s flown in the name of Ukraine. They will, certainly, attack Ukrainian air fields (in fact [they already are doing so](#)). But will it stop there? Probably not: Russia will interpret the F-16s flying over its territory as a declaration of war against Russia, in fact Russia [already is saying so](#).

TOP 3 SOVIET ACES OF THE KOREAN WAR



The F-16 is an excellent aircraft, but the planes Ukraine is getting are around 20 years old and are not really front line. That's why the countries supplying them have moved on. While they can be upgraded with newer weapons, better fire control computers, and maybe even better radars, they are not survivable against Russian air defenses and top of the line Russian aircraft such as the Su-35. Flying them over Russia is, therefore, only a provocation likely to result in a wider war spreading to Europe.

NATO has been playing chicken with Russia for some time, especially by supplying long range systems to Ukraine's army. There is hardly any military justification, since harassing Russia only can lead to escalation and mostly does not strengthen Ukraine's army, which is increasingly short of manpower and ammunition.

Zelensky probably hopes that he will be saved by a NATO intervention. But from Russia's perspective, NATO has already intervened and things can only get worse. It is not clear who, if anyone, told Stoltenberg to make such a reckless statement about the use of the F-16. What is clear is that the "permission" should be withdrawn and Stoltenberg fired.

Corrupted from Birth: The UNRWA's Forgotten History

By Asaf Romirowsky and Alex Joffe

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65597/corrupted-from-birth-the-unrwa-forgotten-history>

Feb 25 – The [discovery](#) of a Hamas server farm beneath the United Nations Relief and Relief Agency (UNRWA) 's Gaza headquarters culminates a catastrophic few months for the world's largest welfare organization. Israeli intelligence recently found that at least a dozen [UNRWA employees](#) were directly involved in the October 7 massacres, and at least 1,200 had ties to Hamas. In addition, [UN Watch](#) released a report showing that over 3,000 UNRWA employees cheered on the October 7 report on private communications channels.



UNRWA's ties to terror go back decades, as do their denials of the obvious. Commissioner General Phillipe Lazzarini's claim of being [unaware](#) that Hamas was literally beneath them with wires running from the headquarters to the server farm through the floor is as absurd as when the headquarters [parking lot](#) collapsed in 2014 as a result of Hamas' underground construction or when rockets were found hidden in [UNRWA schools](#) twice. The organization then "strongly and unequivocally" [condemned](#) the unnamed "group or groups responsible for this flagrant violation of the inviolability of its premises under international law."

Everyone in UNRWA knew and lied, just as everyone in Gaza knew that Hamas was constructing a 500-kilometer tunnel network that diverted construction materials and goods from international aid. As a result, the international community, through UNRWA, funded a vast portion of Hamas' operations by freeing it to focus on terrorism rather than health and education.

Even international protests are a sham; the organization's largest donor, the United States, suspended only [\\$300,000 of aid](#), having already paid \$121 million, with hundreds of millions more coming this summer. Spain decided to increase its [tiny contribution](#). Qatar only contributes [\\$18 million to UNRWA](#).

These lies are omnipresent. Whistleblowers, over decades, were threatened and hounded out of the organization and the Middle East while UNRWA functionaries like former spokesman [Chris Guinness](#) cried on camera about the plight of the organization and its indispensable mission.

Lies and corruption have been built into UNRWA from the very beginning. The organization's [ever-expanding missions](#) revolving around the slippery term "rehabilitation" and its unilateral redefinition of "refugee" to include all Palestinians and their descendants meant that from the start, it was going to be corrupted for local gain and would play along for its survival. It kept Palestinians in stasis, inculcating a perpetual victimhood mentality. The story of the first UNRWA whistleblower is, therefore, instructive.

Lt. General Sir Alexander Galloway, a distinguished British officer, retired as British High Commissioner for Allied Occupied Austria and became [UNRWA's head in Jordan in 1951](#). Just a year later, Galloway was fired at the request of the Jordanian government when he refused to dismiss Western employees and hire locals.

In August of 1952, he published a blunt op-ed in the *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post* that [lambasted](#) UNRWA, the Arab states, and the refugees themselves: What is the solution? Of course, the problem is difficult. Refugee settlement, except under dictatorship, is a long, expensive business. Somehow or other, the Arab Governments, the United Nations, UNRWA, and some of the refugees have got to face facts. There is a need of a change of heart and a better atmosphere. There is need to distinguish between a tempting political maneuver and the hard, unpalatable fact that the refugees cannot in the foreseeable future return to their homes in Palestine. To get this acceptance is a matter of politics: it is beyond the function of UNRWA. Second, a determined effort should be made to get the 'host' countries to take over relief from the Agency, thus freeing it to get on with the much more important task of resettlement. Galloway's bluntness and insight were also shown in a [quote](#) from an interview he gave in 1952 to a group of visiting American church leaders: "It is perfectly clear than the Arab nations do not want to solve the Arab refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront against the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don't give a damn whether the refugees live or die." Galloway's solution was [straightforward](#):

Give each of the Arab nations where the refugees are to be found an agreed-upon sum of money for their care and resettlement and then let them handle it. If... the United Nations had done this immediately after the conflict—explaining to the Arab states, 'We are sorry it happened, but here is a sum of money for you to take care of the refugees'—the problem might have been solved long ago. Since the early 1950s, UNRWA has done precisely the opposite, opting for the "tempting political maneuver" of lying to Palestinians about the future, never demanding that host countries resettle Palestinians, and instead becoming the Palestinian ministries of health, welfare, education, and, to an astonishing degree, foreign affairs.

[UNRWA](#) has some 30,000 employees, with 13,000 in Gaza alone. But with the sudden exposure of UNRWA's terror ties, [Israel is demanding the organization be replaced](#). The [United Nations still claims](#) that UNRWA is indispensable: "there is no way any organization can replace or substitute the tremendous capacity, the fabric of UNRWA, their ability and their knowledge of the population in Gaza." This statement by [Sigrid Kaag](#), the United Nations Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, simply demonstrates the point that UNRWA and the UN as a whole are woven completely into Gaza, including Hamas, making any denials of abuses or "reforms" impossible. What comes the day after in Gaza remains unclear, but UNRWA, in its current form, cannot be a part of the solution. UNRWA's ethos of entitlement and the Palestinian identity as permanent refugees—pending the destruction of Israel—cannot continue.

[Asaf Romirowsky](#) is executive director of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME) and the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA), and a Middle East Forum writing fellow.

[Alex Joffe](#) is the director of strategic initiatives for the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA).





Feb 28

President Biden said he hopes a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas can take effect by early next week.

341,198,625 Americans; ONE Biden! What a shame!

President Joe Biden is a healthy, active and prosperous 81-year-old who remains capable of successfully performing his duties as President of the United States," White House chief physician Kevin O'Connor said in his opinion. (Feb 28). Labs might be within normal limits but physically and mentally is he fit?

Turkey Must Be Isolated and Condemned

By Gregg Roman

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65604/turkey-must-be-isolated-and-condemned>

Feb 26 – The Turkish parliament [voted](#) to accept Sweden as a member of NATO last month, but this should not distract us from how outrageous Turkish rhetoric and behavior have been under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP). Turkey is wildly out of step with other NATO members. Turkish language about Israel is unhinged. Erdogan [accused](#) Israel of carrying out "the most heinous attacks in human history"; [equated](#) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with Adolf Hitler, giving Netanyahu the moniker the "[butcher of Gaza](#)"; and [accused](#) Israel of being a "terror state" that is committing genocide in Gaza.

On the other hand, Erdogan referred to Hamas as a "[liberation group](#)" and refused to categorize it as a terrorist organization. Turkish behavior toward Israel has been no less reprehensible and sets it apart from the rest of NATO. Ankara [removed Israel](#) as a favored export target to discourage Turkish companies from engaging in commerce with Israel. The Turks also [assisted](#) South Africa in that country's ludicrous case against Israel in the International Court of Justice, furnishing Pretoria with "evidence" of Israeli "genocide." When an Israeli soccer player, Sagiv Jehezkel, expressed solidarity with Israeli hostages, he was [detained by Turkish authorities](#). Turkey's Justice Minister said that Jehezkel was under investigation because he had "openly incited the public to hatred and hostility" with "an ugly gesture in support of the Israeli massacre in Gaza."

How ludicrous. How disgraceful. When the United States and Britain launched strikes against the Iranian-backed Houthis, Erdogan sided with Iran and Russia, [accusing](#) the US and Britain of trying "to turn the Red Sea into a sea of blood."

Turkey's behavior is uniquely pernicious because it is a member of NATO and, therefore, nominally a steadfast ally of the United States and Western countries. It is one thing for Iran or Russia to say and do outrageous things. It is another for a NATO member to do so. However, under Erdogan and the AKP, Turkish policies are converging with those of [Russia](#) and [Iran](#) and, in the past, have even benefited ISIS – all directly contrary to NATO objectives.



Turkey has [aided](#) Iran in evading sanctions. Erdogan's confidant, Sitki Ayan, was sanctioned by the US Treasury for leading a "sanctions evasion network...that has facilitated the sale of hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of oil for Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force." A Turkish banker was convicted for [moving tens of billions of dollars](#) from Turkey to Iran. Reza Zarrab, a dual Iranian-Turkish national, "may have helped Iran pocket more than \$100 billion" in illegal transactions. Zarrab said in 2012 that Turkish officials, including within Erdogan's circle, were in on the scheme. Erdogan has cozied up to Russia, and he has [said](#) that he trusts Russia as much as he does the West. Turkish exports of military goods to Russia [soared](#) in 2023 while Russia embarked on a brutal war of aggression on Ukraine. It was Turkey's initial instinct [to block](#) Finland and Sweden from entering and bolstering NATO. Turkey [looked the other way](#) and allowed ISIS fighters to enter Syria during that country's civil war. Turkish officials [reportedly purchased oil from ISIS](#) through front companies. Wounded ISIS soldiers were treated in Turkish hospitals. Turkey's human rights record is atrocious, another item that separates it from NATO members in good standing. The Turkish government [ethnically cleansed](#) the Kurds of northern Syria, [cracked down](#) on Kurdish rights domestically, and [threw journalists it did not like](#) into prison.

The think tank Freedom House categorizes Turkey as [Not Free](#). Enough is enough. Turkey's membership in NATO is an embarrassment to the alliance and must be addressed. NATO cannot afford to go along with business as usual while a member's behavior and rhetoric are indistinguishable from those of Russia and Iran. While there is no provision to expel members from NATO, there are other steps the US should take to cold-shoulder Turkey.

The US must develop alternative regional security arrangements that reduce NATO's reliance on Turkey and develop diplomatic efforts with other NATO members to address Turkey's behavior collectively. The US must enhance relations and military cooperation with other regional powers to offset Turkey. Finally, and importantly, the US should monitor and diplomatically address Turkey's internal political developments that conflict with NATO principles, such as its discrimination against Kurds and the jailing of journalists. Under Erdogan and the AKP, Turkey is no ally. It is past time to recognize this and act accordingly.

Gregg Roman is director of the Middle East Forum. He previously served as an official in the Israeli Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense.

The Turks accuse Israel of committing genocide! Who; The Turks...! Ankara in The Hague in the guise of the protector of human rights

By Loria Markidis | Former ambassador

Source: <https://hellasjournal.com/2024/02/katigoroun-i-tourki-to-israil-gia-diapraxi-genoktonias-pii-i-tourki-i-agkira-sti-chagi-me-to-prosopio-tou-prostati-ton-anthropinon-dikeomaton/> (translated from Greek)

Feb 29 – A few days ago, I read on the website of Turkish Radio and Television, trtworld.com, the oral statement of the Turkish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ahmet Yildiz, before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, which examined "the effects of the policy and practices of the State of Israel in Palestine and East Jerusalem".

Anger and indignation seized me for the indescribable audacity and hypocrisy of Ankara and its representative. He presents his country as a staunch supporter of Palestinian human rights and condemns Israel for unilateral policies and practices against these people.

This country which since 1974 flagrantly violates international and humanitarian law, this country which disregards the resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations Organization, the raider and invader country and conqueror of foreign lands and property with impunity to this day.

He is worried, Mr. Ahmed said, about the restrictions imposed by Israel on the performance of the religious duties of Muslims during Ramadan as well as the provocative statements of ministers of his Government.

Ankara is tearing its clothes when, with its practices and its actions, it deprives the Christians of Cyprus of the human right to function in the occupied churches and monasteries which they systematically looted and desecrated.

Turkey accuses Israel of committing genocide while Turkey itself holds the scepters of the crime of genocide and ethnic cleansing against the Greeks of Cyprus and beyond. It also called for the displacement of Palestinian civilians and the usurpation of their properties, for the possession of territories, the country which invaded Cyprus, executed civilians, men, women, and children,



raped, usurped the homes and properties of the displaced refugees and today sells out to every stranger the belongings of the rightful owners.

He boldly criticizes the "colonization of the occupied Palestinian territories with the transfer of Israelis aiming to alter the demographic composition of the population".

Ankara, which from 1975 until today carried and carries thousands of Turkish settlers into the territory of the Republic of Cyprus under its illegal occupation, settles in the homes of the expelled Greeks of Cyprus.

In violation of the relevant Geneva Convention. The few Greeks who remained trapped were oppressed and terrorized by depriving even their children of a proper education with the obstacles and arbitrariness perpetrated by the occupying power.

I hear Mr. Ahmed speaking as a self-proclaimed protector of the Palestinians, about the need to deal with the root of the problem plaguing the people in Gaza, but he glosses over the root of the evil that his own country has inflicted on Cypriots, Greeks, and Turks with its invasion and continued occupation.

The utter shamelessness of Turkey and its representative is the statement that the positions it expressed about Israel do not apply in any other case, except for the policies and practices of Israel. An attempt to prevent any invocation to apply what he advocates to the case of Israel and its corresponding policy and practices.

As you know, Mr. Ahmed, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that your country "has responsibility for Human Rights violations through its subordinate local administration in the occupied territories of the Republic of Cyprus".

It is also known that the Court condemned the Turkish policy of violating the human rights of the trapped and the attempt to change the demographic character of the occupied territories.

It is recalled, in this regard, the position of the European Commission-Commission, that "Turkey is obliged to implement the decisions of the ECHR and that article 46 of the European Convention on Human Rights describes the responsibilities of the member states regarding the execution of the decisions of the Court".

Full Transcript of German Top Military Officials' Leaked Plot to Attack Crimean Bridge

Sputnik International

Source: <https://www.bundle.app/en/breakingNews/full-transcript-of-german-top-military-officials'-leaked-plot-to-attack-crimean-bridge-15a59c62-f695-4d07-852d-788455d17230>

On February 19, 2024, a conversation took place among Grafe (department head for operations and exercises at the Air Force Forces Command of the Bundeswehr), Gerhartz (Bundeswehr Air Force Inspector), Fenske and Frohstedte (employees of the Air Operations Command within the Space Operations Center of the Bundeswehr).

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Always a German finger in every nasty situation that will make Europe and the World to suffer!

Is China Capable of Attacking Taiwan?

By Aaron Sarin | Freelance writer living in Sheffield

Source: <https://www.persuasion.community/p/is-china-capable-of-attacking-taiwan>



Feb 26 – In his [New Year address](#) on December 31st, Chinese President Xi Jinping laid out his plans for 2024. He spoke in the painfully repetitive patois that's so natural to Communist Party members. "We will steadfastly advance Chinese modernization, fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, speed up building the new development paradigm, promote high-quality development, and both pursue development and safeguard security," he intoned. And then, moving abruptly from the vague into the terrifyingly specific, he said: "China surely will be reunified."

If he is to be taken at his word, of course, this would imply a potential invasion of Taiwan, leading to the very real possibility of a global conflict. The island nation's presidential election in January may have seemed a likely catalyst for this ambition, especially as Beijing's least favourite candidate emerged victorious (Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party).

The signs were certainly ominous. As the election approached, Google Cloud's cyber threat intelligence firm Mandiant [reported](#) a "substantial volume of espionage operations" carried out by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) against Taiwanese technology and critical infrastructure. Warplanes filled the Strait,



PLA tugboats passed within three nautical miles of Taiwan's southern coast, and Chinese high-altitude balloons flew directly over the island (the latter a [new development](#)). But following Lai's victory, things have been surprisingly quiet. In stark contrast to the aftermath of Nancy Pelosi's Taiwanese visit back in summer 2022, when the PLA conducted live-fire artillery shooting and ballistic missile test firings close to the island, Beijing has launched no belligerent response. While it's possible that Xi is simply waiting until May 20th when the new president assumes office, it would seem most likely that China's huge internal challenges have stayed his hand. Many commentators, myself included, have warned of the PLA's military prowess. It turns out that appearances may have been deceptive. Recent U.S. intelligence [revealed](#) that a quantity of China's formidable-looking nuclear missiles are actually filled with water. Doubtless the money for fuel had disappeared into pockets, based on widespread assumptions within the military that China will never really go to war and that no serious missile inspection would ever be carried out. An ex-officer, who fled to the United States in 2016, [described](#) the common practice whereby army personnel would take home chunks of missile fuel for use with their evening meals—it was particularly useful for keeping hotpots on constant boil. Comical details like these provide a rare glimpse of the PLA from the inside. They show a military culture thoroughly rotten and hollowed out by graft.

Perhaps, in its current state, the PLA is incapable of anything so ambitious as conquest. Xi's recent [purging](#) of fifteen senior military figures may well have been a frantic response to the discovery of this chronic corruption. While Beijing has given an official reason for the removals, they come amidst [reports](#) of widespread graft investigations. If that is the case, then a rehaul of the PLA will now be underway, and Xi's plan for invasion may well be significantly delayed.

The danger has not passed. During my private conversations with Chinese mainlanders over the years, I was told more than once—by individuals who claimed high-ranking Party connections—that the Taiwanese issue was Xi's real reason for abolishing term limits in 2018. Historian Niall Ferguson [heard](#) the same thing from one of the president's economic advisers. "Reunification" is of immense personal importance to Xi: it is the goal around which he intends to build his legacy. It's an ambition that requires time and preparation, and the traditional ten-year tenure as President of the PRC and General Secretary of the CCP was simply insufficient. So he extended it. Xi's mind was made up long ago: he will invade as soon as he can be sure of success.

But others in the Party leadership may not agree. Recall, for instance, PLA general Liu Yazhou, who found himself swept up in Xi's "anti-corruption" drive two years ago. He [received](#) a suspended death sentence. Under Communist Party rule, those charged with crimes related to corruption are often being targeted for something else, and Liu was [known](#) to have written several times on the foolhardiness of attempting to take Taiwan by force. This was the real reason for his downfall: the public utterance of a position that directly opposed the president's most cherished dream. Liu's opinion may be a common one.

And then there is the Chinese public. According to a recent [poll](#), a majority of mainlanders support the invasion of Taiwan, but how serious is such support? American expatriate Blake Stone-Banks [recalls](#) the mood back in August 2022, as Nancy Pelosi's plane circled the island in cautious preparation for arrival at Taipei—an event that many believed could trigger war. He sat at a business dinner in eastern China, where nobody at the table could tear their eyes from their phone. Stone-Banks also observed a young couple on a date at a nearby table: as the evening progressed, they neither spoke to one another nor looked at each other. Romance was a distant memory. "The only sound in the restaurant was the bleep of the radar on their smartphones," wrote Stone-Banks. The horrified, dry-lipped tension in that room does not suggest a public fired up by warlust.

China certainly has its hyper-nationalist extremists: mini-Xis who hunger for imperial expansion. I've had the personal misfortune to make their acquaintance. But a percentage of those who support the invasion may have been demonstrating a superficial performative rage. Finally, there is the woeful state of the Chinese economy. This development could push China in two very different directions. On the one hand, Beijing is weaker now than at any point in years: it needs friends and [foreign direct investment](#) and it needs to find a way out of its economic challenges rather than bullishly beating the war drum. On the other hand, states facing decline have [historically](#) become more confrontational. Xi's instincts incline him toward confrontation, but he lacks Vladimir Putin's cavalier rashness. He will not make the move until he feels that the odds are decidedly in his favour. China's corrupt military and the president's own economy-tanking [policies](#) have set him back, buying time for both Taiwan and the world.

Mile high club: Enormous Saudi skyscraper dwarfs all others

Source: <https://newatlas.com/architecture/foster-partners-2-km-skyscraper-saudi-arabia/>

Mar 04 – A new report suggests that Saudi Arabia is planning one of its most audacious architecture projects to date: a mega-tall multibillion dollar skyscraper that would reach an incredible maximum height of 2 km (1.2 miles) tall.

According to well-placed UK architecture magazine *The Architects' Journal*, prestigious British firm Foster + Partners has won the gig to design the building. Assuming it actually goes ahead, it would dwarf the [Burj Khalifa](#), the world's current tallest building, which is in Dubai and reaches a height of 829.8 m (2,723 ft).



World's tallest skyscraper under construction

Triangular footprint and sloped exterior to reduce wind loads. Cost: \$1.2 billion

Spire: Occupies top 250m of tower

Floor 157
Sky terrace – highest observatory in world (610m)

Floors 125 / 126
Observation deck

163 occupied floors in total, rising to 650m. Residential units to occupy over 100 floors

Notches shade areas of building from sun

Lower floors
Offices and hotel

Sources: Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture, CTBUH



Assuming it actually goes ahead, the as-yet-unnamed Saudi skyscraper will reach an incredible maximum height of 2 km (1.2 miles) | AI generated with Adobe Firefly



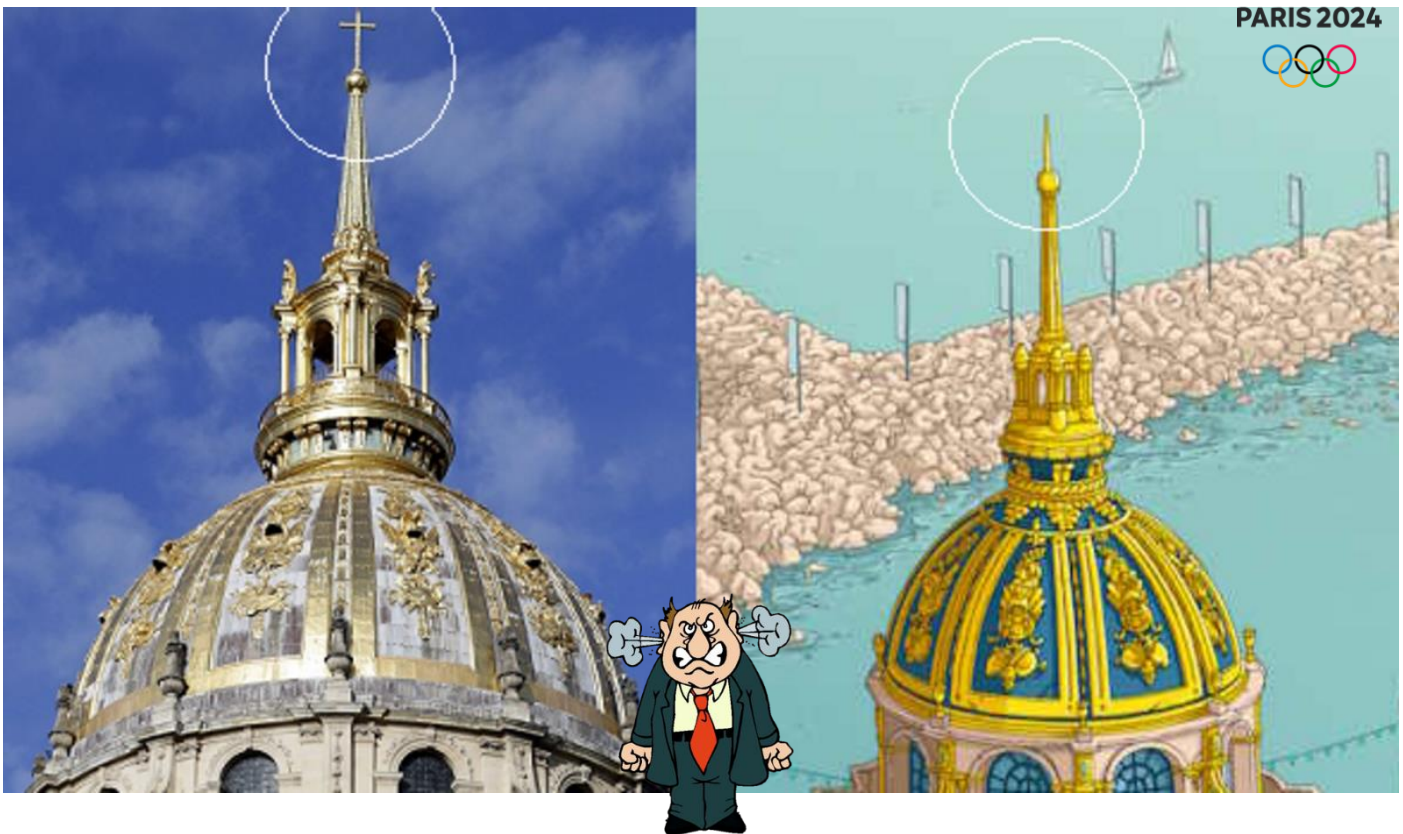
Even the upcoming [Jeddah Tower](#) would only be around half its height, and the new skyscraper would also be almost four times the height of the USA's tallest tower, the [One World Trade Center](#). The report suggests it will be located near the King Khalid International Airport, which Foster + Partners is also currently busy expanding and is situated north of the Saudi capital Riyadh. Beyond the incredible height of the project and its expected location, not much else is known at this early stage and there are a lot of potential hurdles to overcome. For example, the wind loads at such heights will be extremely severe and even the ground itself could struggle to support its weight. The cost will also be astronomical. If the project was planned anywhere else in the world, we'd be very skeptical, however with a [170-km-long skyscraper](#) already carving a path through the desert and a huge [cuboid skyscraper](#) big enough to hold 20 Empire State Buildings planned, it would be unwise to count it out.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Practically this is a vertical city project AND a Saudi landmark. Landmarks are targets that should be defended against missiles, armed drones, asymmetric threats (CBRN) – to name a few. And this should be done during the design phases since adding components afterwards would be difficult or impossible. Unfortunately, as with other giga projects in the GCC area CBRN threats are still considered exotic and there is a perception that the state has the means to counter them. So wrong!

“An artist’s bias”: why the Dôme des Invalides lost its cross on the poster for the Paris Olympics

Source: <https://www.archysport.com/2024/03/an-artists-bias-why-the-dome-des-invalides-lost-its-cross-on-the-poster-for-the-paris-olympics/>





Mar 05 – The day after the officialization of the poster for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, in the form of an extremely meticulous and detailed fresco, the absence of the cross at the top of the Dôme des Invalides, replaced by an arrow, did not escape notice. many Internet users who took offense on social networks. The controversy was taken up by several far-right politicians, such as MEP Gilbert Collard, for whom Ugo Gattoni, the designer of the poster, is one of the “traitors guilty of the fundamental denial of France”.

“A sort of visual zapping of the 2024 Games”

Contacted this Tuesday, the Paris 2024 Organizing Committee (Cojo) clarified that this absence of a cross is a simple “bias of the artist”. It is pointed out that other elements of the poster do not correspond to reality, such as the sculptures on the Arc de Triomphe, the passage of the aerial metro under its arch, or the pink color of the Eiffel Tower. “We wanted a poster full of symbolism. This poster is also the meeting between the heritage of heritage and sport, Joachim Ronchin, the head of Design at Paris 2024, reminded us on Monday. We wanted to create a sort of visual zapping of the 2024 Games.” The idea was therefore not to create a representation of the capital entirely faithful to reality, as shown by the two posters, which complement each other. On Monday, Tony Estanguet, the head of the organizing committee, put an end to another mini-controversy after a sketch during the Enfoirés concert broadcast last Friday which had damaged the Paris Games. A few days ago, it was the Olympic village that was criticized.

France unveils security plan for Olympics opening ceremony in central Paris

Source: <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230524-france-unveils-security-plan-for-olympics-opening-ceremony-in-central-paris>

Mar 05 – The 2024 summer Olympics in Paris will mark the first time an opening ceremony has not been held inside a stadium – instead, the extravaganza will unfold along the River Seine, with spectators lining streets and bridges in the heart of the French capital. The plan is not without risks, and organisers revealed extensive safety protocols on Tuesday.

The Olympics opening ceremony will begin at 8:24pm on July 26, when the first boat – carrying the Greek delegation – emerges onto the River [Seine](#) from the eastern part of the capital. The vessel will lead a flotilla of boats carrying the athletes participating in the Games 6 kilometres west through the heart of the French capital, past famous landmarks and crowds of spectators.





These illustrations released on December 15, 2021 by Paris 2024 Olympic Committee shows the concept for the Paris Olympics opening ceremony which will take part on the River Seine. © Florian Hulleu, AFP



The last boat, carrying the French delegation, will arrive at 11:50pm at the [Eiffel Tower](#), where athletes and other spectators will witness the artistic and musical spectacular of the official ceremony along with the lighting of the Olympic flame.

Olympic host countries typically use the opening ceremony to spotlight their national culture for a global audience, usually through song and dance. But the organisers of the 2024 games have added a twist by declining to host the event in a stadium in order to make the city of [Paris](#) itself the star of the show.

"It's the biggest audience that [France](#) will ever have had, the most beautiful showcase," said organising committee president Tony Estanguet at a press conference on Tuesday. "Our responsibility is to create dreams, to show how incredible this country is."

"The open and public character of this ceremony will enable hundreds of thousands of people to see it for free," added Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo.



Paris 2024 : cérémonie d'ouverture des Jeux olympiques – Innovante ? Oui ! Sécurisée (CBRNe/NBCe) ? Non !

Ioannis Galatas, Julien Marx

DANS **SÉCURITÉ GLOBALE** 2022/4 (N° 32), PAGES 35 À 49



Registration for free tickets

But both the scale and open staging of the event pose unique logistical and security challenges.

Organisers have promised the ceremony will be "the [largest ever held](#) in the history of the Games", and the numbers are colossal: Some 10,500 athletes, 100,000 paying guests, [up to 400,000](#) free-ticket holders and 200 heads of state are set to attend. Live broadcasts will be shown on 80 giant screens and extensive sound systems will be erected in the capital.

Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin joined Estanguet and Mayor Hidalgo on Tuesday to detail an 11-page security protocol aimed at shielding the event from the threats of terrorism, drone attacks and other risks.

One of the biggest security announcements was that attendees wanting to claim one of the hundreds of thousands of free tickets will have to sign up in advance on a ticketing platform set up by France's interior ministry. Darmanin said the tool would "be indispensable for regulating all [crowd] flows for tourists and Parisians".

Free-ticket holders will have access to one of 20 zones along the river's upper embankments, separated from guests paying for a closer, waterside view. They will not have access to bridges, which will be reserved for logistics, sound and lighting equipment, emergency services and security, and paid ticket holders.

Ticket prices for the opening ceremony ran as high as €2,700 during the most recent ticket sale on May 11. Athletes and others have already decried the high prices of tickets to the competitions, which run from €24 to €980 for semi-final events.

35,000 police officers

The security protocol addressed acute concerns that the show might be a target for terrorism, as well as the possibility of protests after the sustained and sometimes violent demonstrations this year against pension reforms pushed by President Emmanuel Macron.

Bomb-carrying drones are also a worry. "It's a totally new threat," Darmanin said. "It's not certain that anything will happen but it is certainly the most difficult to prepare for."

Plans include an unprecedented deployment of 35,000 police officers in the French capital for the opening ceremony. (For comparison, the London police force deployed nearly 13,000 police officers for its largest-ever security operation, the coronation of King Charles.)

Some 2,000-3,000 security agents from private firms will be also be called upon, with stepped-up screening procedures for hiring.

"We will be, in terms of security, extremely demanding regarding those who will be on the lower and higher quays [of the river] or to the stadiums, including private security agents," Darmanin said.

An extra [400 security cameras](#) will also be installed on Paris streets ahead of the event, bringing the total to 4,400. Critics have already raised privacy concerns about video surveillance technology that will be used during the Games in Paris on an experimental basis, combining cameras with artificial intelligence software to flag potential security risks such as abandoned packages or crowd surges.



Darmanin on Tuesday defended the measures, saying that all security efforts put in place “had a common objective: that the experience for spectators will be as good as possible”.

Unanswered questions

As plans solidify for the ceremony – now only 14 months away – announcements this week indicate some attempts to downsize the event. Previous announcements put the number of free tickets at 500,000, as opposed to the “roughly” [300,000 – 400,000](#) suggested by the sports minister overseeing the Olympics, Amélie Oudéa-Castéra, on Sunday.

Darmanin on Tuesday said “hundreds of thousands” of free tickets would be available.

There remain questions over a recruitment shortfall for privately hired security agents and how many boats will join the flotilla. French media have quoting figures between 90-170 vessels. But “there are questions over how many delegations will refuse to join the parade as well as which delegations will accept [sharing boats](#)”, a member of the organising committee told French sports media site RMC Sport.

Tuesday’s safety protocol specifies there will be 30 security boats and 25 other craft in reserve in case of breakdowns or other needs. A partial trial run for the flotilla, without passengers, will take place on July 17, with more tests planned for spring 2024. In the week before the event, two days of rehearsals on the river have been planned.

And new air defence technologies to counter potential drone attacks will be trialed later this year when France hosts the Rugby World Cup.

Is U.S. Military Assistance Subsidizing Turkey's Occupation of Cyprus, Syria, and Iraq?

By Michael Rubin

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65638/is-us-military-assistance-subsidizing-turkey>



Mar 06 – Despite a last ditch effort by Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY), the Senate failed to block the Biden administration sale of F-16 and F-16 avionics upgrades to Turkey. The White House envisions the sale both as a consolation prize after Turkey lost its participation in the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program and as a reward for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan lifting his veto on Sweden's NATO accession.

Augmenting Turkey's air force, however, remains bad policy for three reasons:

First, despite U.S. assurances to the contrary, the F-16s do little to enhance Turkey's role in NATO collective defense. Quite the contrary, Turkey's repeated threats toward Greece and its denial of Greek sovereignty over the Aegean Sea raise the specter that the F-16s could [spark an intra-NATO war](#).

Second, Turkey openly seeks to build its own military industry. Providing advanced jets and upgrades simply catalyzes that goal at the expense of American industry and regional security.

Finally, giving into Erdogan's blackmail only [encourages future extortion](#).

Biden will have blood on his hands for the F-16 deal, as Erdogan is much more likely to use the warplanes against Yezidis and Kurds in Syria and Iraq, or against Armenians should Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev make good on his threats to eradicate Armenia in its entirety.

Congress, however, is not without recourse. As Congress begins to debate appropriations, it is reasonable for appropriators to ask questions about U.S. aid and military transfers to Turkey. Such questions fall within the purview of appropriators, but do not cross the line into legislating through appropriations.

For example, Congress might demand the Defense Department report publicly on Turkey's indigenous defense industry to establish the degree to which Turkey incorporates U.S. software or other products into its military platforms. The Pentagon might assign a financial value to intellectual property rights violations in order to deduct that amount from future assistance to Turkey, NATO partner or not. It might also deduct future Turkish arms sales to third countries from the amount of assistance the United States gives Turkey. Likewise, as money is fungible, Congressional appropriators might demand the Pentagon or State Department calculate the cost of Turkey's nearly half century occupation of Cyprus, especially now that Turkey doubles down on seized Cypriot civilian infrastructure in order to build a [drone base to threaten Israel](#) and shipping in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey stations several thousand troops on the island. Financial analysts might assign the expense this represents as well as the transfer costs of several hundred thousand Turkish settlers, and then both deduct this amount from any assistance to Turkey and divert the same amount to the Cypriot government to distribute to the owners of illicitly seized properties.



The same logic holds true with regard to Kurdish districts in northern Syria that Turkey has occupied and [ethnically cleansed](#), as well as the oil refineries and other civilian infrastructure that Turkey has bombed inside Kurdish-controlled sectors of Syria, especially as the Israel-Hamas war distracts the region. Reversing Turkey's occupation of these zones is crucial given Ankara's aim to demand a referendum for them to join Turkey, much like occurred in 1939 with the Syrian district of Hatay.

Turkey also maintains several dozen forward operating bases in Iraqi Kurdistan many of which monitor and terrorize the local Iraqi Kurdish population. The expense of these should be determined and publicized, both to deduct from U.S. and NATO assistance and so the public know the cost of Turkey's imperial project.

Finally, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev imprisoned economist and democracy activist Gubad Ibadoghlu after he publicized the [corrupt contracts Erdogan and his allies won](#) for building projects in Nagorno-Karabakh following the ethnic cleansing of the region's indigenous Armenian population. Appropriators should demand the State Department report such contracts so that Congress can deduct Erdogan's personal profit from American assistance.

Over the last decade, the United States has provided Turkey with more than [\\$100 million annually](#) in aid, not including military assistance that is far higher. Biden may say Erdogan is an ally, but this is simply putting lipstick on a pig. Congress need not go along, especially when the civilian and military assistance the United States provides Turkey worsens rather than enhances regional stability.

[Michael Rubin is director of policy analysis at the Middle East Forum and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.](#)

EDITOR'S COMMENT: The US is a friend and ally of Greece and Cyprus because we belong on the right side of history!

Israel and Palestine Are Now in a Religious War

By **Caroline de Gruyter** | Columnist at *Foreign Policy* and a Europe correspondent for the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*.

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/03/07/israel-palestine-hamas-gaza-religious-war/>



[A Muslim imam, a Christian priest, and two Jewish rabbis join a prayer calling for rain on November 11, 2010, in the West Bank village of Walajeh near Bethlehem. HAZEM BADER/AFP via Getty Images](#)

Mar 07 – Something strange is going on with Israel, writes Elie Barnavi, a former Israeli ambassador to France and a prominent historian and writer, in his autobiography [Confessions d'un bon à rien](#): In less than a century his country "has gone through the entire sequence of European wars, but in reverse order." Barnavi's book (which has not been translated into English) was published in 2022. He could not have known at the time that a furious war between Israel

and Hamas would erupt in late 2023. Even so, his analysis of Israel getting involved in European wars "but in reverse order" is perfectly applicable to the war now raging in Gaza. To be sure, his vision is pitch dark: Israel's wars are getting worse, in Barnavi's view. Therefore, the potential for further escalation of the Gaza war in the wider region is considerable.

What exactly does it mean to have European wars in reverse order? In Europe, religious wars raged on for most of the 16th and 17th centuries, fought between Catholics and protestants and their regional, princely or city-state backers. The situation only changed after the [Peace of Westphalia](#), in 1648, a double peace treaty that put an end to both the Thirty Years' War in the Holy Roman Empire and the Eighty Years' War between Spain and the Dutch Republic. From then on, states became the predominant actors in international politics. They certainly fought terrible wars, but



also managed to contain and prevent them through peace conferences—the Concert of Vienna (1814-15) for example—where European powers guaranteed non-interference in each other's spheres of influence. Finally, interstate wars in Europe stopped altogether after the Second World War, at least among member states of what has become the European Union.

Israel, Barnavi argues, took the opposite trajectory. Israel's wars began as battles between states: the Jewish state against neighboring Arab states, involving one national army fighting another. This interstate warfare ended with the [Yom Kippur War](#) in 1973. After that, Israel no longer fought large-scale wars against other states and instead mainly fought Palestinian guerrillas. Even in that new phase, however, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained a conflict between two nations, two national movements, over the same piece of land. Because of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip, this struggle—which is raging still today—took on a colonial dimension. Beyond that, crucially, the war has changed in character. On both sides, politics and society are now deeply divided. Both in Israel and Palestine, the main internal division is between those who are secular and those who are religiously motivated. On both sides, the religious camp seems to be getting the upper hand.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Politico wrote recently, is ["losing control"](#) of his government because his far-right, religious coalition partners are uncompromising and pushing their way. For instance, the Israeli Minister of Finance, Bezalel Smotrich, and Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir—who both live in Israeli settlements in the West Bank—have [publicly called for](#) "migration" of Palestinians from Gaza and building new Israeli settlements there, and have [referred](#) to Palestinians as "human animals" and "Nazis." Despite U.S. pressure, they have also [refused](#) to transfer tax revenues that Israel routinely collects for the Palestinian Authority to the government in Ramallah, Palestine's de facto administrative capital. Netanyahu obviously no longer controls his own ministers. His religious coalition partners know he will not fire them. If he does, the government would fall and the prime minister, who [faces charges](#) on three cases of fraud, bribery and breach of trust, would lose the immunity that currently keeps him out of reach of the judiciary. On the Palestinian side, things are no better. For many Palestinians, 88-year old Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has lost all credibility. Under his 19-year tenure, the Palestinian cause and the fight against the Israeli occupation have largely disappeared from the international agenda. Hamas puts them back on that agenda. A [December 2023 poll](#) showed that Hamas's popularity was actually growing—even among secular Palestinians who normally do not support Hamas and condemn the Oct. 7, 2023, massacres. This result should be seen as a sign of utter political despair; they have lost hope that less extremist leaders can achieve a just peace with Israel.

In this way, what used to be a national conflict is increasingly turning into a religious conflict. Barnavi, who has studied Europe's religious wars extensively as a scholar, writes: "The growing power of fundamentalists on both sides drags us back to the pre-modern, pre-Westphalian era—to the religious wars in Europe of the second half of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century."

This is bad news. Europe's wars of religion were terrible. Everybody was fighting everybody, and there was no restraint in warfare. The French 16th-century philosopher [Michel de Montaigne](#) lived through them and wrote about them in his Essays. These wars led him to develop his theory of political governance and change through "petits pas" (little steps) instead of revolutionary, sweeping movements, so as to contain extremism and bloodshed. If religious lunatics have their way, he noted, compromises are no longer possible. Barnavi, without mentioning Montaigne, seems to come to the same conclusion. Two countries can negotiate a deal, he argues in his memoirs, with both settling for less than they originally demanded, using rational considerations. But two camps that deeply believe God has given them the land are incapable of doing this, because it requires them to renege on the fundament on which their faith and identity are based.

The question of whether Israel and the Palestinians can get their stranded peace process back on track thus depends less and less on negotiations between both sides—which was the case 30 years ago, resulting in the Oslo peace accords—and more and more on the struggle within the two camps between secular and religious parties. The more intense these internal power struggles become, the less likely the peace process can be put into motion again. This means, of course, that it also becomes more likely that the conflict will be settled militarily.

Women's Rights in Afghanistan: "Before" and "After" America's Destructive Wars

How America's "Humanitarian Wars" derogate the fundamental rights of women worldwide.

By Michel Chossudovsky

Source: <https://michelchossudovsky.substack.com/p/womens-rights-in-afghanistan-before>

*The NeoCons' agenda is **not to "win the war"** but to **engineer the breakup of sovereign nation states**, destroy their culture and national identity, derogate fundamental values and human rights.*



The strategic objective is to trigger political and social chaos, engineer the collapse of national economies, appropriate the countries' wealth and resources, impoverish the entire Planet including the American Homeland.

It's a mesh of weapons of mass destruction, covert intelligence operations, propaganda and "strong economic medicine". The criminality of the US/NATO hegemonic agenda is beyond description.

This article focusses on **Women's Rights in Afghanistan "Before" and "After"** the conduct of Washington's "Humanitarian War" against Afghanistan, which commenced at the height of the Cold War in 1979. entitled the Soviet-Afghan War. It was a carefully planned intelligence operation.

It is preceded by a review of America's "Just War" against Afghanistan.

●► Read the full paper at the source's URL.

Michel Chossudovsky is an award-winning author, Professor of Economics (emeritus) at the University of Ottawa, Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal, Editor of Global Research.



Army Mad Scientist
Operational Environment Wicked Problems
Writing Contest
Submissions due 16 May 2024



During the past decade, conflicts around the globe have shaped our understanding of the 21st Century battlespace. The convergence of battlefield transparency, autonomous systems, and massed and precision fires have resulted in an increasingly lethal Operational Environment (OE). Inexpensive, expendable, man-portable precision munitions in the hands of dismounted infantry are attriting exquisite, expensive, and finite combat systems — main battle tanks, capital warships, and strategic bombers — once the "gold-standard" of global military strength and dominance.

Army Mad Scientist is hosting a writing contest to explore this aspect of the OE.

ALL WRITING CONTEST SUBMISSIONS SHOULD ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING TOPIC:

How have innovations in asymmetric warfare impacted modern large scale and other combat operations, and what further evolutions could take place, both within the next 10 years and on towards mid-century?

CONTEST RULES:

- All entries due by 11:59 pm Eastern on May 16, 2024 at: madscitradoc@gmail.com
- Three types of contest submission:
 - 1500-word Non-Fiction Essay
 - 1500-word Fictional Intelligence (FICINT) Story
 - Hybrid 1500-word submission incorporating a short FICINT vignette, with a Non-Fiction Essay expounding on the threat capabilities described in the vignette
- *Anyone* can participate (Soldiers, Government Civilians, and all global citizens) -- Multiple submissions are encouraged!
- Contest Winner will be proclaimed an official Mad Scientist and published at the *Mad Scientist Laboratory* -- semi-finalists of merit may also be published
- Looking for additional ideas? Explore the [Mad Scientist Laboratory](#)
- Questions? Email us at: madscitradoc@gmail.com

POINTS TO CONSIDER:

["Once More unto The Breach Dear Friends": From English Longbows to Azerbaijani Drones, Army Modernization STILL Means More than Materiel](#)

[Learning from LSCO: Applying Lessons to Irregular Conflict](#)

[Through Soldiers' Eyes: The Future of Ground Combat](#) and its associated [podcast](#)

[The Operational Environment's Increased Lethality](#)

[Unmanned Capabilities in Today's Battlespace](#)

[Rapid Adaptation](#)

[Strategic Latency Unleashed!](#), [Going on the Offensive in the Fight for the Future](#), and associated [podcast](#)

**Who is pushing
Europe to WWII?**



A very

dangerous

man

Don't Look Now But We Are Losing The War With The Houthis

By Sam Faddis

Source: <https://andmagazine.substack.com/p/dont-look-now-but-we-are-losing-the>



Mar 11 – The U.S. military and its allies shot down at least [28 drones](#) in the Red Sea fired by Iranian-backed [Houthi militants](#) in Yemen Saturday, the Pentagon said. That's a good thing. Here's a question, though, why do the Houthis have any drones left to fire at anyone? Haven't we been bombing them for some time now? How is it that the mightiest military on the planet cannot prevent continued Houthi attacks on vessels in the Red Sea?

The Pentagon says it is because we lack sufficient intelligence on Yemen and the Houthis. The military says it has destroyed a bunch of stuff but it doesn't really know how many missiles or launchers or drones the Houthis had to start with. Dan Shapiro, the Pentagon's top man on the Middle East, [told a congressional hearing last week](#) that while the US military had "a good sense" of what it had destroyed, it did not "fully know the denominator" — meaning the original size of the Houthis' arsenal before the start of the US military campaign in January.

AND Magazine is a reader-supported publication. To receive new posts and support my work, consider becoming a free or paid subscriber.

A number of current and former officials offered explanations for how this was possible. One said that Yemen had declined as a priority and therefore our intelligence "focus" had been lost. Another stressed that it was difficult to collect in "inhospitable terrain" and that it was "inherently challenging" to collect in Yemen.

All of this we are assured is in the process of being corrected. The Biden administration has now declared the Houthis an international terrorist organization. That would be, of course, after first removing them from that list at the beginning of Joe's tenure in the White House. The Defense Intelligence Agency just released an [unclassified report](#) on Iranian support to the Houthis, and we are assured that we will now redouble our efforts to stop the Iranians from resupplying the Houthis by sea. Just to make sure everyone knows we are serious we also imposed sanctions on an Iranian military commander and a Houthi militant linked to the ongoing Red Sea attacks. US intelligence now has a stronger picture of Houthi ties to Tehran, said officials. Officials have also stressed that they intend to apply "diplomatic pressure" on Iran to rein in the Houthis. This would be based on the theory apparently that the guys who give the orders and provide the weapons want the shooting to stop.

All of this, of course, is nonsense. The problem is not that we have been trying in any meaningful sense to crush the Houthi forces attacking commercial shipping in the Red Sea and failing. The problem is that we have not been pursuing any strategy with any chance of success and that our efforts, including intelligence collection efforts, have been pathetically weak. The problem is that we are not serious. We have no strategy worthy of the name and our forces and intelligence collectors are so hamstrung as to be virtually useless. [We don't need a DIA study to tell us the Iranians bring in weapons and munitions by sea to Yemen.](#) It's been going on for years. So, stop every vessel sailing between Iran and Yemen and sink every one found to be carrying arms and munitions to the Houthis. Then turn the prisoners over to the Saudis to be held until the conclusion of the hostilities. Stop sending money to the ayatollahs with which they can buy the arms, explosives, drones, and missiles the Houthis use. [Stop appointing people to key administrative positions](#) who sympathize with Iran and believe we are the "bad guys" in this affair. Discard a policy that counts as a win the interception of a cheap drone by a multi-million



dollar missile. If the Houthis fire a missile or drone at a ship in the Red Sea every element in their structure connected to that action should be targeted and destroyed immediately. That means all the way from the guys who fired the weapon to the men in the headquarters who gave the orders. Everybody pays the price. That includes the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps officers who are really running the show. Do whatever is necessary to [collect the intelligence](#) we need on the ground. When the OSS needed intelligence on Nazi troop deployments in France in 1944 it did not label that nation a “challenging” environment for collection and report “intelligence gaps”. [It dropped operatives by parachute into enemy territory](#) and required them to get the intel we needed to win the war. Some were caught and killed. We kept sending them in. All of this probably sounds very anachronistic in today's Washington where the priority is on proper pronoun usage, not offending anyone's sensibilities and we are required to take lectures on warfighting from a male Space Force officer in a skirt. It is also how you win a war. [Right now we aren't “degrading” any capabilities.](#) We aren't on the path to victory. Last month the Houthis sank a UK-owned Belize-flagged ship sailing through the Bab el-Mandeb strait and caused an 18-mile oil slick. The ship sank. [The Houthis have hit four US-flagged commercial ships since November.](#)

Last week the Houthis hit a commercial vessel and killed at least three people. The crew abandoned ship. The bulk of commercial shipping has fled the Red Sea and is sailing around Africa.

That's not what winning looks like. We are losing the war with the Houthis, and the whole world is watching.

Sam Faddis is a retired CIA Operations Officer. Served in Near East and South Asia. Author, commentator. Senior Editor AND Magazine. Public Speaker. Host of Ground Truth.

Will Erdoğan's Islamization of Turkey End Greek Orthodoxy There?

By Abdullah Bozkurt

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65663/will-erdogan-islamization-of-turkey-end-greek>



Fener Greek High School for Boys, located in the Balat neighborhood of İstanbul, is one of the few functioning schools for minorities. (Photo: Nordic Monitor)

Mar 11 – The Greek Orthodox minority in Turkey is on the brink of extinction, with the community's population dwindling to just 1,500 people, primarily comprising elderly individuals. This stark decline contrasts sharply with a century ago when the community numbered 1.4 million.



The decline can be attributed to a combination of factors such as forced repatriation, asset seizures, sustained pressure, crackdowns, unfair discrimination, profiling, relentless negative campaigning and decades-long tensions between Ankara and Athens.

The alarm bell for the dire situation of the rapidly shrinking Greek Orthodox minority was sounded in a document circulated in January at the United Nations. "This enormous population erosion happened because subsequent governances of Turkey throughout the 1923-2003 period, pursued a systematic policy of severe discriminatory measures to force the expatriation of the members of the [Greek orthodox] minority," the document said. The document, prepared by the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, a nongovernmental organization with special consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council, reveals the serious challenges facing the Greek Orthodox community in Turkey.

The US State Department's 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom estimated that fewer than 2,500 Greek Orthodox Christians reside in Turkey. Whatever the actual number may be, the pattern is clear: The Greek Orthodox community is shrinking rapidly in predominantly Muslim Turkey and may soon face extinction. The most severe blow to the Greek Orthodox minority occurred during a population exchange in 1923 as part of the Lausanne Treaty, which resulted in the exchange of approximately 1.2 million Christian Orthodox individuals from Turkey for nearly 400,000 Muslims from Greece.

According to the agreement, individuals residing in Istanbul and the Aegean Sea islands of Gökçeada (Imbros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos) were exempted from the forced exchange. Their numbers totaled 135,000 at the time.

However, successive Turkish governments' open and secret pressures on the remaining minority, at times amounting to violence and forced labor, further took a toll on the Greek Orthodox minority, slashing their numbers to merely 1,500 people as of today, according to the document. In June 1932 the Turkish government banned approximately two dozen professions of Greek Orthodox community members holding Greek citizenship, leading to the expatriation of 12,000 members from Turkey. In March 1964 Turkey designated 12,500 community members as "harmful elements" and began confiscating their properties. This process resulted in the departure of around 60,000 members from Turkey. By the turn of the century, the community population had dropped to 5,000.

The document listed some of the repressive measures specifically targeting non-Muslim community members in Turkey. For instance, in May 1941 the government conscripted all members of non-Muslim minorities aged 18-45 years, citing the risk of possible attack from Nazi Germany, whose military had reached the European borders of Turkey. These conscripted non-Muslims were employed in logistics, such as construction projects and building public parks, instead of receiving training in arms.

Although the government cited the risk of war as a reason for the conscription, there was speculation that its true goal was to undermine the economic wealth of non-Muslims by depriving money-earning male members from engaging in trade and business. These conscripts were discharged after 18 months.

In November 1942, during World War II, the Turkish parliament passed a wealth tax law (Varlık Vergisi) requiring all citizens to pay a capital tax to subsidize the economy and cover the increased cost of the military, which had grown to approximately 2 million soldiers. Those who could not pay were sent to labor camps. The measure disproportionately impacted non-Muslims in Turkey, leading to the depletion of their fortunes, before it was repealed two years later.

One of the most devastating incidents that took a toll on the Greek Orthodox minority was the urban riots of 1955, believed to have been sparked by government provocateurs amid reports of the bombing of the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki, which was the house where Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was born in 1881. The public anger over the incident that targeted the house in Greece of Turkey's founding father was directed at the Greek minority in Turkey, resulting in looting, vandalism and even murder. The pogrom, as the event is sometimes referred to, accelerated the departure of the minority community from Turkey, especially the Greek Orthodox. An estimated 50,000 minority members left Turkey after the attacks.

In 1962 a secret commission specifically designated for the affairs of minority groups in Turkey was established by decree from the prime minister under the name of Azınlıklar Tali Komisyonu (ATK). Its members were taken from the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), the Office of the Chief of Staff, the National Security Council and the Foreign Ministry.

The work of the ATK became pivotal in the crackdown on the Greek Orthodox community after the fighting between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in 1964. The community suffered from the ATK's measures, such as the closure of schools, confiscation of assets and properties, forced deportations and boycotts. The ATK was abolished in 2004 when Turkey started negotiations to become a member of the European Union. Some of the confiscated properties were returned to minority groups beginning in 2008; however, according to the document submitted to the UN, the rate of return remained at 25 percent.

The Turkish government also continues to dismiss the status of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I as the leader of the world's approximately 300 million Orthodox Christians. The UN document states that despite some positive changes, the main issue of the dwindling population impacting the Greek Orthodox community remains unresolved. It said the proposal made by the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans in 2010, which included the repatriation of members of the younger generation of the expatriated community, is the only way to solve the problem. Turkey has so far not been receptive to such a proposal but adopted a stop-gap measure in 2011 to



address a shortage in the management of the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate by granting citizenship to foreign archbishops. Turkey only allows Turkish citizens to vote in the patriarchate's Holy Synod, which administers patriarchate affairs, or to be elected patriarch. The pool of potential future patriarchs with Turkish citizenship has shrunk drastically in parallel with the declining population of the Greek Orthodox community in Turkey.

According to the Turkish government's official position, the patriarch is considered to be the religious leader solely of the country's Greek Orthodox minority, not the leader of Christianity's second-largest group of churches worldwide. Despite the patriarchate's role in appointing metropolitans and bishops around the world, from Canada to New Zealand, acting as a coordination center for resolving internal problems among clergy and churches and issuing directives, the Turkish government does not recognize such authority.

In recent years, negative campaigning against the patriarchate has again gained momentum. In a statement issued by the Fatih District Governor's Office on August 15, 2022, the use of the title "Ecumenical" by Bartholomew I was deemed illegal. The statement emphasized that under the law, the Fener Greek Patriarchate is merely a religious institution subordinate to the Fatih district governor in Istanbul province. It cited a 2007 ruling of the Supreme Court of Appeals that rejected the Ecumenical title and deemed it illegal.



Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I at Sümela Monastery in Trabzon province, Turkey, in 2012. (Photo: Nordic Monitor)

The statement was issued after Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), an ally of President Erdogan, condemned the use of the Ecumenical title on a Trabzonspor football team jersey presented as a gift to Bartholomew I in Trabzon province. This occurred when Bartholomew I visited the 4th-century Sümela Monastery in Trabzon to conduct a religious ceremony.

"This heart-wrenching display is not only scandalous but also a highly provocative, destructive and harassing challenge [to Turkey]," Bahçeli said. "The provocations that have been staged one after another in recent days, the sabotage aimed at undermining our national unity and spirit of solidarity, will not deter us from our path. One of these provocations is the presentation of a Trabzonspor jersey with the word 'Ecumenical' written on it as a gift to Fener Greek Patriarch Bartholomew, who came to Trabzon to lead a ritual for the ninth time at Sümela Monastery," he added. The MHP, which has been in an alliance with Erdogan since 2015, wields significant influence in the police, judiciary, military and intelligence, shaping policies on a number of issues within the Erdogan government. The neo-nationalists (Ulusalçı in Turkish, or Eurasianists), also in alliance with the Erdogan government since 2014, is another group that drives campaigns against the Greek Orthodox minority. This group is particularly effective in disinformation campaigns targeting the patriarchate, utilizing the media outlets it controls. Figures from the group often appear on pro-government networks to criticize the patriarchate. Some of the leading neo-nationalists have filed criminal complaints against the patriarchate in recent years, listing Bartholomew I and others from the church as suspects who committed crimes against the Turkish constitution.

One of them is Cihat Yaycı, a retired admiral who had advised President Erdogan in the past and who filed a criminal complaint against Bartholomew I and Greek Orthodox Archbishop of America Elpidophoros (Ioannis Lambriniadis) in September 2023. Bartholomew I and Elpidophoros were accused of undermining the unity and integrity of the Turkish Republic, a crime punishable by an aggravated life sentence. The Independent Turkish Orthodox Patriarchate (Bağımsız Türk Ortodoks Patrikhanesi), a fake patriarchate linked to Turkish intelligence and run by the neo-nationalist group in Turkey, is another actor driving the anti-patriarchate campaign in Turkey. Sevgi Erenerol, the self-described media and public relations officer of the independent patriarchate, filed a criminal complaint against Bartholomew I and 12 members of the synod who made the decision to recognize the Ukrainian Church in 2019. Describing the Ecumenical Patriarchate as separatist and divisive, the complaint accused Bartholomew of becoming a tool of the United States.

Both [Erenerol](#) and Yaycı, along with dozens of neo-nationalists, were prosecuted, tried and convicted of multiple criminal violations, including plots to murder Greek Orthodox community members and assassinate Bartholomew I. However, they were released after the Erdogan government intervened in the court cases and helped whitewash their criminal activities.

It does not appear that the pressure on the Greek Orthodox community in Turkey will ease any time soon, given the political dynamics in Turkey and the close alliance of the Islamist Erdogan government with nationalist and neo-nationalist blocs.



Abdullah Bozkurt, a Middle East Forum Writing Fellow, is a Sweden-based investigative journalist and analyst who runs the Nordic Research and Monitoring Network and is chairman of the Stockholm Center for Freedom.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Compare the way the Greek government behaves to the Muslim minority with that of the Turkish government to the Orthodox minority and make your own conclusions.

Class of civilizations!



US Air Force

Russian Army



Alumor – Clean, Available Water Wherever You Need It

Source: <https://i-hls.com/archives/123107>



Mar 16 – For life to occur, it needs safe drinking water, but much of the world's population today is struggling to get constant access to drinking water or any access at all. Furthermore, the UN estimates that until 2025 two thirds of the world's population will live in areas with limited or non-existent access to drinking water.

[Alumor](#) is revolutionizing water purification technology. It is driven by a vision to address the global struggles of providing drinking water to all, and reshaping universal access to safe drinking water. The company is working to provide a solution for these challenges using new and innovative technologies.

Alumor's revolutionary technology provides a dual-use solution to military and security personnel in the field, civilians without access to water, and even in areas of disaster: earthquakes, floods, fires, events that harm municipal water supplies, power outages, and many more.

Most of today's filters for microbial pollution are based on membrane filters. The problem with these filters is that the filter itself significantly blocks the water flow and supply and makes the user "struggle for every sip". "In combat situations or in areas of disaster, there's no time to struggle for a sip – there has to be a free flow of water" explains CEO Shlomo Dahan. The challenge in developing Alumor's water purifying model was enabling a free water flow without the system needing constant upkeep (like having to frequently replace the filters). Another challenge is providing an efficient autonomous system in locations that lack infrastructure and electricity (like soldiers in the field) or in emergencies (like disaster areas).

IHLS recognized this need and initiated a collaboration between Alumor and IMoD to develop and supply an electro-optic purification system. This system is different than those with regular filters in that it uses light of a certain wavelength and provides a solution at an exit point. This is done while keeping a free waterflow using a patent-protected and independently developed flow model (thus not requiring a water tank).

Another problem with the existing technology is that the UV lamps currently used in the market require very high voltage, which prevents the use of this technology in places that lack the necessary infrastructure. To solve this issue, Alumor built a compact, portable, modular system that operates on low voltage, providing excellent purification results that comply with international standards.

Alumor has two main products:

- ❖ **H2O Flow** is a system that connects to a tap and provides access to safe drinking water from any source. This is an especially useful asset to military units in the field and in remote locations, assisting in areas of disaster and addressing water access challenges in urban environments with inconsistent water quality.
- ❖ **H2O Pro** is an innovative portable personal unit that provides safe drinking water in the field. The product is portable and easy to carry, connects to personal water containers, can purify more than 40 liters on a single charge and is built for speedy charging – ideal for use in the field and on the move.

The products themselves weigh 80-400 grams and can function in various situations: when connected to constant voltage, to a portable power source, or operating on solar energy.

Alumor's upcoming development is expected to both provide results that comply with severe American purifying standards and be able to purify various water sources and pollutants.



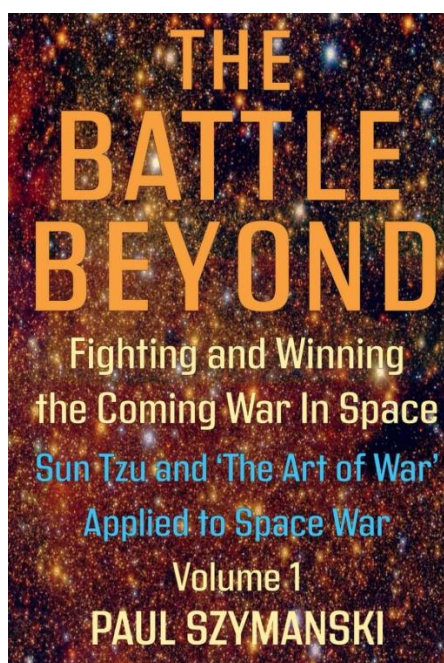
Alumor is a graduate of the [INNOFENSE](#) Innovation Center operated by iHLS in collaboration with IMoD. A unique acceleration program that removes entrance barriers to the technological ecosystem turning startups into mature, leading companies while connecting them with relevant investors, which is designed to strengthen the links between the civilian and defense markets via the collaborative development of the technologies, thus advancing and improving their integration in both markets.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: It would be interesting to know if Alumor can clean water contaminated with CWAs or radiation debris.

The Battle Beyond—Fighting and Winning the Coming War in Space – Sun Tzu and the Art of War Applied to Space War - Volume 1: Ancient Chinese Military ... Applied to Outer Space Warfare Strategies Hardcover – March 13, 2024

By Paul Szymanski (Author)

Source: <https://www.amazon.com/Battle-Beyond-Fighting-Winning-Coming-Space/dp/BOCY2LW5Y6>



As with most military planning, we fight the last wars that we understand well. That is probably the biggest problem outer space warfighters have in conceptualizing how a future conflict might play out. We just have not had that much experience in true space warfare. This makes it very difficult to predict how such combat will actually occur. Much as the concepts of air power were being developed in the 1920's-30's, the true power of space warfare is currently not well understood. To help solve these strategic issues, the author has initiated a study to extrapolate warfare principles from the Chinese military philosopher, Sun Tzu's (544 BC – 496 BC) "Art of War," to space warfare strategies, objectives and tasks. This study is only a third completed analyzing these principles, but the author has already derived 740 individual space strategies based on this ancient "Art of War." This briefing will report on the current status of this important study that will help mold strategic thinking and impact the future of outer space warfare. Due to the uniqueness of these space strategies, the author assesses that just implementing one or two of these strategies will be sufficient to win the next space conflict.

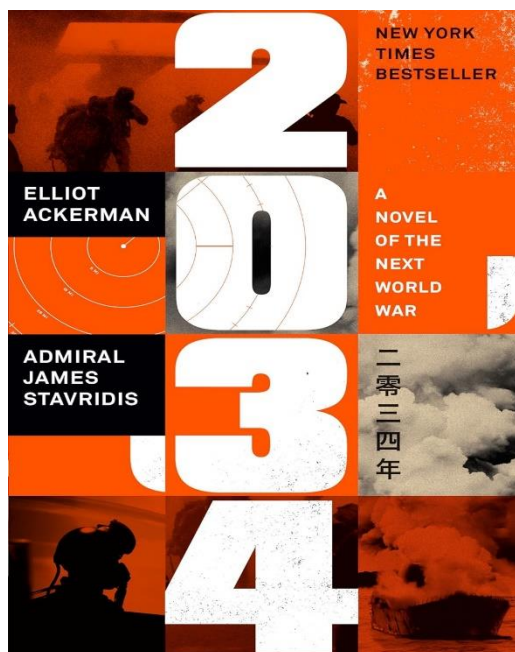
The author has initiated analysis of the fundamental Principles of terrestrial warfare as delineated in the ancient Chinese military philosopher, Sun Tzu[1] (544 BC – 496 BC), in his landmark treatise, "The Art of War". Due to the author's 50 years of experience analyzing the requirements for outer space warfare, and his participation in 12 different space weapons programs and 40-50 space weapons studies, he has been able to derive 740 basic modern space warfare strategies and tactics from these ancient concepts.

However, he is only one-third of the way through conducting this analysis, and will complete this study to its logical conclusion in Volume 2 of this book.

This is the author's finest work yet, and will lead to advanced space warfare planning and the successful resolution of outer space conflicts for those who follow his foundational principles for how to fight and win space wars.

Paul Szymanski has 50 years of experience in all fields related to space warfare: policy, strategy, simulations, surveillance, survivability, threat assessment, long-range strategic planning, and command and control. In addition, he has a comprehensive experience base, having worked directly with multiple services (Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines), civilian agencies (NASA, DARPA, FEMA), and from the White House National Security Council (NSC) and Congress, to the Pentagon (Secretary of the Air Force) to systems development (Space Systems Command - SSC/ASP/XRJ), technology development (Air Force Research Lab – AFRL/RD/RV/RI/RH and as a member of the Independent Assessment Team general officer programmatic review board) to operational field test (China Lake Naval Test Center). Also, he has published/lectured over 150 times in the past few years alone in Aviation Week, the United States, Britain, Scotland, Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Estonia, Ukraine, India, Malaysia, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan.





2034: A Novel of the Next World War Hardcover – March 9, 2021

By Elliot Ackerman (Author), Admiral James Stavridis USN (Author)

Source: <https://www.amazon.com/2034-Novel-Next-World-War/dp/1984881256>

“Consider this another vaccine against disaster. Fortunately, this dose won't cause a temporary fever—and it happens to be a ripplingly good read.” —Wired

“This crisply written and well-paced book reads like an all-caps warning for a world shackled to the machines we carry in our pockets and place on our laps . . .” —The Washington Post

From two former military officers and award-winning authors, a chillingly authentic geopolitical thriller that imagines a naval clash between the US and China in the South China Sea in 2034—and the path from there to a nightmarish global conflagration.

On March 12, 2034, US Navy Commodore Sarah Hunt is on the bridge of her flagship, the guided missile destroyer USS John Paul Jones, conducting a routine freedom of navigation patrol in the South China Sea when her ship detects an unflagged trawler in clear distress, smoke billowing from its bridge. On that same day, US Marine aviator Major Chris "Wedge" Mitchell is flying an F35E Lightning over the Strait of Hormuz, testing a new stealth technology as he flirts with Iranian airspace. By the end of that day, Wedge will be an Iranian prisoner, and Sarah Hunt's destroyer will lie at the bottom of the sea, sunk by the Chinese Navy. Iran and China have clearly coordinated their moves, which involve the use of powerful new forms of cyber weaponry that render US ships and planes defenseless. In a single day, America's faith in its military's strategic pre-eminence is in tatters. A new, terrifying era is at hand.

So begins a disturbingly plausible work of speculative fiction, co-authored by an award-winning novelist and decorated Marine veteran and the former commander of NATO, a legendary admiral who has spent much of his career strategically outmaneuvering America's most tenacious adversaries. Written with a powerful blend of geopolitical sophistication and human empathy, 2034 takes us inside the minds of a global cast of characters--Americans, Chinese, Iranians, Russians, Indians--as a series of arrogant miscalculations on all sides leads the world into an intensifying international storm. In the end, China and the United States will have paid a staggering cost, one that forever alters the global balance of power.

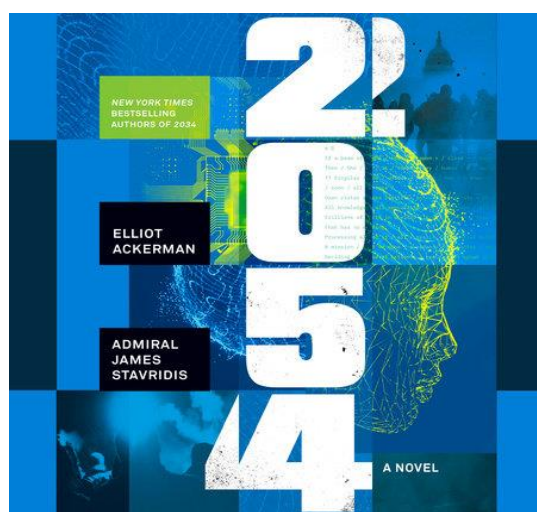
Everything in 2034 is an imaginative extrapolation from present-day facts on the ground combined with the authors' years working at the highest and most classified levels of national security. Sometimes it takes a brilliant work of fiction to illuminate the most dire of warnings: 2034 is all too close at hand, and this cautionary tale presents the reader with a dark yet possible future that we must do all we can to avoid.

2054

Source: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/696977/2054-by-elliott-ackerman-and-admiral-james-stavridis/>

From the acclaimed authors of the runaway *New York Times* bestseller *2034* comes another explosive work of speculative fiction set twenty years further in the future, at a moment when a radical leap forward in artificial intelligence combines with America's violent partisan divide to create an existential threat to the country, and the world

It is twenty years after the catastrophic war between the United States and China that brought down the old American political order. A new party has emerged in the US, one that's held power for over a decade. Efforts to cement



its grip have resulted in mounting violent resistance. The American president has control of the media, but he is beginning to lose control of the streets. Many fear he'll stop at nothing to remain in the White House. Suddenly, he collapses in the middle of an address to the nation. After an initial flurry of misinformation, the administration reluctantly announces his death. A cover-up ensues, conspiracy theories abound, and the country descends into a new type of civil war.



The same authors also wrote an [article](#) in the Wall Street Journal that shows the direction modern warfare is taking, with drones and artificial intelligence (AI) as the protagonists. They certainly report that the most recent examples of their use in the field prove that drones have inflicted blows far out of proportion to their costs. But the sequel is more interesting and extremely specific. The Gerald Ford nuclear-powered aircraft carrier recently built by the US is considered the most powerful and expensive vessel ever created. Cost, of 13 billion dollars. The thought is interesting: With the same money, a state could buy 650,000 drones. It would only take a small number of these drones to sink the CVN-78 because, despite very strong protection systems, there is a saturation point. In addition to the fact that developments in AI can also make defense systems vulnerable. So, drones are changing, and will continue to change, the shape of warfare. What if they go into real mass production?

A handful of elite actors from the worlds of computer science, intelligence, and business have a fairly good idea of what happened. All signs point to a profound breakthrough in AI, of which the remote assassination of an American president is hardly the most game-changing ramification. The trail leads to an outpost in the Amazon rainforest, the last known whereabouts of the tech visionary who predicted this breakthrough. As some of the world's great powers, old and new, state and nonstate alike, struggle to outmaneuver one another in this new Great Game of scientific discovery, the outcome becomes entangled with the fate of American democracy. Combining a deep understanding of AI, biotech, and the possibility of a coming Singularity, along with their signature geopolitical sophistication, Elliot Ackerman and Admiral James Stavridis have once again written a visionary work. *2054* is a novel that reads like a thriller even as it demands that we consider the trajectory of our society and its potentially calamitous destination.

Made In Macedonia: Americans Lose Millions Buying Fake Donald Trump Debit Cards



By Milos Katic, Mirjana Jevtovic, Biljana Nikolovska, Jelena Jankovic, and Natalija Jovanovic

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240319-made-in-macedonia-americans-lose-millions-buying-fake-donald-trump-debit-cards>

It is an open secret in this corner of the Balkans that a startlingly successful digital disinformation and fake news industry that emerged in the Macedonian city of Veles alongside the political rise of Donald Trump helped lay the groundwork for a thriving new business in fraudulent goods marketed through encrypted channels to Trump-style conservatives and "patriots" an ocean away. Neither the Republican presidential hopeful Trump nor any of his organizations appear to have any connection to the manufacturers, platforms, or sellers.

Milos Katic is a correspondent for RFE/RL's Balkan Service.

Mirjana Jevtovic is an investigative journalist and digital-forensics unit editor with RFE/RL's Balkan Service based in Belgrade.

Biljana Nikolovska is a correspondent for RFE/RL's Balkan Service.

Jelena Jankovic is a correspondent for RFE/RL's Balkan Service.

Natalija Jovanovic is a journalist with RFE/RL's Balkan Service based in Belgrade.



EDITOR'S COMMENT: This is FAKE NEWS! There is no city named Veles in Macedonia, GREECE. And as everybody knows there is only one Macedonia, the land of Alexander the Great in the northern part of Greece. End of story!



COLLOQUIUM: Enhancing European Public Health Preparedness, Pre-Hospital, and Disaster Medicine

Source: https://www.aspher.org/download/1499/enhancing-european-public-health-preparedness-programme_250324.pdf

The world is changing, which presents new challenges to population health. Public Health is centrally placed to protect and enhance human health and is a key component of national security. This Colloquium seeks consensus from professional associations, international organizations, expert stakeholders, and citizens on adaptive ways forward for the discipline; to enhance existing public health curricula in the face of emerging threats. Public and global health are challenged by unprecedented population growth, human migration, urbanization, natural disasters, climate change, warfighting and conflict, and novel disease emergence.

Enhanced curriculum development, informed by the emerging field of disaster medicine, can assist public health practitioners, both direct and in supportive roles, to better address dynamic and complex problems threatening the public's health and welfare. The lessons of recent pandemics, warfare returning to the European continent, and population dislocation demand a fresh look at public health education and training and to build on the decades of development of the public health discipline from academic institutions, organizations, and associations.

Subject matter experts, academics, and leaders from across Europe have convened in a high-level meeting to launch development of an enhanced curriculum to better address current and future challenges. This colloquium draws from the WHO / ASPHER competency framework and builds essential ingredients to strengthen the public health discipline as viewed from the lens of changing geopolitical events, creating a nuanced understanding of the intersections between Mass Violence, War, and Disaster for public health practitioners of the future. Successful implementation around these complex challenges requires large-scale collaboration, trust and meaningful engagement.

We will bring together the capability, perspectives, data and power that often sit in separate organizational boundaries.



The Colloquium

This colloquium will serve as a pivotal platform to address complex challenges by synthesizing knowledge and expertise, addressing current violent conflicts and future threats and offer the opportunity for individual and organizational learning needs analyses. It is the launching point.

Operating under Chatham House Rule 1 and drawing from the broad constituencies of three sponsoring organizations — ASPHER, WADEM, and ECDM — this inaugural convening will establish an augmentative framework to build on collective and individual institution's public health curricula development, the WHO-ASPHER 2020 competency framework, and the 2024 ASPHER-WHO Core Curriculum Programme for Public Health. We will create a high-trust environment within which these collaborations thrive.

The outcomes will pave the way for transformative public health education that prepares professionals to navigate the intricate landscape and unique challenges of the 21st Century, ultimately contributing to resilient societies in Europe and beyond. The one-day colloquium is a convocation of thought leaders and subject matter experts and helps to launch and create a robust framework for novel curriculum development. The resultant working group methodology will entail ongoing meetings, workshops, in-depth conversations and content development.





T - NEWS

PREVENT – Islamist extremism 'not being effectively tackled by Government'

Source: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/21/islamist-extremism-not-being-effectively-tackled/>

Feb 21 – [Islamist extremism](#) is not being effectively tackled by the Government, the independent reviewer of Prevent has said, as he warned it was fuelling a “dangerous” surge in [anti-Semitism](#).

In an exclusive interview with The Telegraph, William Shawcross said the Government had failed to fully implement his proposals to overhaul Prevent, its counter terror programme, which meant the public faced an increased threat from extremists and terrorists. He said the failure to take tougher action stemmed from a continuing bias within Prevent towards tackling the rise in Right-wing terrorism rather than the main threat of [Islamist terrorism](#).

Mr Shawcross said he warned ministers a year ago about the need to tackle the “pernicious” threat from the Hamas support network in the UK which had now become “more dangerous” following the terror group’s attack on Israel on October 7.

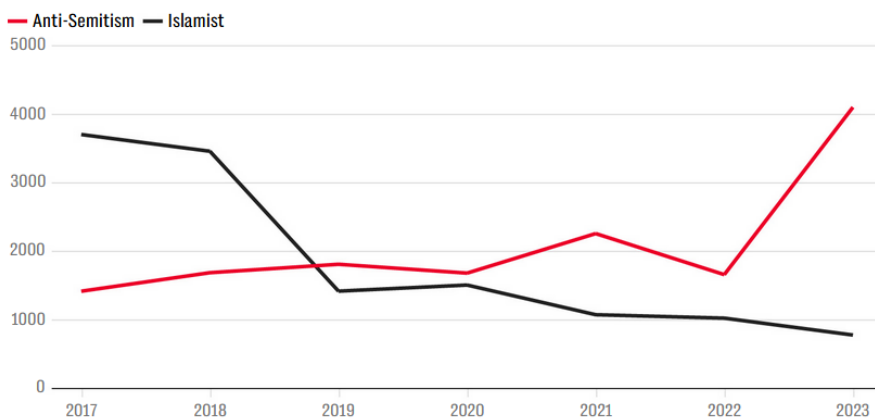
He blamed the network’s members for fuelling the “horrific” increase in anti-Semitism and encouraging anti-Semitic abuse and banners on pro-Palestinian marches.

“The Government is failing to implement my recommendations properly and the British people are therefore in more danger from extremists and terrorists,” said Mr Shawcross, who was commissioned to produce the report by the Government and is now Commissioner for Public Appointments.

He said he was “glad” there had been progress on his proposals but said the Government had not gone far enough on key recommendations, including focusing Prevent on Islamist terrorism, enshrining its principles in counter-terror law, extending it to illegal immigration and combating the misuse of

Surge in anti-Semitic crime

Number of anti-Semitic incidents vs Islamist referrals to Prevent



SOURCE: CST, HOME OFFICE

blasphemy.

“Some of the things I’ve recommended that have not been carried out do represent such an increased threat because October 7 has changed everything,” said Mr Shawcross. “I am concerned about the increased threat to the public that exists after October 7 which still needs to be addressed.”

Hamas should not “exist at all” in Britain but he said: “There are Hamas supporters in this country tragically and some of them are involved in helping promote these marches. There’s the Palestinian forum in Britain, which is known to be close to Hamas and have met with Hamas leadership.

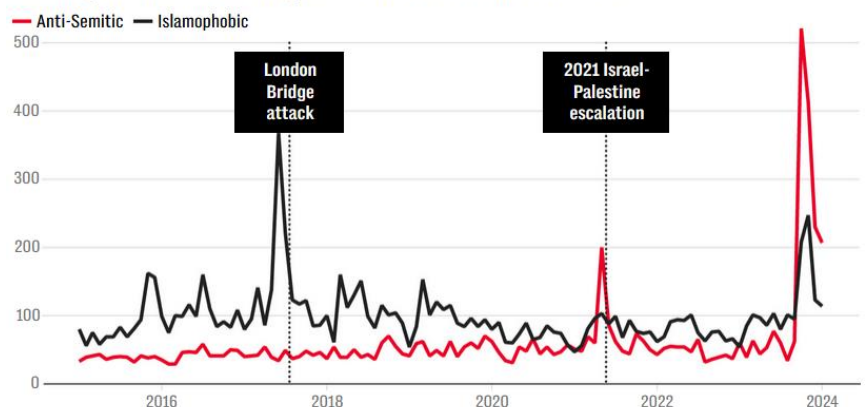
“There is an underlying Hamas support network, which is very dangerous and should be dealt with by both Prevent and the police.”

Mr Shawcross, whose report was published a year ago, said he believes the bias towards Right-wing terrorism is partly driven by Prevent staff’s fears of being labelled racist or Islamophobic.

He cited MI5 data that 75 per cent of its caseload was focused on Islamist threats, yet the latest figures for referrals to the Prevent programme showed just 11 per cent related to Islamist terrorism.

London's anti-Semitic hate crime problem

Monthly number of Islamophobic and anti-Semitic crimes



SOURCE: METROPOLITAN POLICE

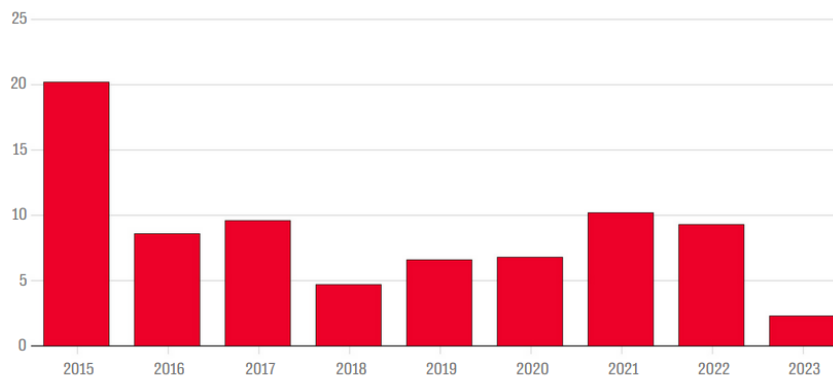


“One of the reasons why there is sometimes a reluctance to address the Islamist threat is that people are frightened of being called Islamophobic or racist. It’s become a hugely effective form of censorship: ‘Oh, you’re just a racist. You’re an Islamophobe.’ And people don’t like that for obvious reasons,” said Mr Shawcross.

“So when you say there’s a Right-wing threat, you’re not in the danger of becoming racist. So that is an area that is still there and I think the fear of being called an Islamophobe or a racist has grown since October 7.”

Detection rates for anti-Semitic crimes

September-December, London



SOURCE: METROPOLITAN POLICE, *2023 INCLUDES JANUARY 2024

amended in law. It must happen to ensure we are doing everything we can to protect the public,” he said.

He said ministers had also failed to extend Prevent to Border Force, despite a surge in illegal immigration. “It’s an anomaly. Border Force should be using it because there is so much illegal immigration. Illegal immigrants who have got into the country have been responsible for some terrorist attacks in the last few years,” he said.

He said the Government had promised to issue guidance to combat the way blasphemy was being used by Muslims to censor free speech and silence critics of Islamist extremism but had failed to do so. He cited the teacher in Batley driven out of his school by “a mob of extremists” and into hiding after showing pupils a satirical image of the prophet Muhammad.

“It is a form of abusive censorship. It’s difficult to resist for schools and it shouldn’t be happening. The government promised that they would issue guidance on this, and that has not yet happened and it should do,” said Mr Shawcross.

A Home Office spokesman said: “We have made significant progress to deliver a strengthened Prevent which places tackling terrorist ideologies at its core.

“William Shawcross’ Review was critical to ensuring Prevent is fit for purpose, which is why we accepted his recommendations in full. One year on, we have delivered 30 of the 34 recommendations he made, and we are making rapid progress on delivering the remaining four. “The government agrees that extreme Islamist ideology presents the greatest threat to the UK, and has moved swiftly to update Prevent duty guidance and training to make that clear.”

Bag Stolen on Train in Paris Did Not Contain Sensitive Olympics Security Info: Authorities

Source: <https://time.com/6835869/paris-olympics-security-plans-stolen-train/>

Feb 28 – While petty thefts are [not uncommon](#) on public transport in Paris, it would seem far-fetched that a bag robbery could upend a major international sporting event. But France faced such a fear earlier this week, after a bag was reportedly stolen on a train in the nation’s capital on Monday that was initially said to have contained security plans for the Paris Olympics that’s just months away.

Broadcast network [BFMTV](#) reported that a 56-year-old engineer working in the Paris City Hall reported to police that his bag had been stolen after he had just boarded a train leaving for Creil from the Gare du Nord station in Paris, around 6:30 p.m. local time, Monday evening.

In his report to police, the engineer reportedly explained that he had placed his bag in a compartment above his seat. But as he was preparing to change trains due to a delay, he noticed his bag was gone. The bag contained the engineer’s professional computer and two USB sticks that contain “sensitive” data,

He said Prevent needed to “more effectively” challenge extremists, as he warned failure to do so would fuel the “terrifying” growth in anti-Semitism.

“I have Jewish friends whose children are at universities around the country who are frightened for the first time in their lives. It is an appalling situation. I never thought that we would see on the streets of Britain, British citizens shouting death to the Jews. It’s absolutely appalling,” he said.

He urged the Government to enshrine the new approach to Prevent in the counter terrorism act of 2015, as he recommended. “This is because Prevent over-focuses on personal and social vulnerabilities at the expense of ideology as a motivation of terrorism. This hasn’t been



PARIS 2024



according to BFMTV, namely Paris City Hall's security plans for the Olympics, which includes the deployment of some 2,000 municipal police officers.

Police referred questions by TIME on Tuesday to the Paris prosecutor's office, which confirmed the theft via a statement but said that the stolen technology does not contain sensitive elements but rather only "notes related to traffic during the Olympic Games." In an [official statement](#) released to the public on Wednesday, Paris City Hall reiterated that the internal information on the stolen technology was related to the "IT mission of the roads and travel department" and said that the victim "was not in possession of any information relating to the organization and deployment of law enforcement." It added: "All necessary resets have been carried out to cut off all access to the City computer systems."

Regional transport police are now investigating the crime, using CCTV footage, and, at the request of the mayor, the Paris general inspectorate is investigating the breach of internal security procedures.

The International Olympic Committee [expressed confidence](#) in January in how French authorities would keep the 2024 Olympics, which kick off on July 26, safe with an "extensive security plan."

Fearing attacks on crowded areas during the upcoming summer games, especially after Paris was home to a string of terrorist incidents that killed at least 130 people across the city [in 2015](#) and [violent riots](#) sparked by social and economic concerns during the last couple years, security protocols have been ramped up, including [controversial plans](#) for stringent checkpoints and the deployment of tens of thousands of security staff, [both public and private](#).

In preparation, organizers including the French government, IOC, and partner companies allocated a budget of 320 million euros (about \$350 million) for security. Some 45,000 security staff are set to be deployed on the first day—which is expected to see as many as 600,000 spectators gather in the capital to watch boats carrying athletes through the river Seine for the first Olympics opening ceremony held outside a sports stadium. After that, 35,000 security staff are set to be deployed throughout Paris during the following days of the tournament, which runs until August 11.

By not repatriating Shamima Begum, the UK is washing its hands of continuing Islamic State terror



By Elizabeth Pearson | Programme Lead MSc Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies, Royal Holloway University of London

Source: <https://theconversation.com/by-not-repatriating-shamima-begum-the-uk-is-washing-its-hands-of-continuing-islamic-state-terror-224419>



Feb 28 – Shamima Begum is [not coming home](#). The Islamic State (IS) poster girl [lost her latest appeal](#) against the British government's 2019 decision to strip her of her citizenship on grounds of national security. The ruling meant a brief return to the British headlines for both Begum and the jihadist terrorist group. When the then 15-year-old and two friends ran away from London for IS in 2015, the group held land [almost the size of Britain](#) in Iraq and Syria.

Now, IS has no territory in the region. Begum is the only one of the young women left alive. And there is neither the public nor political will to bring Begum or others like her home. IS is yesterday's news – at least in Europe.

Islamic State's newsletter al-Naba tells a different story. Each week it reports on successes in [Africa](#), the centre of its global activities. The

[Global Terrorism Index report](#), published annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace, a thinktank, noted that IS was the world's most deadly terror group in 2022, and 43% of deaths from terrorism were in the Sahel. Both IS and rival jihadist factions are thought to be responsible.

War between IS and rivals al-Qaeda blazes across sub-Saharan Africa. In Mozambique, thousands of civilians [are on the move](#), forced from their homes by an IS affiliate. As in Iraq and Syria, women are often targets. In one brutal incident in Mozambique, fighters reportedly [trapped Christian women in a house](#) and set it ablaze.

Trafficking, violence and IS women

Jihadist targeting of women, such as the rape and [enslavement](#) of Yazidi women in Iraq and Syria, or the [abductions of women in Nigeria](#), are central to their violence. Recognising this, the UN security council in



2019 passed a resolution emphasising the need to see gender-based violence “[as a tactic of war and terrorism](#)”. In Nigeria, IS west Africa fighters have [explicitly targeted women](#) working with humanitarian organisations, even executing them on video. Trafficking has been an important IS tactic. At its height, IS [propaganda techniques](#) resembled those of organised child sexual exploitation. Recruiters, [like predators](#), sought out the vulnerable to gain their trust, encouraging them to keep this secret. The group needed women. Without them, there was no one to birth the next generation, no one for the “heroic” jihadists of IS propaganda videos to fight to protect. Women were at the heart of the IS governance project, its recruitment and trafficking, and of its violence.

Lawyers for Shamima Begum have argued she was a minor who was trafficked to Syria, and was therefore a victim of IS, lacking agency. A UN special representative stated in a 2018 report (the year before Begum’s citizenship was stripped) that armed groups’ “recruitment and use of children nearly always constitutes trafficking”.

By removing Begum’s citizenship, the UK has essentially [blocked any attempt](#) to understand if and how that trafficking took place.

Repatriation and justice

The UK’s stance on repatriating IS women is one of “[strategic distance](#)”. In the words of former Met police counterterrorism chief [Neil Basu](#), “if you have chosen to go ... you shouldn’t be allowed to come back”. This approach [sets the UK apart](#) from other western countries.

In 2023, according to US state department data, [14 countries repatriated more than 3,500 of their nationals](#) from north-east Syria. In France and Germany, some IS women have gone through the domestic courts.

While IS women were mainly not permitted to fight, not all violence took place on the battlefield. France has prosecuted female jihadis for [association with “terrorist wrongdoers”](#).

Germany has prosecuted some IS women under war crimes and genocide legislation. In one case, a woman was sentenced for her role in the [enslavement of a Yazidi woman](#). In another, for the death of a Yazidi child, [left in the sun to die](#). Repatriation and trials go some way not just to punishing wrongdoing, but providing the Yazidi people with justice.

Returned to countries of origin, IS members can be managed. [A new report](#) published by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism found that in Belgium, Germany, France and the Netherlands, most imprisoned women do not appear to pose a threat.

The 2023 [Shawcross report](#) into the British counter-radicalisation strategy Prevent concluded that Islamism terrorism is the largest terrorist threat facing the UK. British Islamism is not isolated, it is influenced by wider trends of transnational jihad.

In leaving Shamima Begum stateless in Syria, the British government sends a message, not just to a [Britain that does not want her](#), but to the Middle East and Africa: Islamic State is no longer our problem.

The truth is, [IS violence is not over](#), even if the theatre of conflict has shifted. Begum has become a symbol of British unwillingness to take this seriously. Her lawyers say [they will fight on](#). Perhaps next time Britain will recognise that IS violence remains a global threat.

Will the Israel– Hamas War Spark New Waves of Extremism in Central Asia?

By Nurbek Bekmurzaev

Terrorism Monitor Volume: 22 Issue: 4

Source: <https://jamestown.org/program/will-the-israel-hamas-war-spark-new-waves-of-extremism-in-central-asia/>

Mar 01 – On December 21, 2023, a poultry farm called “Saxovat-Broyler” caught fire in the Pskent region near Uzbekistan’s capital, Tashkent. The Ministry of Emergency Situations deployed five fire and rescue crews to extinguish the blaze, demonstrating the scale of the incident. Uzbek media provided no further details, except that there were no human casualties ([Gazeta.uz](#), December 21, 2023).

On December 28, 2023, a report emerged that the fire was, in fact, a result of an arson attack, which was carried out by a group of four people in retaliation for the sufferings of Muslims in Gaza ([Telegram/anserenko](#), December 28, 2023). The perpetrators chose the farm as their target due to its alleged ties with Israel and the United States. This has led analysts to forecast that Central Asia has a fully formed “anti-Israeli underground” that will carry out more attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets—or those thought to be associated with them—in the region in 2024.

The fire at the poultry farm became the latest and largest reported anti-Israeli attack carried out in Central Asia since the start of the conflict between Israel and Hamas in October 2023. This article explores the effect of the conflict in Gaza on extremism in Central Asia and discusses attacks targeting Israeli and Jewish people and interests in



the region. It addresses whether the unrest in Gaza will spark a new wave of terrorism and extremism in Central Asia.

Israeli Interests Under Attack

Since the start of the conflict in Gaza, four other attacks against Israeli businesses and cultural centers have been attempted, one of which was successful. In November 2023, the warehouse of joint Uzbek–Israeli enterprise Technopark was set on fire in an act of revenge for the suffering of Muslims in Gaza. Authorities have not identified the perpetrators ([Telegram/anserenko](#), December 1, 2023). Local media briefly reported on the fire without providing any details and did not mention that it was an anti-Israeli attack ([Telegram/NuzUzRu](#), November 24, 2023).

Of the three other foiled attacks, one was in Uzbekistan, while the other two occurred in Kazakhstan. On October 25, 2023, Uzbek authorities arrested an Uzbek and Kyrgyz citizen for plotting to attack the offices of Israeli companies in Tashkent ([Telegram/anserenko](#), October 25, 2023). In response to these arrests, the Israeli Embassy in Tashkent strengthened security measures and Jewish cultural centers in the city closed down. A month later, between November 18 and 20, 2023, Kazakh authorities also arrested a group of Central Asians, including two Tajik citizens, for plotting attacks against Jewish cultural centers in Almaty ([Telegram/anserenko](#), November 26, 2023). None of these incidents were reported in Uzbek and Kazakh media due to these states' concerns that they would create widespread anti-Israeli sentiments.

Israel reacted to these incidents by sending an interdepartmental delegation consisting of Shin Bet officials and Mossad to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan in early December 2023. Their main task was to assess the risks posed to Israeli interests in the region ([Telegram/anserenko](#), December 18, 2023). Israel maintains embassies in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Israel has gradually expanded security, socio-cultural, and economic cooperation with these three countries since the early 2000s ([Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies](#), April 12, 2023).

ISKP Calls to Target Israeli and Jewish Targets

The lack of diverse media sources on these attacks prevents analysts from making certain conclusions about security threats to Israeli interests in the region, especially in the short-term future. However, Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) propaganda in the Uzbek language has encouraged attacks against Israeli interests in Uzbekistan and beyond. [1] At the end of October 2023, two pro-ISKP Uzbek Telegram channels shared photos and addresses of synagogues in Uzbekistan. Additionally, these channels posted details of the incoming flights from Tel Aviv to Tashkent, calling on Muslims to stop Jewish people from landing in the country. This is reminiscent of several anti-Semitic demonstrations against individuals coming off flights from Israel that occurred in the North Caucasus in late October (see [EDM](#), November 2, 2023).

Second, the security measures taken by the Central Asian governments show that authorities view these threats as real rather than exaggerated. For example, on November 2, 2023, a video emerged of police officers guarding a Jewish cemetery in Kokand, Uzbekistan ([Instagram/@yolyolakayuz](#), November 2, 2023). The man narrating the video stated the situation was stable, and no attacks have been recorded thus far.

For their part, Central Asian governments have remained neutral with regard to the conflict in Gaza. Since the start of hostilities, they have expressed concerns about the escalation of violence and have called on the two parties to resolve the conflict via diplomatic means ([DARYO](#), October 9, 2023). At the same time, there have not been any large pro-Palestine demonstrations that could further spread anti-Israeli sentiments. So far, it has been the case that Uzbek authorities immediately shut down attempts to organize any such demonstration in Tashkent by dispersing the public and arresting the organizers ([Gazeta.uz](#), November 1, 2023).

Conclusion

Terrorist organizations exploit themes of injustice and the suffering of Muslims in their recruitment efforts. These themes are prevalent in the coverage of the ongoing conflict in Gaza, and they are powerful enough to resonate with Muslims in Central Asia. With multiple Israeli and Jewish business interests and cultural centers in the region being targets and the steady flow of propaganda, the unfolding conflict in Gaza is capable of inspiring extremists in the region to carry out more attacks. Having seen the end of the extremism wave sparked by the emergence of Islamic State (IS), the region now faces the risk of dealing with a renewed wave emanating from Gaza.

Notes:

[1] The names of these Telegram channels cannot be shared publicly because naming them in an article will lead to their closure, thereby prohibiting researchers and analysts from monitoring them.

[2] Data for this article was collected by the author in collaboration with the Center for Information Resilience's "Afghan Witness" project.



Nurbek Bekmurzaev is an independent researcher and freelance journalist based in Bishkek. He has a graduate degree in International and European Security from the University of Geneva. His main areas of research are radicalization, violent extremist groups, PVE/CVE strategies in Central Asia and rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and their family members.

Which extremists do Britons see as threats in 2024?

Islamic terrorism tops the list, although attitudes among Conservative and Labour voters differ significantly

By **Matthew Smith** | Head of Data Journalism

Source: <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/48784-which-extremists-do-britons-see-as-threats-in-2024>

Feb 29 – Recent days have seen reminders of the threats that Britain faces from different corners. On Tuesday, three men appeared in court charged with [preparing a terrorist act linked to right-wing extremism](#).

Last week a left-wing anarchist was [found guilty of preparing acts of terrorism](#) by compiling and sharing a bomb-making manual, having declaring that he wanted to kill at least 50 people.

And earlier in the month [a 16-year-old boy has been found guilty of plotting a terror attack on people he believed had insulted Islam](#).

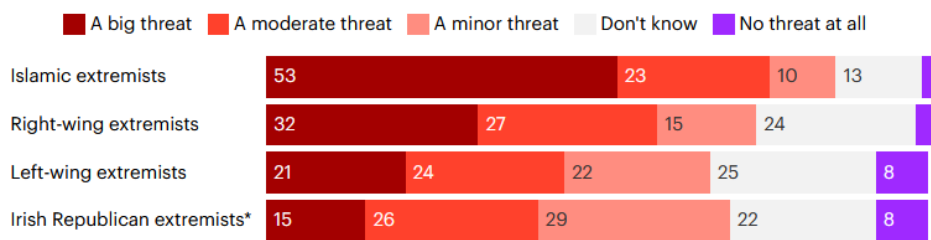
Conservative deputy chair Lee Anderson's [accusation](#) that Mayor of London Sadiq Khan is "under the influence of Islamists" – while resulting in his suspension – has seen other politicians [like Suella Braverman](#) raise warnings about Islamic extremism.

But what do the public think? Our new survey shows that the public tend to see Islamic extremism as a big threat to the UK – although right wing extremism is also seen as a serious problem, particularly by Labour voters.

How much of a threat do Britons see extremist groups as being?

Three quarters of Britons (76%) consider Islamic extremists to be a "big threat" or a "moderate threat". This compares to 59% for right wing extremists, 45% for left wing extremists, and 41% for Irish Republican extremists.*

How much of a threat do you consider the following types of groups to be? %



*Please note that this survey was only conducted on the British mainland, i.e. in England, Scotland and Wales, and so does not include Northern Irish respondents.

YouGov

23-26 February 2024

voters. Labour voters are in just as likely to see right-wing extremists as a big/moderate threat (73%), and specifically more likely to see right-wing extremism as a 'big' threat than Islamic extremism (51% vs 40%).

Most Conservative voters (54%) see right-wing extremism as a big/moderate threat, although far fewer see it as a 'big' threat (22%) than their Labour counterparts.

Conservative voters are indeed more likely to see left-wing extremists as a big threat (37%) or a big/moderate threat (65%) than right-wing extremists. By contrast, only 31% of Labour voters see left-wing extremism as a big/moderate threat.

Who do the public see as the biggest threat?

Speaking in November 2022, MI5 chief Ken McCallum [said that the general threats to the UK were a mix of Islamist and extreme right-wing terrorism](#), with the former being the larger problem, accounting for three quarters of their caseload.

Among the wider public, 50% say that Islamic extremists are the largest threat among the groups asked about. Right wing extremists come next, at 23%, with most of the rest of people saying they are unsure (22%).

However, 2019 Labour voters tend to say that right-wing extremists are the biggest threat, at 50% compared to 29% who say so of Islamist extremists. By contrast, 2019 Conservative voters are far more united in the view that Islamist extremists are the biggest threat (73%).



* Please note that this survey was only conducted on the British mainland, i.e. in England, Scotland and Wales, and so does not include Northern Irish respondents.

●► [See the full results here](#)

Reevaluating the Threat: Terrorism in Latin America

By Benjamin Jaimes

Security & Rule of Law | November 24, 2023

Source: <https://theglobalamericans.org/reevaluating-the-threat-terrorism-in-latin-america/>

The Israel-Hamas war has undoubtedly been a [reason for contention](#) across international discourse. In the Western Hemisphere, it has highlighted the intricate ties of influence, trade, and criminal activity between threat actors like transnational criminal organizations, financiers, and Iranian proxies working on both sides of the Atlantic. From [money laundering, to drug-trafficking](#), to [Iran-sponsored propaganda](#), Latin American governments should beware the presence of financial and military supporters of political extremism and terrorism in their own territories more now than ever.

On November 12, the Brazilian police reported having [arrested](#) a third individual suspected of ties to Iran-proxy, Lebanon-based militant group and [Hamas-ally](#) Hezbollah. The other two, arrested on November 8 with cooperation from Israeli intelligence, allegedly planned to carry out an [attack](#) on Israeli and Jewish targets in Brazil. Facing [charges](#) of formation or incorporation to a terrorist organization and preparation of terrorist acts, the incident proved that Latin America's connections to terrorism do not exist in a vacuum.

Hezbollah, particularly, has a menacing history in the continent. In 2019, Argentina was the first Latin American country to [designate](#) the group a terrorist organization, 25 years after a suicide attack and bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires left 85 victims. To this day, none of the from Lebanon or Iran. Nonetheless, the operatives and networks that orchestrated the event were, in a rather belated aligning move,

More remarkably, the attack triggered a series of investigations. Before a [timely assassination](#), the main prosecutor of the attack, Alberto Nisman, was able to publish a [500-page report](#) accusing the Iranian regime of infiltrating several South American countries by "building local clandestine intelligence stations designed to sponsor, foster, and execute terrorist attacks." As pressure to arrest the mastermind of this campaign [proved](#) impossible, [policymakers](#) raised questions about the extent of Iran and Hezbollah's radical ideologies and terrorist schemes spread to the Americas.

While [Argentina](#) (alongside Paraguay, Colombia, Honduras, and Guatemala) has been clear in [designating Hezbollah](#) as a terrorist organization, the region remains far from a unanimous response to terrorist threats of this order. It was thus unsurprising that, in 2014, the government of Peru had trouble [pressing charges](#) against a Hezbollah member who tried to scheme a terrorist attack in Lima despite detailed evidence. Two trials later, the individual served six years in prison only for fraud and [was absolved this year](#) of any terrorism charges. Peru, like Brazil, must consider following up on the terrorism designations of their neighbors, delineating limits to these criminal organizations.

Beyond designations, the role of Latin American states in sheltering extremists has been nonetheless manifest. On the one hand, the center of Hezbollah's operations since at least the 1990s has been well-known to be in the [Tri-Border Area](#) of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil. There, a large number of Arab and Muslim immigrants are more likely to be recruited, and a free trade zone [still provides](#) a lawless environment for financial crime and drug trafficking opportunities. In addition to Hezbollah, U.S. government [reports](#) say Al-Qaeda and Hamas have also had a presence in the region and that halted attacks on the Mexican Senate and President Vicente Fox in 2001 were plotted there.

Hezbollah still stands as a legitimate military and political actor under Lebanese law, and while they are part of Iran's network of proxies, they also have their own distinct worldview and goals. This makes the Latin American response to Hezbollah and Iran—another state with trading partners in the region—variable. In addition, connections between governments in the region and terrorist groups further complicate diplomatic collaborations and the development of solutions to the problem. For example, the Paraguayan [government](#) and [banks](#) prefer to ignore and downplay their role as a tax and money laundering haven for Hezbollah; earlier this year, Brazil [allowed](#) Iranian warships to dock in Rio; and, in 2007, Argentinian officials allegedly [enabled](#) Iran to fund their political campaigns in exchange for cover-ups of terrorism.



More widely acknowledged, the roles of Venezuela and drug cartels in terrorism development cannot be overlooked. In 2010, reports surged that Chavez and Maduro not only had [hosted](#) Hezbollah in Margarita Island, but diplomatic and National Assembly members directly [managed](#) the organization's finances and influence in the region. In a more recent case in 2020, the U.S. Department of Justice [indicted](#) Syrian-Venezuelan and former politician Adel El Zebayar for allegedly working with Maduro and several top leaders on a narco-terrorism conspiracy that involved cartels in Mexico, Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah.

As illustrated, Hezbollah's interests often [overlap](#) with those of the cartels. Though not yet [designated](#) as Foreign Terrorist Organizations but sporadically [arrested](#) on terrorism charges and lacking ideological motivations, drug cartels similarly wreak havoc, [committing](#) targeted murders and kidnappings. A segment from a [Univision documentary](#) in 2011 showed that Iranian extremists had been ordered to travel to Mexico to recruit members of the infamous drug cartel Los Zetas to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to Washington. Other reports from U.S. and European law enforcement in 2016 [pointed to](#) collaborations between South American cartels and Hezbollah in supplying large quantities of cocaine to the European and American drug markets, hence funding terrorist efforts. While Iran [exercises](#) a significant amount of influence over Hezbollah's operations in the Middle East, there isn't any conclusive evidence that it has provided direct support or backing to Hezbollah's activities in Latin America. Latin American governments must be nonetheless reminded of Iran's record and interests in the region and act cautiously. Creating a legal framework that prosecutes terrorists head-on and investigating any [extremist associations](#) across government bodies and cabinets should be a priority. Furthermore, governments expose their systems to further corruption by ignoring reports of criminal associations with cartels. Unequivocally, Israel and the United States also pose their own challenges in Latin America in promoting their interests. In responding to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, it is reasonable for Latin American governments to act in [support](#) of the Palestinian people and scrutinize Israel's military campaign. However, the tremendous and catastrophic impact that a terrorist attack would have anywhere in the hemisphere should not come without warning. Correspondingly, condemning Hamas' military branch as an ally of both Hezbollah and Iran could be a natural prevention measure in repelling future bad actors.

Latin American countries should take terrorism seriously. Sanctions, law enforcement investigations, and fighting disinformation campaigns could result in several positive outcomes, such as a benefit in their relationship with the European Union, the U.S., and other democratic partners. Attacking drug cartel infrastructure indirectly, creating judicial frameworks on terrorism, and raising terrorism as national security concerns—irrespective of U.S.-Israel-EU pressures—should be top of mind for Latin American governments. Terror, whether ideologically or financially motivated, only undermines democracy.

Benjamin Jaimes is an intern at Global Americans and a journalist for MLex Market Insight's regulatory newsroom. He holds a degree in Political Science with a specialization in Political Theory and International Relations from Columbia University.

Who Supports Hamas?

By Alan M. Dershowitz

Source: <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/20261/who-supports-hamas>



- Many of the protests that now demand a unilateral ceasefire -- including the attempts to shut down Christmas celebrations - - are orchestrated by some of the same radical groups that organized the pro-Hamas demonstrations before Israel went into Gaza.
- Demonstrations and protests by groups such as the Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace or the National Lawyers Guild seem anything but spontaneous and grassroots responses to "Israel's military actions in Gaza." They are not demonstrations against what Israel does; they are protests against what Israel *is*, namely the democratic nation-state of the Jewish people.
- Recall that these protests began *before* Israel counterattacked against Hamas. They were in full bloom on October 8, even while the bodies of 1,200 murdered Israelis, including babies burned alive, were still being gathered and counted, and the roughly 240 hostages taken by Hamas to Gaza identified.
- The protests are exclusively anti-Israel, anti-American, pro-Hamas, and pro-terrorism.
- Where are the calls for anything that would actually help the Palestinians or make their lives better: freedom of speech, equal justice under the law, freedom of the press, better job opportunities, and an end to government corruption and abuse?
- So when you watch an anti-Israel demonstration on television, please understand who is behind it and what are their ultimate goals, because the next target is American democracy -- and you.





Many of the protests that now demand a unilateral ceasefire -- including the attempts to shut down Christmas celebrations -- are orchestrated by some of the same radical groups that organized the pro-Hamas demonstrations before Israel went into Gaza. Pictured: Demonstrators protest against Israel on the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City on November 7, 2023. (Photo by Kena Betankur/AFP via Getty Images)

Dec 28 – The main groups that comprise the bulk of organizers and demonstrators who have supported the Hamas barbarism against Israel are:

- 1) Radical Islamic groups that, like the Islamic Republic of Iran after the 1979 revolution, [regard](#) Israel as the "Little Satan" and America as the "Big Satan."
- 2) American revolutionary groups who used to be affiliated with Communism but now call themselves radical socialists or workers parties. Their goal is to overthrow our government and they attach themselves to every disruptive movement in the hope of garnering support and creating distrust for American democracy.
- 3) Old-fashioned anti-Semites who hate anything associated with Jews and concoct conspiracy theories that blame "the Jews" for all evils.
- 4) Useful idiots who have little or no knowledge of the issues but march in lockstep with all "woke," "hard left," and "anti-colonial" causes on the theory that "if it's left, it must be right."

Recall that these protests began *before* Israel counterattacked against Hamas. They were in full bloom on [October 8](#), even while the bodies of 1,200 murdered Israelis, including babies burned alive, were still being gathered and counted, and the roughly [240 hostages](#) taken by Hamas to Gaza identified. These demonstrations were not against Israeli military actions in Gaza; they had not begun yet. More joined them after that.

The original responses to the Hamas barbarism in the hours and days following the morning of October 7 set the tone and began the organizational actions that followed. Many of the protests that now demand a unilateral ceasefire -- including the attempts to shut down Christmas celebrations -- are orchestrated by some of the same radical groups that organized the pro-Hamas demonstrations before Israel went into



Gaza. Demonstrations and protests by groups such as the Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace or the National Lawyers Guild seem [anything but](#) spontaneous and grassroots responses to "Israel's military actions in Gaza." They are not demonstrations against what Israel does; they are protests against what Israel *is*, namely the democratic nation-state of the Jewish people. To be sure, Israel's legitimate military efforts to destroy Hamas terrorists and the weapons that they have hidden among civilians, and the resulting civilian deaths, have allowed the anti-Israel organizers to recruit more useful idiots who believe they are protesting only against Israeli actions with the chant "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." Many of these undereducated and over-propagandized students have no idea what bodies of water they are referring to, or that this chant demands the end of Israel and any Jewish presence in the Middle East. The radical organizers, however, know exactly what that chant and others mean: a demand to "clean" the Middle East of "dirty Jews."



The larger point is that the well-organized and externally funded demonstrations are directed as much against the United States and its values as against Israel and its actions. Without the useful idiot students who join any protest they think is directed against the "colonial" and "oppressor" targets of "intersectionality," these demonstrations would be relatively small and limited to long-term professional haters of Jews and America.

But these useful idiots make these well-funded and organized protests larger and allow the media to convey the false impression that they are spontaneous. The media insists on calling these protests "pro-Palestinian." Nothing could be further from the truth. When it sounds indelicate to say "pro-Hamas" -- a terrorist organization -- the signs change to "pro-Palestine." There is nothing to indicate how the Palestinians would actually be helped by the disappearance of Israel and leaving them, like the Iranian people, to the tender mercies of a corrupt, repressive state.

They had voted for Hamas in the first place because they hoped it would be better. Hamas had promised to be better. It was not. Even most of its leaders chose not to live in Gaza: they are now billionaires who, until October 7, had been hiding in five-star hotels in Qatar and Turkey. When they got word that Israel might hold them accountable, they reportedly dispersed.

Where are the calls for anything that would actually help the Palestinians or make their lives better: freedom of speech, equal justice under the law, freedom of the press, better job opportunities, and an end to government corruption and abuse?

The protests are exclusively anti-Israel, anti-American, pro-Hamas, and pro-terrorism. Many of the useful idiots join the protests to support a ceasefire, without realizing that a unilateral ceasefire now would constitute an invitation to Hamas to repeat their barbarism over and over again, as their leaders have [promised](#) they would do.

Recall again that the protests against Israel began before there was any fire to cease – that is before Israel responded militarily to the Hamas barbarism. The ceasefire demand was added once Israel counter-attacked, as a way to broaden the base of the protest. The radical anti-Israel protesters, would not be satisfied with a ceasefire. They want to see the destruction of Israel and the victory of Hamas. Indeed, a recent [poll](#) suggested that a majority of young Americans would like to see the end of Israel and its replacement by Hamas. Hamas, of course, would most likely not be satisfied with merely ending Israel. They want to end all non-Muslim democracies. Already Hamas has [sent operatives](#) to parts of Europe, where several were recently caught. There are probably Hamas operatives in the United States, as well.



Most importantly, what if the useful idiots who now march for Hamas in favor of Israel's destruction become a fifth column in America and willingly join Hamas terrorists in targeting Jewish and other institutions in our nation. It was only a half-century ago that young Americans joined the Weather Underground and tried to blow up universities, military recruiting centers and army bases. If Hamas is not defeated in the Middle East, it is coming to a theater near you.

So, when you watch an anti-Israel demonstration on television, please understand who is behind it and what are their ultimate goals, because the next target is American democracy -- and you.

Alan M. Dershowitz is the Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law, Emeritus at Harvard Law School, and the author most recently of *War Against the Jews: How to End Hamas Barbarism*. He is the Jack Roth Charitable Foundation Fellow at Gatestone Institute, and is also the host of "The Dershowitz" podcast.

Tactics and Strategy in the War with Hezbollah

By Jonathan Spyer

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65629/tactics-and-strategy-in-the-war-with-hezbollah>

Mar 02 – The targeted killing of three [Lebanese Hezbollah members](#) by Israel this week constitutes a significant escalation in the limited war now underway between Israel and the Lebanese Shi'ite Islamist movement.

Lebanese Hezbollah regional unit commander Hassan Hussein Salami was killed while driving in the village of Majadel in southern Lebanon. Elsewhere, Israeli jets struck targets in the Hezbollah heartland area of Baalbek. Two other Hezbollah members – Hassan Ali Younes, and Ahmed Mohammed Sindiyan – were killed in this second strike, near the town of Aadous, according to an announcement by the organization.

The area targeted is 18 km. from the city of Baalbek. It is located east of the Litani and about 75 km. from the [border with Israel](#). Hezbollah also announced the death of a fourth fighter, Mohammed Ali Musulmani.

These killings came in response to Hezbollah's downing of an Israel Hermes 450 drone, using a surface-to-air missile. The organization responded, in turn, by launching a barrage of rockets at the Golan Heights and the western Galilee, causing no casualties.

While [Salami was](#) the highest ranking of the targeted Hezbollah men, the decision to extend the range of Israeli attacks to Baalbek, and thus the killings of Younes and Sindiyan, appear to be the more significant details of these latest attacks.

Salami was a notable commander, but he is not the first such figure to be targeted by Israel in Lebanon's south since October 7. Wissam Tawil, a senior figure in the movement's armed wing, was killed by a roadside bomb on January 8, for example. But regarding Baalbek, Israel's targeting had previously extended farthest from the border to the western Lebanese town of Sidon, about 50 km. from the border.

The strike on Baalbek demonstrates the extent to which Israel has discarded previous tacit "rules of engagement" between it and Hezbollah. It shows that as of now, Jerusalem appears to have the tactical advantage over its Iran-linked foes.

Hezbollah seems to have been caught off guard by Israel's willingness to operate beyond previous boundaries. The movement has paid a considerable price for its decision on October 8 to enter the fight against Israel, albeit in a limited way. To date, 237 fighters have been killed, along with 44 Lebanese civilians, according to AFP figures. By comparison, 10 IDF soldiers and six Israeli civilians have died.

Amid the political and economic crisis in Lebanon, it is currently hardly able to contemplate more ambitious moves.

Israel's increased boldness in Lebanon is, in turn, a detail in a broader pattern visible also in Syria, in which Jerusalem is broadening the scope and depth of its activities beyond anything seen before October 7. This includes the targeting and killing of officials of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) on Syrian soil.

Around six operatives of the movement have been killed in strikes on Syria since October 7. (Unlike the latest strike on Baalbek, Israel has not taken responsibility for these killings. The list of possible other candidates for ownership of these operations, however, is essentially blank.)

What Is Behind the Escalation?

WHAT IS behind this escalation? Firstly, it is worth noting that Defense Minister Yoav Gallant initiated an uptick in the intensity of Israeli operations into Syria even before the outbreak of the current Gaza war. Gallant, who also wanted to launch a strike on Hezbollah following October 8, appears to have little faith in the chances of success of Western diplomatic efforts to regulate the Israel-Lebanon border.



Rather, his actions (and previous statements) indicate that he grasps the gravity of the strategic situation that Israel has allowed to emerge on its northern border and wants to initiate decisive action not merely to hurt the enemy but to alter this situation substantially. In this regard, it is important to be aware that while Israel's armed forces and intelligence services have performed well so far in the tactical engagement with Hezbollah, the strategic situation supplies fewer causes for satisfaction.

Hussein Salama, a notable pro-Hezbollah commentator in Lebanon, writing in the Al-Akhbar newspaper on February 27, made the simple and accurate point that "the Gaza war is being fought against the Mahwar al-Muqawama (Resistance Axis)," the term by which the Iran-led regional alliance prefers to be known.

Reflecting this alliance's view of itself and of regional dynamics, Salama went on to list various achievements and ambitions of this axis, including the supposedly upcoming "second liberation of Iraq from the American forces currently expanding into Syria."

Once the picture is broadened and deepened to include this perspective, according to which Israel in its southern and northern campaigns is fighting against members of a single state-led alliance, Jerusalem's tactical achievements in the North assume a more modest perspective.

But it is Iran that has successfully seeded semi-regular insurgent armies on Israel's borders. And since October 7, Iran has utilized those armies to slaughter over 1,000 Israeli civilians, upturn the global diplomatic agenda, divert attention from its nuclear efforts and internal instability (and from its Russian ally's attempt to destroy a neighboring European state), place on hold any chances for further Israeli gains in regional diplomacy and, not incidentally, force 86,000 Israelis from their homes along Israel's northern border.

As Brig.-Gen. Eran Ortal, former commander of the IDF's Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies, put it in a recent interview with Israeli journalist Amir Oren: "Israel does not have 'military weight' far from here, but the Iranians have dramatic military weight here next to us. This is a basic and fundamental asymmetry, and we have not yet adapted to it.

"I hear senior officers talking about us as a regional power, and that's dangerous because thinking you're a power persuades you that you can forever carry out attrition operations, but in reality the Iranians are achieving attrition against us, and not us against them." This statement recalls the Persian expression, told to me once by an Iranian acquaintance in northern Iraq, that "Other nations will kill you with iron; Iranians will kill you with cotton."

The expression suggests patience and the slow, gradual assembling of the instruments of murder. Iran has been pursuing a strategy of this kind across the region and on Israel's borders for some decades. Before October 7, Israeli strategists thought that building adequate fences along the border would permit Israel to ignore or deter this project. No one believes that anymore.

The current dimensions and direction of Israeli military actions to the north since October 7 suggest a straining to get beyond this previous paradigm and to turn the current war into an effort to strike real, even fatal, blows at the Iran-supported Islamist armies that have built themselves on the borders over the last 30 years. It remains to be seen if such an effort will be attempted in the period ahead or if diplomatic and political pressures will continue to prevent it.

Jonathan Spyer is director of research at the Middle East Forum and director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis. He is author of *Days of the Fall: A Reporter's Journey in the Syria and Iraq Wars* (2018).

The Islamic State's Geopolitical Agenda in The Horn of Africa: The Growing Threat of Terrorism in Mozambique.

By Christian Tratzi

Geopolitical Report ISSN 2785-2598 Volume 40 Issue 2

Source: <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2024/03/04/islamic-state-mozambique/>

Mar 04 – Islamic State's activity in the Horn of Africa continues to be a security regional challenge considering the local escalation of attacks, especially in the Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province.

The resurgence of violence, conducted by the Islami State Mozambique (Ansar al-Sunna) hit both civilians and security forces and resulted in casualties and infrastructure destruction, affecting regional stability and investment plans, particularly in the liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector.

An extensive propaganda campaign accompanied the jihadist insurgency on the Islamic State media platforms, demonstrating the strategic interest in the area and the will to expand their influence.

Islamic State in Mozambique: Background Information

Since 2017, the emergence of the Islamic State insurgency marked northern Mozambique, especially in the province of Cabo Delgado. The insurgency's root trace back to socio-economic grievances, including





marginalisation, poverty, and inequality, and the province – despite its significant natural resources' wealth – has remained underdeveloped, with limited access to basic services and economic opportunities for its predominantly rural population.

The jihadist activity reflects a confluence of local and global question and interests the geopolitical and energetic control of the region. The Islamic State exploited the socio-economic disparities and ethnic tensions for their agenda, and purported affiliation with local insurgent groups escalating the conflict.

Through the deliberate targeting of civilians, security forces, and critical infrastructure, **the terrorist group has caused substantial displacement and loss of life, instilling instability across the entire Horn of Africa.** The Mozambican government's efforts to contain the terrorist activity have had limited success in addressing security and development challenges posed by the conflict.

International and continental forces intervened in the conflict: [Rwanda](#) supported militarily and logistically Mozambique, and the Southern African Development Community ([SADC](#)) have also deployed troops to help stabilise the region.

Cabo Delgado represents a strategic area, particularly because of its vast

reserve of natural gas, and attracted multinational corporations interested in capitalising the province's energy potential.

The Islamic State took advantage of the situation to establish control over valuable natural reserves. However, the insurgency has disrupted major energy projects, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) developments led by companies such as TotalEnergies SE and ExxonMobil Corp., hampering investment and delaying economic progress.

The withdrawal of continental military support, which coincided with the resurgence of jihadi attacks, underscores the precarious balance between short-term security and the aim of regional security and stability.

Besides security concerns, the conflict has precipitated a humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands of civilians displaced from their homes, seeking refuge in overcrowded camps and urban centres. Humanitarian organisations struggle to meet the growing needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs), exacerbating food insecurity, malnutrition, and health risks.

Geopolitical Analysis

[Cabo Delgado](#)'s energy wealth, combined with the political instability and armed groups in the territory, makes it attractive to groups and powers interested in controlling the area's energy resources.

Taking advantage of political weakness and following a strategy aimed at expanding its influence in the Horn of Africa, as evidenced by recent actions in Somalia, from the beginning of February the Islamic State has launched a series of attacks in northern Mozambique, seeking to take control of important strategic areas and expand its operations and influence in Africa.

The attacks have primarily targeted the districts of Chiúre and Macomia in the province of Cabo Delgado, causing both local and regional emergencies. IS fighters have targeted Mozambican army positions in [Macomia](#), specifically in the Village of Mokojo. Thanks to a significant propaganda operation based on the publication of pictures and videos, the Islamic State showed its desire to showcase its strength to both rivals and potential new members' recruits.

However, **the primary target of the Islamic State has been the Christian communities in the northern part of the country.** The Islamic State has targeted the Christian communities in the northern part of the country, with attacks on villages in Chiúre and the killing of numerous Christians. These actions were in response to a campaign launched in an audio message by the Islamic State speaker Abu Hudayfa al-Ansari at the beginning of February, as a reaction to the [conflict in Gaza](#).

IS fighters targeted not only civilians but also churches, Christian schools, houses, as well as government buildings. The assaults have also created a difficult humanitarian situation, leading to a refugee crisis and the flight of missionaries engaged in assisting the population.

Through its platforms and information agencies, **the Islamic State has given significant importance to the issue, launching a significant propaganda campaign online.** The weekly al-Naba magazine in the volumes 430 and 431 dedicated its front page to the attacks in Mozambique, demonstrating the interest in acquiring the status of a leading actor in the Horn of Africa.

The triumphant narrative, combined with the religious component of the conflict and accompanied by photos and videos, aims to highlight the strength of the organisation and the operational and structural capabilities of its military apparatus, whose operations have regained momentum after a period of reduced



activity. The Islamic State Mozambique Province raise in the region, concurrently with the increase of activity in the Horn of Africa, might represent a risk both at local and international level.

Risk Assessment

The rise of jihadi terrorism undermines Mozambique's internal safety and creates a situation of instability and insecurity in neighbouring countries. The Islamic State's ability to target political and military positions and infrastructure, along with its capacity to attack civilian targets, shows significant territorial control by the organisation, capable of expanding its operational range.

The withdrawal of regional military support, coinciding with the escalation of violence, creates a **security vacuum that insurgents may exploit to merge their control and expand their influence**, posing a direct threat. A widening conflict and the Islamic State's rise might lead to a humanitarian crisis and, consequently, a refugee issue and potential migration phenomenon.

IS regional advance and its increased territorial presence would also create an economic issue, affecting prospects for foreign investment in projects and infrastructure related to the region's natural resource interests, especially in natural gas reserves.

Militants' control of natural reserves could simultaneously increase the level of insecurity in the entire region, as it would provide the organisation with a significant economic income to finance its activities and propaganda. The extensive focus on propaganda could pose an additional danger to the entire Horn of Africa, as it shows the Islamic State's willingness to expand its influence.

The potential broadening of its actions may **affect both maritime routes** and the matter of migration. The archipelagos between the Mozambique coast and Madagascar are significant strategic ports for both pirates and international powers seeking to exert control over the Indian Ocean region.

The involvement of the Islamic State in this route has the potential to jeopardise a significant portion of the trade associated with trafficking, as well as the overall maritime security in the region. The increase in local terrorism could also have significant implications for Europe, especially considering the migratory flow from the Horn of Africa that affects the continent. Particularly with Western military interventions, migration routes could see the inclusion of jihadists interested in performing actions in European territory.

Conclusion

Islamic State's attacks in Mozambique and the group's propaganda published on this matter make up the main danger factor. The simultaneous insurgency in Somalia destabilises the entire Horn of Africa region and shows the Islamic State's intention to expand its sphere of influence in Southeast Africa.

Most of the offensive has occurred in the Cabo Delgado region, an area rich in natural resources and natural gas. **Islamic State may aim to control these reserves to secure significant economic income**, as happened in the past in Syria and Iraq, which could finance the group's activities and eventually lead to geopolitical control over certain areas.

Given the increasing levels of violence and the worsening humanitarian situation, it is crucial to implement effective strategies to mitigate risks, address security threats, stimulate socio-economic growth, and prevent further destabilisation within the region. International cooperation, targeted counter-terrorism efforts, and investment in conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms are essential to counter the Islamic State's influence and mitigate the risks for Africa and Europe.

Israel Must Preempt Hezbollah

By Jonathan Spyer

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65635/israel-must-preempt-hezbollah>



Mar 05 – When I was resident in northern Iraq in the summer of 2019, an Iranian acquaintance told me that in understanding the regional strategy of his country, I should bear in mind that while "other nations will kill you with iron, the Iranians will kill you with cotton." The phrase stayed with me. I later learned that it is a famous Persian expression. In the context in which we discussed it, my friend wanted me to grasp the subtle, patient and slow moving nature of Iranian strategy in the Middle East. He also wanted me not to confuse patience with an absence of lethal seriousness of purpose.

At present, this patient approach is delivering dividends for the Islamic Republic across the Middle East. Over the last 30 years, as a signal example of its approach, Tehran has seeded two semi-regular Islamist insurgent armies on Israel's borders. These are Hamas in Gaza, and the more powerful and consequential Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The strategic intention is to use these instruments to subject Israel to a long war of attrition intended to result in its erosion, weakening, isolation and eventual demise. The current moment provides Israel with



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – March 2024

an opportunity to act decisively to halt and reverse this process. It's not yet clear if Israel will take this opportunity. It should. The IDF has registered significant tactical successes in the fighting since Oct. 7. Yet, putting the immediate picture aside, it may be seen that the strategic scoreboard currently favors Iran and its methods.



Iran has built powerful military assets on Israel's borders that it can activate at will. Israel has no corresponding leverage over Iran. The result of Teheran's patient, slow assembling and then sudden activation of these forces on Israel's border has been the re-focusing of the global diplomatic agenda, entirely to the benefit of Iran and its allies.

As part of this:

A fast-moving process of rapprochement between Israel and key countries in the Islamic world has been halted.

Israel is now the subject of furious protest demonstrations and opprobrium across the west, reaching deeply into leading western political parties, including the U.S. Democrats. The Jewish state even now faces allegations of "genocide" because of a military campaign in Gaza conducted demonstrably and verifiably within western norms.

Thanks to Iran's long investment, over 1,000 Israelis were slaughtered in a single day, with the utmost brutality, in a spectacle not seen since the establishment of the modern State of Israel.

Iran's advancing nuclear program, and its ally Russia's ongoing attempt to destroy a neighboring state, have been relegated to secondary status in terms of global attention.

In Israel itself, 86,000 people have left their homes in the north. Many Israelis consider indeed that a kind of reverse "security zone" has been established on the Israeli side of the border.

What all this means is that Israel's future development, diplomatic relations, international standing and even population distribution are currently hostage to Iran's proxy instruments.

Israel must end the slow, web-spinning process whereby the Islamist insurgent armies on its borders continue to rule, continue to grow, continue to flourish and are subject to activation by their patrons at a moment of their choice.

Regarding Gaza, it's vital that the conquest of the Strip by Israel be completed, and Hamas governance and organized armed capacity in the area brought to an end.

The more complex and grave question, however, concerns the north. Diplomacy appears to stand little chance of removing Hezbollah from the Israel-Lebanon border. The movement's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, said himself in a recent speech that moving the Litani River to the border would be easier than moving Hezbollah north of the Litani.

Once diplomatic efforts fail, as they surely will, then Israel will face the choice of acquiescing to the steady erosion of the possibility of normal life for the citizens of its northern communities, or acting decisively to reverse this trend.



The former will mean that Iran's slow and patient project for shrinking Israel, rendering it unviable and then finishing it will have passed another milestone.

The latter will mean large-scale preemptive military action against Iran's proxy, to drive it north of the Litani and severely degrade its capabilities throughout Lebanon.

This is not a matter to be taken lightly. Hezbollah has been around for nearly half a century, is the dominant political and military force in Lebanon and has an extensive array of accurate and guided munitions capable of targeting anywhere in Israel. But Oct. 7 demonstrated that the Israeli choice of seeking to ignore or fence off Iran's client insurgent forces was and is not a feasible strategy. Israel must therefore either seize the opportunity to severely weaken and remove this force and its Hamas allies from their current position, or acquiesce to Tehran's continuing to hold the strategic initiative. To do the latter means to accept an ongoing attempt at slow strangulation, the true meaning of "killing with cotton." This is inconceivable. A large-scale Israeli military campaign to destroy or severely degrade Lebanese Hezbollah must therefore be launched.

Jonathan Spyer is director of research at the Middle East Forum and director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis. He is the author of *Days of the Fall: A Reporter's Journey in the Syria and Iraq Wars* (2018).

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Only an out-of-the-box Lebanese-Israeli alliance to expel Hezbollah could bring stability and prosperity to the region.

Houthis Kill First Innocents In Terror Attacks On Merchant Ships

Source: <https://www.dailywire.com/news/houthis-kill-first-innocents-in-terror-attacks-on-merchant-ships>



EPA

Mar 07 – Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists killed civilians for the first time this week in their current campaign of terror attacks against merchant ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, U.S. officials said.

The Islamic terrorists have launched more than 50 terror attacks against cargo ships and chemical tankers since November of last year. The **M/V Rubymar**, which was [hit by an anti-ship missile](#) last month, became [the first ship to be sunk](#) from the attacks.

“At approximately 11:30 a.m. (Sanaa time) Mar. 6, an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) was launched from Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist-controlled areas of Yemen toward M/V True Confidence, a Barbados-flagged, Liberian-owned bulk carrier, while transiting the Gulf of Aden,” U.S. Central Command said in a



statement. "The missile struck the vessel, and the multinational crew reports three fatalities, at least four injuries, of which three are in critical condition, and significant damage to the ship."

"The crew abandoned the ship and coalition warships responded and are assessing the situation," the statement continued. "This is the fifth ASBM fired by Houthis in the last two days. Two of these ASBMs impacted two shipping vessels — M/V MSC Sky II and M/V True Confidence — and one ASBM was shot down by USS Carney (DDG 64)."

CENTCOM noted that the continued terror attacks from the Houthis have "disrupted global trade and taken the lives of international seafarers"; yet President Joe Biden has failed to take the action required — an aggressive military response — to deter attacks from the group.

On Tuesday, CENTCOM shot down an anti-ship ballistic missile and three one-way attack unmanned aerial systems that the Houthis fired at the USS Carney (DDG 64) in the Red Sea. Later in the day, CENTCOM again had to defend itself, destroying three anti-ship missiles and three unmanned surface vessels (USV) in self-defense.

Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula announces death of leader, SITE Group says

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-announces-death-leader-site-group-says-2024-03-10/>



Mar 10 – Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) announced the death of its leader, Khalid Batarfi, on Sunday, the SITE Intelligence group said.

In a statement, AQAP did not give a cause of death, according to SITE. It **named Sa'd bin 'Atef al-Awlaki as his successor**, the monitoring group added.

"Allah took his soul while he patiently sought his reward and stood firm ... and waged jihad for his sake," SITE quoted a group leader as saying.

Batarfi was named as AQAP's leader in early 2020 after his predecessor, Qassim al-Raymi, was killed by the United States in what former president Donald Trump said was a counterterrorism operation in Yemen.

Batarfi was one of 150 jailed AQAP members who were freed when the group, regarded by the United States as one of the deadliest branches of the network founded by Osama bin Laden, captured the Yemeni port city of Mukalla in 2015, where he was being held. SITE said the new leader, al-Awlaki, last appeared in a video released in February 2023, in which he urged Sunni tribesmen in the Yemeni provinces of Abyan and Shabwa to "resist overtures by the United Arab Emirates and the (separatist) Southern Transitional Council to join their fight against AQAP".



CEP Marks 20th Anniversary Of The Madrid Train Bombings

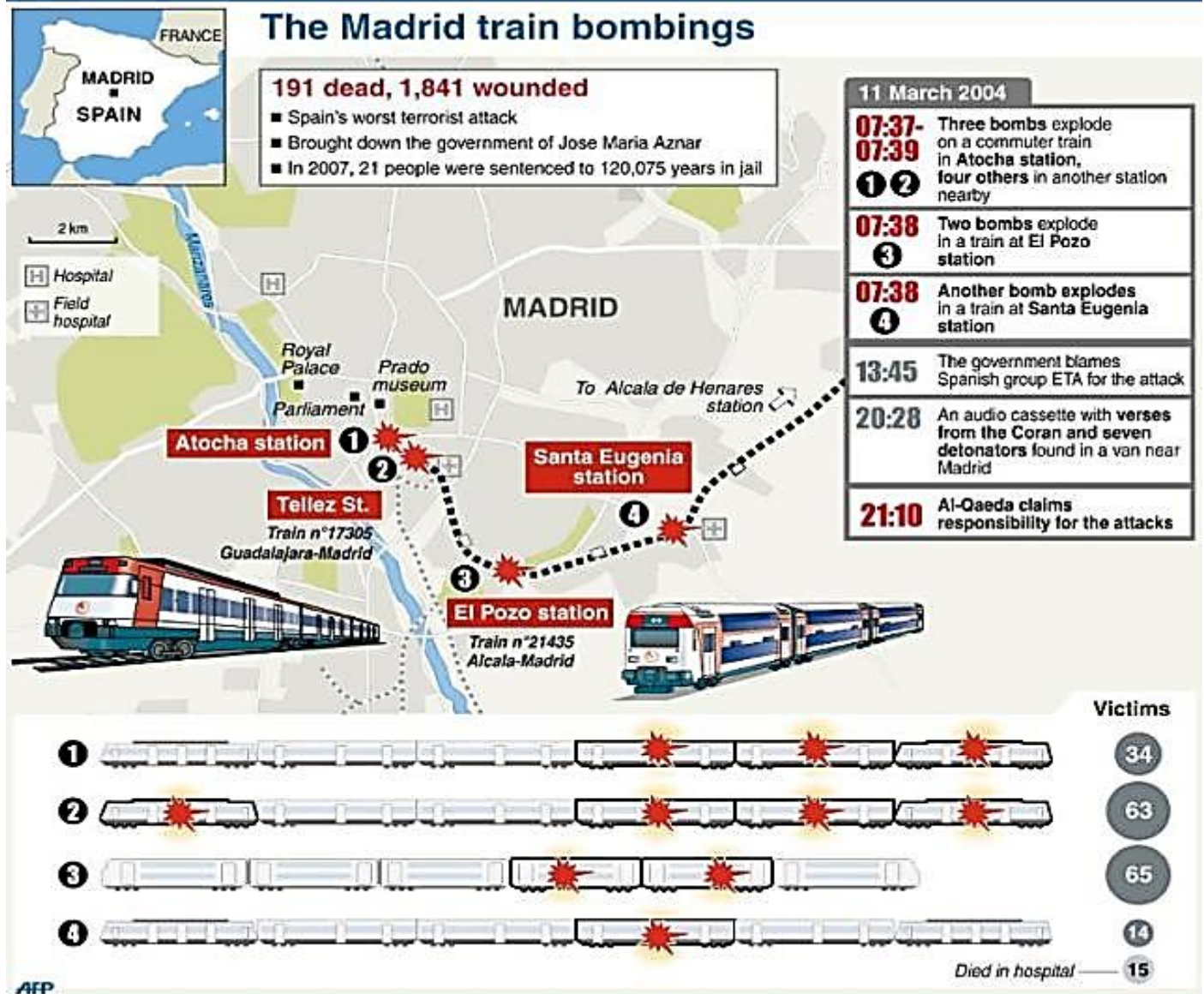
Today, the Counter Extremism Project (CEP) marks the solemn occasion of the 20th anniversary of the devastating Madrid train bombings, in which 193 were killed and over 2,000 injured by Islamist terrorists. The bombings remain one of the most devastating terror attacks in Europe, and led to the establishment of the European Day of Remembrance to commemorate all victims of terror. This anniversary serves as a stark reminder of the enduring danger posed by terrorism and the ongoing struggle to counter extremist ideologies two decades on.

Established Islamist terror groups such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah continue to represent organized threats, with attack plans by their loyalists and returning fighters in Europe regularly uncovered. The ongoing conflict in Gaza has provided fresh impetus for ISIS and al-Qaeda in particular to maintain relevance, with both calling for strikes against the West and Jews.

The newer threat of individual radicalization through the internet has meanwhile made identifying and tracking potential terrorists increasingly hard. Young people are at particular risk of exposure to this material. We must continue to put pressure on social media platforms and messenger services to ensure



that extremist online content is blocked immediately. We must also invest further in de-radicalization programmes, to provide alternatives to those who have fallen for messages of hatred.

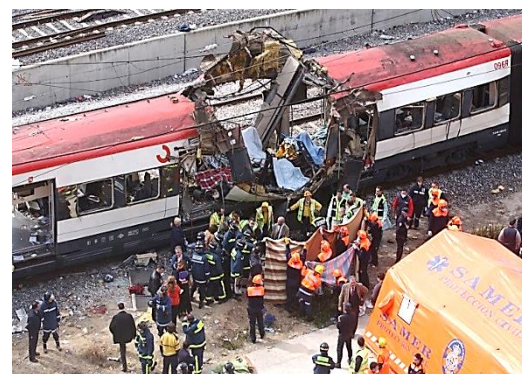


Dr. Hans-Jakob Schindler, Senior Director of the Counter Extremism Project, remarks:

"The evolution of technology and the proliferation of online platforms have significantly altered the landscape of extremism and terrorism. Today, terrorists continue to exploit the internet to radicalise, recruit, and communicate with unprecedented ease, posing a formidable challenge to law enforcement and counterterrorism efforts.

Addressing the challenge of returning fighters also remains a substantial problem. Groups like al Qaeda and ISIS are in many ways as strong and dangerous as ever. The relevant authorities need to be given the right guidelines and proper resources to identify threats and prevent them before they can be put into action.

As we stand in solidarity with the victims of Madrid, it is imperative that we remain vigilant and united in our efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms. Through cooperation, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to our shared values, we can work towards a safer and more resilient future for all."





NCTN-IACSP Journal

JOURNAL OF TERRORISM AND NATIONAL SECURITY
NORDIC COUNTER TERRORISM NETWORK & INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION FOR COUNTERTERRORISM AND SECURITY
PROFESSIONALS JOURNAL

Source: <https://www.iacsp-nctn.org/v2/page.php?id=195>

The Nordic Counter Terrorism Network (NCTN) and the International Association for Counterterrorism and Security Professionals, Southeast Asia Region (IACSPSEA) Journal is an online journal and a unique platform that unites academics and practitioners who are dedicated to defeating radicalization and its violent manifestations as well as approached to counter and anti-terrorism in all their forms. The journal develops and shares applied knowledge to this critical societal struggle.

The NTCN-IACSP Journal will address all forms of political radicalization as well tactics, targets and procedures of the groups and individuals involved with them, and best practices in challenging the violence and the underlying ideas. This will include the full spectrum of kinetic and not-kinetic counter and anti and counter terrorism approach. The NCTN-IACSP will apply academically and professionally rigorous standards with a strong policy relevant focus.

The NCTN-IACSP journal reaches readers in political violence and terrorism research and the members of the International Association of Counter Terrorism

The Journal of
COUNTER TERRORISM
& Homeland Security International
The Most Credible Source of Terrorism Information in Print Today

Top Cyberwarfare Challenges Facing Governments In 2024

- Nepal: North Korea Pulls In Its Diplomatic Horns
- Developing A Crisis Communications Plan For An EMP Attack
- Exploitation Of Buildings' Security Systems By 'Violent 'Insiders'
- George Floyd: The Perils of Politicized Prosecutions
- How The FBI Caught The Traitorous Cuban Spies
- Homeland Security Bookshelf

CELEBRATING 39 YEARS
1985-2024
IACSP.COM

Veneratio Diligenti Vires
Seeking the Edge Through Education, Training, and Technology



and Security Professionals; the leading association for your field with more than two decades of supporting and developing professionals in the CT community, the Leadership in Counter Terrorism Alumni (LinCT), European Expert Network on Terrorism (EENeT) and will be published on the NTCN-IACSP website. The NCTN-IACSP journal firmly believes the only way to try to defeat a global network spreading humanities worst ideas, is to develop one spreading its best. We look forward to providing that avenue.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The NCTN-IACSP Journal, is a ternary journal that unites the academics and practitioners and welcomes contributions from those working in all aspects in Terrorism and National Security, including academics in practice and academicians providing policy recommendations. Suggested topics are welcome. For submission requirements, please go to <https://www.iacsp-nctn.org/guidelines> or please contact Dr. Shantesh Kumar at shantesh.kumar@iacsp-nctn.org or Andrin Raj at a.raj@iacsp-nctn.org

No	Description	Date	Type	Size	Action
1	NCTN-IACSP Journal (Volume 3, Issue 2, August 2023)	30 Aug 2023	PDF	2913kB	View Download
2	NCTN-IACSP Journal (Volume 3, Issue 1, April 2023)	28 Apr 2023	PDF	5799kB	View Download
3	NCTN-IACSP Journal (Volume 2, Issue 3, December 2022)	11 Dec 2022	PDF	3547kB	View Download
4	NCTN-IACSP Journal (Volume 2, Issue 2, August 2022)	16 Aug 2022	PDF	3290kB	View Download
5	NCTN-IACSP Journal (Volume 2, Issue 1, April 2022)	15 Apr 2022	PDF	2401kB	View Download
6	NCTN-IACSP Journal (Volume 1, Issue 3, December 2021)	15 Feb 2022	PDF	4168kB	View Download
7	NCTN-IACSP Journal (Volume 1, Issue 2, August 2021)	23 Sep 2021	PDF	3517kB	View Download
8	NCTN-IACSP Journal (Volume 1, Issue 1, April 2021)	19 Jun 2021	PDF	29619kB	View Download

Surge of Illegal Homemade Machine Guns Helps Fuel Gun Violence in US

Source: <https://www.voanews.com/a/surge-of-illegal-homemade-machine-guns-helps-fuel-gun-violence-in-us/7520964.html>

Mar 10 – Eleven-year-old Domonic Davis was not far from his mom's Cincinnati home when a hail of gunfire sprayed out from a passing car. Nearly two dozen rounds hurtled through the night at a group of children in the blink of an eye.

Four other children and a woman were hurt in the November shooting that killed Domonic, who had just made his school basketball team.

"What happened? How does this happen to an 11-year-old? He was only a few doors down," said his father, Issac Davis.

The shooting remains under investigation. But federal investigators believe the 22 shots could be fired off with lightning speed because the weapon had been illegally converted to fire like a machine gun.

Communities around the United States have seen shootings carried out with weapons converted to fully automatic in recent years, fueled by a staggering increase in small pieces of metal or plastic made with a 3D printer or ordered online.

Laws against machine guns date back to the bloody violence of Prohibition-era gangsters. But the proliferation of devices known by nicknames such as Glock switches, giggle switches, auto sears and chips has allowed people to transform legal semi-automatic weapons into even more dangerous guns, helping fuel gun violence, police and federal authorities said.

"Police officers are facing down fully automatic weapon fire in amounts that haven't existed in this country since the days of Al Capone and the Tommy gun," said Steve Dettelbach, director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, or ATF. "It's a huge problem."





A conversion device that can make a semi-automatic pistol fully automatic is displayed for a photograph at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, National Services Center, March 2, 2023, in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

The agency reported a 570% increase in the number of conversion devices collected by police departments between 2017 and 2021, the most recent data available.

Guns with conversion devices have been used in several mass shootings, including one that left four dead at a Sweet 16 birthday party in Alabama last year, and another that left six people dead at a bar district in Sacramento, California, in 2022. In Houston, police officer William Jeffrey died in 2021 after being shot with a converted gun while serving a warrant. In cities such as Indianapolis, police have seized them every week.

The devices that can convert legal semi-automatic weapons can be made on a 3D printer in about 35 minutes or ordered online from overseas for less than \$30. They're also quick to install.

Once in place, they modify the gun's machinery. Instead of firing one round each time the shooter squeezes the trigger, a semi-automatic weapon with a conversion device starts firing as soon as the trigger goes down and doesn't stop until the shooter lets go or the weapon runs out of ammunition.

"You're seeing them a lot in stunning numbers, particularly in street violence," said David Pucino, deputy chief counsel at Giffords Law Center.

In a demonstration by ATF agents, the firing of a semi-automatic outfitted with a conversion device was nearly indistinguishable from an automatic weapon. Conversion devices with differing designs can fit a range of different guns, enabling guns to fire at a rate of 800 or more bullets per minute, according to the ATF.

"It takes two or three seconds to put in some of these devices into a firearm to make that firearm into a machine gun instantly," Dettelbach said.

Between 2012 and 2016, police departments in the U.S. found 814 conversion devices and sent them to the ATF. That number grew to more than 5,400 between 2017 and 2021, according to the agency's most recent data.

They took hold in Minneapolis in 2021 and helped fuel record-breaking gun violence that year, said police Chief Brian O'Hara. Along with spraying out bullets at a dizzying speed, switches make a gun much more difficult for the shooter to control, so more people can be hit by accident.

"The thing is shaking as it's firing, so we wind up getting multiple victims, people hit in extremities during the same shooting incident, because the person cannot control the weapon," O'Hara said.





The city has seen a decline in their use since the September 2022 arrest of a man charged with selling switches that he had ordered from Russia and Taiwan or made himself, O'Hara said. But "it's still a very, very real problem," he said. "This is having a really deep impact on families, on neighborhoods and communities." While the devices are considered illegal machine guns under federal law, many states don't have their own specific laws against them. In Indiana, police were finding them so often — multiple times a week in the state's capital — that the state changed the law to ensure it included switches.

"We have to update the laws regarding machine guns to deal with the problems of today," Indianapolis police Chief Chris Bailey said. Only 15 states have their own laws against the possession, sale or manufacture of automatic-fire weapons, according to Giffords. Indiana was one of many states that have regulations with exceptions. Five states have no state-level machine-gun regulations at all. But long before prosecution, police must find the conversion devices. Often about the size of a quarter, they can easily go unnoticed by the untrained eye after being installed, said Dettelbach.

He recalled visiting a Texas police department after the ATF hosted a training on conversion devices. Afterwards, the chief searched the weapons in the evidence room and found several with previously undetected conversion devices.

"These items don't always look as dangerous as they are," he said. "If you see some of them, they're pieces of plastic and metal, and sometimes it's even hard to recognize them when they're actually on or in the firearm because they blend in."

They're also increasingly a fixture online, in social media and rap lyrics, Davis said. "Everyone is talking about switches," he said. "It's a scary trend." Davis struggles to talk about the loss of his son. Domonic would often come with his dad on Fridays to get a haircut at the barber shop where Issac Davis works. The shooting also fell on a Friday, making the end of the week an especially tough time. Davis hopes to start a foundation called For Every Eleven to fight gun violence and honor his son's memory.

Houthis successfully test hypersonic missile, plan to begin production

Source: https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/report-houthis-successfully-test-hypersonic-missile-plan-to-begin-production/

Mar 14 – The Iran-backed Houthi rebels have successfully tested a **hypersonic rocket** in Yemen, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti reports, citing a military source.

According to the report, the Houthis are planning to begin manufacturing the missiles for use against targets in the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden, as well as Israel.



The Yemen-based terror group has said that it would escalate attacks during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in solidarity with Palestinians amid the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

Months of Houthi Red Sea attacks have disrupted global shipping, forcing firms to reroute to longer and more expensive journeys around southern Africa, and stoking fears that the Israel-Hamas war could spread to destabilize the wider Middle East.

Hypersonic weapons are mediocre. It's time to stop wasting money on them

By David Wright and Cameron Tracy

Source: <https://thebulletin.org/2024/03/hypersonic-weapons-are-mediocre-its-time-to-stop-wasting-money-on-them/>



Must Read



An artist's view of the US long-range hypersonic technology vehicle 2 (HTV-2) as part of DARPA's Falcon project. In 2011, the HTV-2 flight test ended in a failure when it attempted to reach Mach 20 and the Falcon project was discontinued. (Credit: Image courtesy of DARPA)

Mar 12 – Hypersonic weapons are frequently described as having unique, [game-changing](#) capabilities because they combine hypersonic speeds (more than five times the speed of sound, or Mach 5) with long-distance gliding at low altitudes (below about 50 kilometers). This has led, for example, to [dire warnings](#) that US ships would be “defenseless” against hypersonic attack.

Many countries are currently [developing hypersonic weapons](#), with the United States, Russia, and China leading the pack. The United States is developing several systems designed to carry non-nuclear payloads to distances of a few thousand kilometers. The most advanced US systems are the Army's [Dark Eagle](#) and Navy's Conventional Prompt Strike, versions of which may be deployed in the next few years. Russia claims to have deployed a long-range hypersonic weapon (Avangard), a short-range ship-based weapon (Tsirkon), as well as a short-range air-launched maneuvering ballistic missile (Kinzhal) that was used in combat for the first time during the war in Ukraine. China has developed



two short-range hypersonic weapons: the DF-ZF (WU-14), which it says is operational, and the Xingkong-2 (Starry Sky II), which might start operation in several years.

Most of these weapons are boost-glide vehicles, which are accelerated to hypersonic speeds by rocket boosters and then glide unpowered for hundreds to thousands of kilometers. All three countries are also developing hypersonic cruise missiles, which carry scramjet engines to power them during part of their flight.

Despite this ongoing hypersonic arms race, the specific military utility of these weapons remains unclear.

Analysts [have questioned](#) the alleged capabilities of hypersonic weapons, and [recent studies](#) further undermine these claims. This [makes one wonder](#) why the US government is still devoting billions of dollars to their development and deployment, thereby taking money from other pressing national needs. For the last several years, research and development on hypersonic weapons has consumed [several billion dollars annually](#), corresponding to about 3 percent of all US defense research and development spending. Cumulatively, the United States has spent over \$10 billion so far on hypersonic weapons—a figure likely to grow once these weapons enter full-scale production.

No better flight performance

Existing weapon systems such as ballistic missiles already travel at hypersonic speeds. What distinguishes hypersonic weapons from these weapons is therefore their ability to glide at low altitudes, staying within the atmosphere for most of their flight (Figure 1).

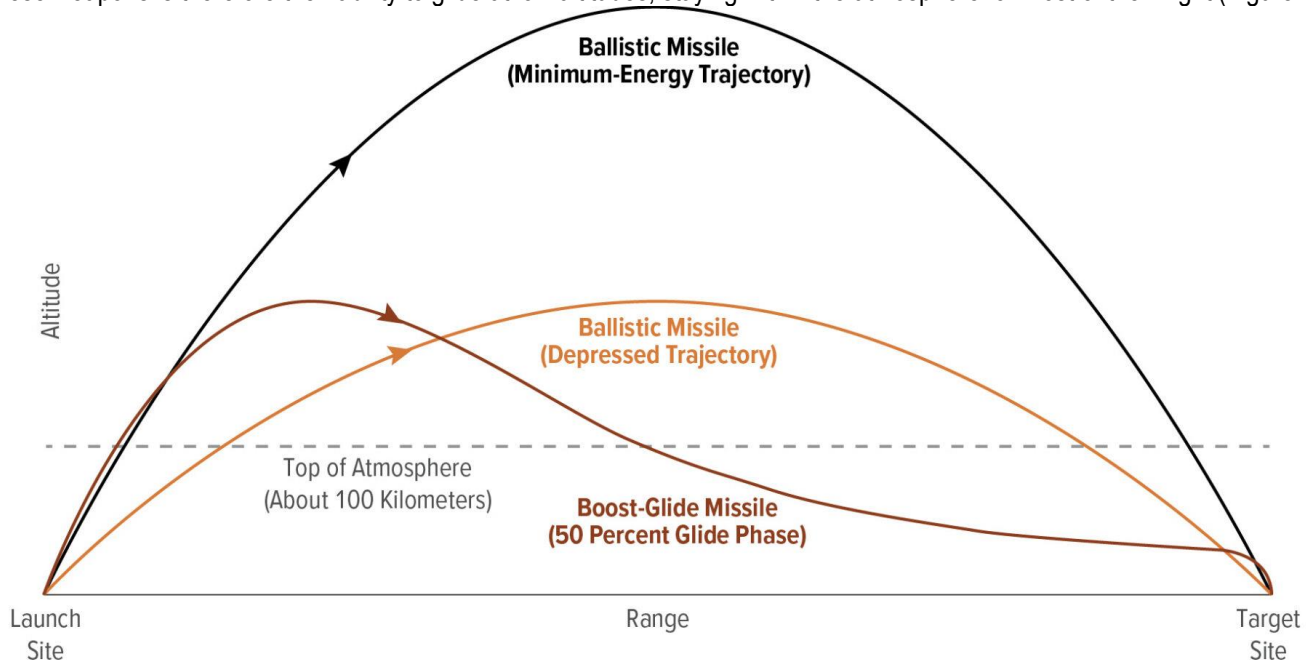


Figure 1. Different possible flight trajectories of ballistic and boost-glide missiles with the same range. (Credit: [Congressional Budget Office](#), public domain)

Low-altitude flight potentially offers three main advantages to hypersonic weapons: It makes them stealthy by reducing the range at which ground-based radars can detect them, allows them to maneuver during their long glide phase, and allows them to fly under the reach of long-range missile defenses, which can only operate above the atmosphere. However, low-altitude flight also comes with [significant disadvantages](#)—problems that far outweigh many of the purported advantages.

First, flying at high speed through the atmosphere causes significant drag (the mechanical force that opposes an object's motion through the air). Because [drag slows hypersonic weapons](#), they are no faster—and can actually take longer to reach their targets—than other warhead delivery systems, such as ballistic missiles flown on depressed trajectories.

Low-altitude flight also causes intense, sustained heating of these missiles because of the high density of the atmosphere compared to higher altitudes. The searing heat that hypersonic vehicles are subjected to during glide limits their performance and is the [fundamental technological challenge](#) to developing faster and longer-range versions of these weapons. As the aerodynamic heating of a body increases with roughly its velocity cubed, a vehicle gliding at Mach 5 would experience more than 100 times the heating of one gliding at Mach 1 at the same altitude. A further threefold increase in the speed—from Mach 5 to Mach 15—would increase the heating by an additional factor of nearly 30. This intense heating led to the [failure of the last test](#) of the US long-range hypersonic technology vehicle 2



(HTV-2), which attempted to reach Mach 20, in 2011. Ballistic missile warheads experience high heating rates, but only during their short re-entry phase at the end of their flight trajectories, which lasts for less than a minute for a long-range missile on a depressed trajectory, compared to an in-atmosphere glide phase that could last 30 minutes for a long-range hypersonic weapon.

To circumvent the heating problems of long-range hypersonic weapons, the United States and other countries have shifted their focus to versions intended for use in regional conflicts. Theater-level weapon use implies shorter ranges up to a few thousand kilometers, rather than intercontinental trajectories, and required speeds in the range of Mach 5 to 10 rather than the Mach 20 and above envisioned for the HTV-2. A hypersonic weapon starting its glide phase at Mach 10 and gliding for a thousand kilometers at low altitude would still experience intense heating for about eight minutes.

Easily detectable and engaged

Hypersonic weapons are also not as stealthy as advocates frequently claim. To reach their high speeds, they must be launched on large rocket boosters, whose bright exhaust plumes can be seen by currently deployed early-warning satellites. These satellites would be able to detect a possible hypersonic launch and determine the initial direction of the weapon's flight, which would give a good indication of its target.

Even after launch, these weapons could remain visible. The intense heating of a hypersonic vehicle traveling faster than about Mach 6 to 10 produces a [very bright infrared signal](#) during its glide phase that can also be seen by currently deployed early-warning satellites mounted with infrared detectors. This means that even if a hypersonic weapon at such high speeds would change course after launch, existing satellites should be able to detect where it is going and trigger a response to the attack.

Even though low-altitude flight may reduce the range at which hypersonic weapons could be detected by ground-based radars to hundreds of kilometers, that range would still be long enough for them to be tracked and engaged by terminal missile defense systems.

This is important because it means that hypersonic weapons can in fact be [intercepted by terminal missile defense systems](#), which can protect high-value assets like air defenses or ships. The high drag that hypersonic weapons experience during low-altitude flight slows them and would make them easier targets for these defenses to intercept. This means that ships and other assets are less vulnerable to hypersonic weapons than what officials often claim.

Limited maneuvering and no better accuracy

Hypersonic weapons do have the ability to maneuver and change their trajectories during their glide phase, using aerodynamic forces like those that keep them aloft. But the amount of maneuvering these weapons can achieve is [typically exaggerated and comes at a significant cost](#).

The mental image suggested by many descriptions of this maneuvering is of a speedboat weaving its way around obstacles. But, at such high speeds, changing the direction of a missile requires very large forces, and generating such forces would further increase drag and can significantly reduce the speed and range of the weapon. These drawbacks limit how much maneuvering hypersonic missiles can achieve in practice while still reaching useful ranges.

Adding an engine to the weapon to power it during the first part of its low-altitude flight could reduce the speed and range losses from maneuvering. However, since scramjet engines being developed for this purpose are not a mature technology and operating them is [notoriously complicated](#), they will likely be less reliable and more expensive than boost-glide hypersonic weapons that reach high speeds during launch and glide unpowered for most of their flight.

Hypersonic weapons are also touted as being more accurate than current missile technologies. But the same types of guidance and targeting systems being developed for these hypersonic systems can be used on maneuvering missile warheads, which the United States first developed in the Cold War. In addition, these maneuverable re-entry vehicles (MaRVs) fly high enough to avoid the heating problems that hypersonic weapons face during their low-altitude glide. MaRVs can also be made much lighter than hypersonic weapons and therefore require smaller rockets to launch them.

A costly distraction?

A [recent analysis](#) by the Congressional Budget Office compared hypersonic weapons to MaRVs mounted on ballistic missiles and found that both systems "could provide the combination of speed, accuracy, range, and survivability (the ability to reach a target without being intercepted) that would be useful in the military scenarios [it] considered." This analysis also showed that hypersonic weapons "could cost one-third more to procure and field than ballistic missiles of the same range with maneuverable warheads."

Detailed analysis shows that MaRVs launched on ballistic missiles flown on depressed trajectories [outperform hypersonic weapons](#) in many flight scenarios. They would also likely be developed more quickly



and perform more reliably than hypersonic missiles. This makes you wonder whether the US Congress and Pentagon leadership understands this or has been blinded by the exaggerated claims about hypersonic weapons.

In Russia and China, decision-makers may be similarly enthralled by the magical claims about hypersonic weapons put forward by their military advisors without understanding the nuance behind them. Ironically, both countries appear to have stepped up their own hypersonic development programs in part due to US interest in developing new, non-nuclear, long-range missile capabilities following the September 11, 2001 attacks. This program led to the United States to flight test its HTV-2 hypersonic vehicle, although the program was effectively cancelled in 2012 after only a few tests.

There is no doubt that the United States can build and deploy functioning hypersonic weapons, especially ones with relatively low speeds and short ranges. The issue is whether these weapons make any military sense and are a wise use of taxpayer money, independent of whether other countries build them or not.

Exaggerated claims about hypersonic weapons are driving lavish spending on a wide array of hypersonic weapon systems. Yet the hypersonic arms race is likely to have real consequences, increasing international tensions and military spending without enhancing national or global security.

Congress does not seem to be looking critically enough at the US rush to build hypersonic weapons. It should look harder.

David Wright is a visiting scholar in the laboratory for nuclear security and policy in the Department of Nuclear Science and Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has a PhD in Physics.

Cameron Tracy is a research scholar at the Center for International Security and Cooperation, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University. He has a PhD in Materials Science and Engineering.

US Intel: ISIS, al Qaeda, Hamas, & Hezbollah

Source: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/us-intel-isis-al-qaeda-hamas-hezbollah>



Emblems of U.S. intelligence agencies

Mar 14 – On March 11, 2024, the annual US intelligence assessment [reported](#) that the regional affiliates of ISIS and al Qaeda are likely to expand in the future, despite leadership losses. The rival Islamist groups, which are both Sunni, are also likely to continue targeting US citizens and Western interests more broadly even as the Sunni global jihad shifts to Africa. “This threat is mostly likely to manifest in small cells or individuals inspired by foreign terrorist organizations and violent extremist ideologies to conduct attacks,” the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) warned. The report also highlighted the capabilities of Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiite group backed by Iran, to target Americans worldwide. The war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas may “have a generational impact on terrorism,” Director of National



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – March 2024

Intelligence Avril Haines warned the Senate Intelligence Committee. Al Qaeda and ISIS have “directed supporters to conduct attacks against Israeli and U.S. interests.” The following are excerpts from the 2024 assessment.

Global Terrorism

U.S. persons and interests at home and abroad will face an ideologically diverse threat from terrorism. This threat is mostly likely to manifest in small cells or individuals inspired by foreign terrorist organizations and violent extremist ideologies to conduct attacks. While al-Qa’ida has reached an operational nadir in Afghanistan and Pakistan and ISIS has suffered cascading leadership losses in Iraq and Syria, regional affiliates will continue to expand. These gains symbolize the shift of the center of gravity in the Sunni global jihad to Africa.

- Terrorists will maintain an interest in conducting attacks using chemical, biological and radioactive materials against U.S. persons, allies, and interests worldwide. Terrorists from diverse ideological backgrounds continue to circulate instructions of varied credibility for the procurement or production of toxic or radioactive weapons using widely available materials in social media and online fora.

ISIS

ISIS will remain a centralized global organization even as it has been forced to rely on regional branches in response to successive leadership losses during the past few years. External capabilities vary across ISIS’s global branches, but the group will remain focused on attempting to conduct and inspire global attacks against the West and Western interests.

- ISIS–Greater Sahara and ISIS–West Africa contribute to and capitalize on government instability, communal conflict, and anti-government grievances to make gains in Nigeria and the Sahel.
- ISIS-Khorasan is trying to conduct attacks that undermine the legitimacy of the Taliban regime by expanding attacks against foreign interests in Afghanistan.

Al-Qa’ida

Al-Qa’ida’s regional affiliates on the African continent and Yemen will sustain the global network as the group maintains its strategic intent to target the United States and U.S. citizens. Al-Qa’ida senior leadership has not yet announced the replacement for the former emir, Ayman al-Zawahiri, reflecting the regionally focused and decentralized nature of the organization.

- Al-Shabaab continues to advance its attack capabilities by acquiring weapons systems while countering a multinational CT campaign, presenting a risk to U.S. personnel. In 2023, al-Shabaab also expanded its operations in Northeast Kenya.

Hizballah

Lebanese Hizballah will continue to develop its global terrorist capabilities as a complement to the group’s growing conventional military capabilities in the region. Since October 2023, Hizballah has conducted attacks along Israel’s northern border to tie down Israeli forces as they seek to eliminate HAMAS in Gaza. Hizballah probably will continue to conduct provocative actions such as rocket launches against Israel throughout the conflict.

- Hizballah seeks to limit U.S. influence in Lebanon and the broader Middle East, and maintains the capability to target U.S. persons and interests in the region, worldwide, and, to a lesser extent, in the United States.

Gaza Conflict

The HAMAS attack against Israel in October 2023 and Israel’s responding military campaign in Gaza has increased tensions throughout the region as Iranian proxies and partners conduct anti-U.S. and anti-Israel attacks, both in support of HAMAS and to pressure the United States. Media coverage of the destruction and loss of life are being amplified by active social media campaigns on all sides, roiling public reactions among neighboring countries and around the world. Israel will face mounting international pressure because of the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and Iranian-backed attacks will jeopardize stability in Lebanon, Iraq, the Gulf, and the Red Sea. The risk of escalation into direct interstate conflict, intended or otherwise, remains high.

- The Gaza conflict is posing a challenge to many key Arab partners, who face public sentiment against Israel and the United States for the death and destruction in Gaza, but also see the United States as the power broker best positioned to deter further aggression and end the conflict before it spreads deeper into the region.



Israel and Iran are trying to calibrate their actions against each other to avoid escalation into a direct full-scale conflict. We assess that Iranian leaders did not orchestrate nor had foreknowledge of the HAMAS attack against Israel.

Since October 2023, Iran has encouraged and enabled its various proxies and partners—including Hizballah, Iranian-backed groups in Iraq and Syria, and the Huthis in Yemen—to conduct strikes against Israeli or U.S. interests in the region.

- Hizballah is calibrating this pressure on Israel from the north while trying to avoid a broader war that would devastate Hizballah and Lebanon. Hizballah's leadership, though, probably will consider a range of retaliatory options depending on Israel's actions in Lebanon during the upcoming year.
- In Iraq, Iranian-aligned militias almost certainly will continue attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria.
- The Huthi's continued ballistic missile, cruise missile, and UAV attacks against merchant vessels transiting the Red Sea, which are disrupting international shipping, and on Israel create a real risk of broader escalation.

Both al-Qa'ida and ISIS, inspired by the HAMAS attack against Israel, have directed their supporters to conduct attacks against Israeli and U.S. interests. The HAMAS attack is encouraging individuals to conduct acts of antisemitic and Islamophobic terror worldwide and is galvanizing individuals to leverage the Palestinian plight for recruitment and inspiration to conduct attacks. The Nordic Resistance Movement—a transnational neo-Nazi organization—publicly praised the attack, illustrating the conflict's appeal to a range of threat actors.

In regard to Gaza, Jerusalem remains focused on destroying HAMAS, which its population broadly supports. Moreover, Israel probably will face lingering armed resistance from HAMAS for years to come, and the military will struggle to neutralize HAMAS's underground infrastructure, which allows insurgents to hide, regain strength, and surprise Israeli forces.

The governance and security structures in Gaza and the West Bank as well as the resolution of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and rebuilding will be key components of the long-term Israeli–Palestinian relationship.

- Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has publicly stated his opposition to postwar diplomacy with the Palestinian Authority (PA) toward territorial compromise.
- Netanyahu's viability as leader as well as his governing coalition of far-right and ultraorthodox parties that pursued hardline policies on Palestinian and security issues may be in jeopardy. Distrust of Netanyahu's ability to rule has deepened and broadened across the public from its already high levels before the war, and we expect large protests demanding his resignation and new elections. A different, more moderate government is a possibility.

HAMAS's and the PA's continued animosity will be a factor in governance outcomes as will HAMAS's broad popular support. Much also will hinge on Israel's decisions regarding how to deal with Gaza in the aftermath of its campaign as well as scale and scope of its support for the PA.



Germany's RAF Terrorism — Many Unanswered Questions

By Christoph Strack | DW reporter

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240314-germanys-raf-terrorism-many-unanswered-questions>

Mar 14 – Even today, talk of the Red Army Faction (RAF) often provokes a heated debate in Germany. The crimes of the RAF, said Federal Interior Minister [Nancy Faeser](#) (SPD) at the end of February, are “today still unmatched as examples of the dangers of left-wing extremism and left-wing terrorism in the Federal Republic of Germany.” More than a quarter of a century has passed since the terrorist organization announced its dissolution. Nonetheless, there are those who are still grieving, victims who are still injured, RAF members who are still on the run — and many unanswered questions. At the end of February 2024, after many years without success, special police units began once again publicly tracking down the last prominent suspects involved in RAF terrorism. For those who lived through it, the “German Autumn” (Deutscher Herbst) was in the fall of 1977. That was when the RAF emerged as a far-left terrorist organization. In 1968, two arson attacks on Frankfurt department stores, using tactics typical of left-wing urban guerrillas, had already occurred. Andreas Baader was convicted and imprisoned for his involvement. His escape from prison in 1970 marked the birth of the RAF. The most prominent members of the first generation of the RAF were Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, and Gudrun Ensslin. In these early years, the group was known as the “Baader-Meinhof Group” after its two most recognizable founders.

Notorious Personalities and Lesser-Known Victims

The group carried out numerous attacks in Germany up into the 1990s. Thirty-five people were killed. Some of the victims were major figures in West Germany. In 1977 alone, the year of terror, they murdered



Siegfried Buback, the country's chief prosecutor, and shortly afterward, the head of the Dresdner Bank, Jürgen Ponto. Then "second generation" RAF members [kidnapped Hanns Martin Schleyer](#), the head of then-West Germany's national employer association and a former SS officer — the SS (Schutzstaffel) was a major paramilitary organization in Nazi Germany. The kidnapping was intended to force the release of imprisoned RAF leaders. When this attempt failed, RAF leaders Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe committed suicide in prison on October 17. Hanns Martin Schleyer was murdered 44 days after his abduction.

The names of the RAF's prominent victims are well known in Germany, but the lesser-known victims include company car drivers, bodyguards and ordinary police officers. Germany was in a state of near paralysis in the autumn of 1977. Frequent vehicle inspections at highway exits and heavily armed police officers at key locations were commonplace. As in several other European countries, a growing fear of terrorism was sweeping the country.

RAF members of the second and third generation continued carrying out crimes until the end of the 1990s. They repeatedly targeted US troop facilities in Germany. Then, in the spring of 1998, the RAF announced in a lengthy letter that it was disbanding.

The Manhunt Continues, Questions Remain Unanswered

The search for the perpetrators went on, though. Most of the crimes committed between 1970 and 1998 have still not been solved. This is also due to the fact that those RAF members who were arrested and stood trial have, for the most part, not made any incriminating statements about accomplices or connections within the organization. One thing is clear: the RAF and the trail of blood it left across the Federal Republic of Germany are still not a thing of the past.

One of the unanswered questions is the role played by the domestic secret service, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, in the student protest movement's descent into terror in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

According to the Hamburg political scientist Wolfgang Kraushaar, the secret service agent Peter Urbach (1941-2011) is a key figure here. In an interview with DW in 2018, Kraushaar explained: "Urbach played an important — though still inconclusive — role in the transformation of that small but hardened nucleus of the protest scene into militant groups and ultimately into networks, out of which terrorism then took shape." In Kraushaar's eyes, Urbach was an agent provocateur who supplied left-wing extremist protesters with Molotov cocktails and firearms and incited the extra-parliamentary opposition. Speculation about the role of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution looms in the background of each new arrest and search for clues.

This is what is behind Federal Interior Minister Nancy Faeser's statement following the [arrest of suspected "third-generation RAF" terrorist Daniela Klette at the end of February](#). She said that a further criminal investigation into the crimes was now possible. "We also owe it to the relatives of the RAF victims to provide answers." As head of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which oversees Germany's security agencies, Faeser is the 15th politician to have had more or less frequent dealings with the RAF. When the 53-year-old SPD politician was born, the Federal Criminal Police Office was already searching for the Baader-Meinhof group. It is quite likely that Faeser will not be the last minister tasked with investigating past and future left-wing terrorism.

The Islamic State Five Years Later: Persistent Threats, U.S. Options

THE ISLAMIC STATE FIVE YEARS LATER

PERSISTENT THREATS, U.S. OPTIONS

with

IAN McCARY
U.S. Deputy Special Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS

AARON Y. ZELIN
moderator

VIRTUAL POLICY FORUM SERIES

MARCH 21, 2024

Watch on YouTube

MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE GENEROSITY OF THE AND ROBERT KAUFMAN FAMILY

**Paris2024
last chance
to postpone the
River Seine
Opening Ceremony!**

**The unexpected
is the
new normal!
(Moscow massacre)**

**Pride might
cost lives!**



Global security in 2024: Migration more critical than Russia

By Frank Hofmann | Senior DW correspondent

Source: <https://www.dw.com/en/global-security-in-2024-migration-more-critical-than-russia/a-68217835>

Feb 12 – More people fear migration through war and climate change than Russian aggression, a recent Munich Security Conference report found. An escalated Indo-Pacific conflict involving China and Taiwan is also raising fears.

The world in 2024 will be characterized by a "downward trend in world politics, marked by an increase in geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainty," Christoph Heusgen, chairman of the [Munich Security Conference \(MSC\)](#), wrote in the conference's [2024 security report](#), released on Monday ahead of this week's high-profile gathering in [Bavaria](#).

From February 16 to 18, military personnel, security experts and high-ranking politicians from all over the world will once again meet in [Munich](#), with Ukrainian President [Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#) also expected to attend.

In a [Munich Security Index survey](#) published ahead of last year's conference, [Russia's war on Ukraine](#) was rated as the biggest threat to security, particularly in the G7 countries, which includes seven of the world's advanced economies.

But in the current survey — for which the MSC questioned 12,000 people in the [G7 countries](#), as well as Brazil, India, China and South Africa — "migration through war and climate change" is now seen as even more important than the prospect of an aggressive Russia. It appears those surveyed in October and November 2023 have grown accustomed to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Heusgen: Ukraine cannot join NATO 'right now'

The MSC also asked Ukrainians about "acceptable conditions for a cease-fire," with 92% calling for a complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, including the [Crimean Peninsula](#). Only 12% would find it acceptable if Crimea remained annexed by Russia. More than two-thirds would like Ukraine to join the EU and [NATO](#) quickly.

West loses influence in competition with China

Entitled "Lose-Lose?" the new MSC report claims that everyone is losing out in the current global situation.

According to the survey, the risk perception of a military [conflict in the Indo-Pacific between China and Taiwan](#) has risen sharply. Fear of an increasingly self-confident China has made a big leap — especially in Japan, followed by India, the US, Germany and France. In the G7 countries (Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Japan, Canada and the US), "large segments of the populations[...] believe their countries will be less secure and wealthy in 10 years' time," writes Heusgen. An analysis of the survey shows that people in the G7 countries expect China and countries in the Global South to increase their power and influence, with China benefiting at the expense of the other nations.

Globalization in reverse gear

Overall, dissatisfaction with the economic situation in the world is growing, the report continues: "Despite the tremendous achievements in the post-[Cold War](#) era, key actors in the West, powerful autocracies, and countries in the so-called Global South have all become dissatisfied with the status quo — and their own share of the proverbial pie."

Globalization as a whole has shifted into reverse gear. Competition and a greatly increased need for security clearly prevail in today's world. Globally, less capital is flowing to China in particular, and the intensification of geopolitical rivalry has buried the belief that market-driven globalization leads to a fair distribution of profits. According to the report, states are prioritizing "resilience and security over efficiency."

Will geopolitical tensions end globalization?

The dramatic political shifts of the last few years are reflected in what the report calls the "macroeconomic reality." Western capital flows are being redirected from China to other partners. "Trade flows, too, are showing tentative signs of restructuring along geopolitical lines," according to the Munich Security Report, which paints a very pessimistic picture of networking in the world overall. Nevertheless, Europe, and Germany in particular, stand out as an exception. "German companies also continue to invest heavily in China, defying Berlin's ambition to reduce its exposure," the report says. "German foreign direct investment in China remained at a near-record high in the first half of 2023."

Meanwhile, the German government is still pursuing its policy of "de-risking" with China — in other words, reducing economic dependency. This began with the [COVID pandemic](#) when supply chains between Germany and China collapsed. The break with the long-standing energy dependency on Russia has given this policy momentum. Nevertheless, this does not yet seem to be reflected in tangible figures.



Sahel region: More violence after every coup

[Russia's increasing military influence in the Sahel region](#) also played a role in the MSC's analysis. The expulsion of French troops by Niger's military junta in 2023 is just one example of France's waning interest in the region, while Russia appears to be trying to decouple the [Sahel countries](#) from Europe and the US.

Here, too, the authors of this year's Munich Security Report see only losers. "The people of the region, in turn, are losing the chance for peace and democratic progress, as each coup since 2020 has been followed by greater levels of violence."

According to the report, the increased mistrust worldwide is also reflected in the perception of danger from cyberattacks and the negative consequences of the use of [artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#).

"Once a driver of mutually beneficial globalization, technological progress has become a race for geopolitical dominance," the analysis claims. This is supported by the Munich Security Index survey results, according to which respondents in the US rate this threat as particularly high, followed by India.

Overall, it appears that people are becoming increasingly afraid of disinformation campaigns in the digital world.

Protecting Australians from Convicted Terrorists

By Justin Bassi, John Coyne, and Henry Campbell

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240316-protecting-australians-from-convicted-terrorists>

The following is an edited summary of introductory remarks made to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) today by ASPI executive director Justin Bassi, the head of ASPI's counter terrorism program, John Coyne and Henry Campbell, the program's coordinator. The committee is examining the operation, effectiveness and implications of Division 105A of the Criminal Code which is a key part of the legal framework for the management of convicted terrorists. The full ASPI submission is [here](#).

Mar 16 – The issue of terrorism and how to both counter and respond to it has been a key part of ASPI's work since the Institute was established in 2001.

From 9/11 and the Bali bombings, to the rise of ISIL and the threat of issue-motivated violence from the likes of white supremacists, a comprehensive approach is needed, including education, prevention, punishment and rehabilitation. Division 105A of the Criminal Code fits into a sophisticated legal framework for the post-sentence management of convicted terrorists.

An issue of foremost importance to the committee, and central to our submission, is whether continuing detention orders (CDOs) should remain part of this legislative framework.

The former [Independent National Security Legislation Monitor \(INSLM\)](#), Grant Donaldson, recommended in a [report](#) that CDOs be abolished. We consider this a misjudgment and urge the committee to disagree with the recommendation.

This does not mean that amendments are not needed. Indeed, the PJCIS is a part of the framework that ensures Australia's national security and counter-terrorism legislation undergoes effective, continuous reform. And sometimes, laws should be abolished. But often, an 'evolutionary' approach of ongoing reform is better than a 'start-stop' approach that responds to incidents rather than prepares for them.

Instead of abolishing the entire CDO provision, the former INSLM's concerns about the scheme's risk assessment tool should prompt examination of, and any necessary reform to, that element. There is no existing or proposed substitute for CDOs. Eliminating them would therefore create a gap and expose the Australian community to greater risk.

Extended supervision orders (ESOs) are sometimes proposed as alternatives, but they are not the same. Supervision orders, while important, create greater risk to the community and are more resource-intensive for security agencies.

This was unfortunately demonstrated in the case of [Ahamed Samsudeen](#) in Auckland. Regarded as a terrorism risk, Samsudeen was under surveillance by New Zealand Police following his release from prison in July 2021. Surveillance and control orders could not stop Samsudeen from entering an Auckland supermarket on 3 September 2021 and grabbing a knife. It took the police surveillance team only one minute to realize he was launching an attack and a further 30 seconds to shoot him dead. But, in that time, he injured eight people.

New Zealand, notably, has terrorist control orders but no comparable CDO policy.

To be clear, CDOs are not a silver bullet, but they are a last-resort measure when a terrorist offender is judged as posing too high a risk if released.

Australia's community safety results from a national security strategy that includes a legislative framework to address the full range of threats, not just those that are most common, likely or current.



This framework must be able to respond to future threats, with the expectation that certain threats, such as terrorist plots, are prevented, not responded to once they've happened.

In addition to the focus on the risk assessment tool, the former INSLM's recommendation to remove CDOs from the framework was based in part on the view that Australia faces a reduced threat environment, writing in his official report: 'It is my judgment that CDOs are not proportionate to the threat of terrorism and are not necessary.'

We have made the mistake before of examining security in the context of current circumstances as though they are static. One example is the 2013 National Security statement, which effectively called an end to the era of terrorism, only to see the rise of ISIL that same year and, in 2014, the increase of Australia's terrorism threat level to HIGH. While Australia's terrorism threat level is now at POSSIBLE, reduced from PROBABLE in 2022, ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess said last month in his Annual Threat Assessment 2024: 'Terrorism remains a threat—a real threat, a pervasive threat—even with a lower national threat level.'

Australians should be proud of our system and the security agencies that make our safety the nation's top priority. While we are currently in a period in which a terror attack is less likely than recent years, we should not become complacent. CDOs have an important role as a last resort and, even if not used for many years, they remain relevant in both principle and practice.

Justin Bassi is the Executive Director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI).

John Coyne is Head of the Northern Australia Strategic Policy Centre and Head of Strategic Policing and Law Enforcement at ASPI.

Henry Campbell is the coordinator of ASPI's Northern Australian Strategic Policy Centre, Strategic Policing and Law Enforcement program.

The Houthis Are Schooling Us in Asymmetric Warfare

By Marc Champion

Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2024-03-11/the-houthis-are-schooling-us-in-asymmetric-warfare>



Mar 11 – The Houthis of Yemen think they're at war with the West. With the news that three undersea fiber-optic cables were severed off the Yemeni coast and that one of their ballistic missiles took lives for the first time upon striking a container ship, it's time to acknowledge that we are at war with them. The much harder question is how to fight this kind of asymmetric foe.

What the Houthis are proving is that the developed West faces rising challenges on two fronts from weaker enemies, ranging from non-state actors to the likes of Iran and Russia. And for all the still-extraordinary power of US carrier fleets, the answer to those challenges can't always boil down to just getting tougher, drawing lines and establishing deterrence – the standard Washington strategy.

The first challenge is that advances in the production of missiles and drones have democratized extremely powerful weapons that until recently were available only to the richest states. The suicide vest and improvised explosive device are being replaced by the suicide drone and precision-guided missile.

The second is a growing asymmetry of vulnerabilities. The Houthis are demonstrating in real time just how target-rich developed nations are. Wealthy, complex societies such as the US, which had a per capita gross domestic product above \$76,000 at the end of last year, have a lot more to attack (and lose) than a nation such as Yemen, with per capita GDP of \$650. In a globalized economy, much of the infrastructure supporting all that wealth creation is offshore. So when the Houthis disrupt the roughly 12% of global shipping that passes through the Bab al-Mandab strait between the Arabian peninsula and the Horn of Africa, it impacts consumers in Europe and manufacturers in Asia, but not Yemen. If oil tankers have to shift to longer, more expensive routes than the Suez Canal, nudging up the price of gasoline at US pumps, the Houthis will be much less affected. The same goes for attacking the dozen or more international submarine data cables that run through the same strait. Meanwhile, if the Houthis kill US troops or citizens, that's a political problem for the Biden administration. If the US kills Houthi civilians, that's a political boon for the Houthis — as Hamas has proved in Gaza. It still isn't clear how the three Red Sea cables were damaged. The Ministry of Telecommunications in Sana'a has denied Houthi involvement. The US has assessed the most likely explanation is that the Rubymar, a British-owned container vessel that was floating aimlessly after being



struck by a Houthi missile, may have dragged its anchor across the cables last week, before finally sinking. Either way, this is a teachable moment. Submarine cables often are damaged by fishing trawlers or weather events, and quickly repaired. What's telling in this case is the difficulty that operators are having in getting \$60 million-plus repair ships out to restore the connections in a war zone. While the risks can be overdone – there is a good deal of redundancy in the system — intercontinental data cables are critical infrastructure. Trillions of dollars pass through these small fiber-optic highways every day, not to mention communications and the data that sophisticated militaries rely on to operate. The incident in the Red Sea has given just a glimpse of what might happen if they were taken out by a determined foe in a context of war, just as Britain attacked Germany's undersea telegraph cables at the start of World War I.

"This is where you see the interests of industry and people that have to deal with security diverge," says Justin Sherman, a non-resident fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank, and chief executive officer of Global Cyber Strategies, a Washington-based advisory company. Virtually all submarine cables are laid and operated by private companies focused less on maximizing security than minimizing cost. There's nothing wrong with that — it's the commercial incentive that got the cables built.

The result, though, is that cables tend to be laid in bundles; the places they land are public, and they're often also gathered together to reduce costs; security is usually minimal. All of that is ideal for anyone bent on causing a catastrophic disruption. There may not have been a confirmed case of a hostile state cutting another's cable connections in recent years – these things are hard to prove — but so long as countries believe they're at war, it will happen.

What's striking about maps of the world's roughly 1 million miles of submarine cable is what they say about relative dependencies. As a large continental power that spans from Europe to the Far East, Russia has just a handful of short hop undersea cable connections. Yet it has for years been developing one of the world's largest surface and subsurface naval capabilities for reaching and monitoring, or potentially tapping and destroying them. Russia has, of course, plenty of fiber-optic cables of its own, but these are on land. The smart move is to reduce our vulnerabilities. In the case of undersea cables, that means increasing resilience through redundancy; beefing up security at landing stations, as well as in the web-based – and therefore open-to-hacking – monitoring programs used by commercial operators. Governments should also develop legal frameworks to push companies to design more security into new cable systems. All of this has been known for years – British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak wrote [a paper](#) on the subject in 2017, when he was just an MP.

In the meantime, the US should resist the temptation to escalate its fight with the Houthis. The temporary loss of the Suez Canal shipping route until the war in Gaza ends is a cost the global economy can survive. Targeting mobile missile launchers was always going to be a game of whack-a-mole, unlikely to deter the Houthis because being attacked by "the Great Satan" works well for them politically. They claim to have been flooded with tens of thousands of new recruits since.

To have a real chance of ending the Houthi threat to international shipping – or indeed cables – the US Navy would have to target Houthi command and control centers in Sana'a and other urban areas, inevitably causing civilian casualties that would only add to US troubles in the Middle East. To reliably succeed would demand a full invasion. Neither option would be remotely worth the cost.

Marc Champion is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering Europe, Russia and the Middle East. He was previously Istanbul bureau chief for the Wall Street Journal.

The U.K. Has an Islamist Problem

By Jonathan Spyer

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65691/the-uk-has-an-islamist-problem>

In London for a short visit this week, I decided to take a look at the latest demonstration organized by the [Palestine Solidarity Campaign \(PSC\)](#) against what it refers to as the 'genocide in Gaza.' The weekly mass demonstrations in the British capital in support of the Palestinian side in the Gaza war have acquired significance beyond the specific context of British foreign policy.

As a middle-sized European power, the UK has little influence on Middle East events in general and no influence at all on Israeli or Hamas decision-making. Demands for a 'ceasefire now' on the streets of London will therefore produce nothing on the ground in the Middle East. The demonstrations are significant, however, in that they showcase the arrival in British public life of a new political force: namely, a mass, Islamist-led street presence that seeks to enforce its will on the public space and intimidate its opponents.

Already in late February, the presence of an Islamist mob outside parliament forced the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, to change parliamentary procedure out of a concern for the physical safety of MPs in a debate on calls for a ceasefire in Gaza. According to a report in the Guardian, opposition leader Keir Starmer "warned Hoyle that Labour MPs' security was at risk" should they be seen to be abstaining or



opposing a motion calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Contrary to convention, and with 'hundreds of protesters congregating outside parliament,' the speaker permitted a Labour amendment softening the language of a Scottish National Party motion calling for a ceasefire, enabling Labour members to vote for the motion and thus avoid the hostile attentions of the mob.



Anti-Israel demonstrators in London (Photo: Hannah Baldock)

Hoyle later justified his decision in the following terms: "The details of the things that have been brought to me are absolutely frightening on all members of this House on all sides. I have a duty of care, and I say that, and if my mistake is looking after members, then I am guilty." A notable precedent was thus established. Dan Hodges, a journalist with the mass circulation Mail on Sunday newspaper, later tweeted that he had spoken "to an MP yesterday who told me he had weighed up his own physical safety when deciding on how to vote on yesterday's Gaza motion. We have crossed a line now. We are not a properly functioning democracy if this is a factor in how our elected representatives act."

The Speaker's decision came in the wake of a series of attacks and threats against MPs by Islamists in recent years. In 2021, a Conservative MP, David Amess, was stabbed to death in his constituency office by an Islamist assassin. A decade earlier, Labour MP Stephen Timms narrowly survived a similar stabbing attack by a female Islamist assailant.

Conservative MP and former minister of state for immigration Robert Jenrick, in a statement in Parliament, summed up the current situation in the following terms: "The real issue is that this House appears cowed by threats of violence and intimidation. The mother of parliaments appears weakened and diminished as a result. We have allowed our streets to be dominated by Islamist extremists, and [British Jews](#) and others to be too intimidated to walk through central London, week after week." Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said, more succinctly, on February 29 that there was a "growing consensus that mob rule is replacing democratic rule."

The Organizers of Weekly Marchers Have Ties to Hamas

Regarding the mob in question, the weekly demonstrations for Gaza, which have temporarily taken over central London regularly, attract upwards of 250,000 participants. The PSC is the main organizer, but a flyer handed to me as I approached the area where the march was due to set off on March 9 contained the logos of five other organizations identified as backing the protests. These were the Friends of al-Aqsa (FOA), the Stop the War Coalition, the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), the Palestinian Forum in Britain, and the Campaign



for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Of these, two have clear links to or are supportive of Hamas. The Muslim Association of Britain was co-founded by Mohammed Kathem Sawalha, a former senior Hamas military operative in the West Bank, now resident in Britain. The MAB is a [Muslim Brotherhood](#)-associated group. Its leaders include Azzam Tamimi, described by the Daily Telegraph as Hamas's 'special envoy' in the UK. Friends of al-Aqsa, meanwhile, was founded by Ismail Patel, who has visited Hamas-controlled Gaza and met with then-leader Ismail Haniyeh. It is listed by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, which publishes declassified materials from Israel's intelligence bodies, as 'harboring an intense hatred for Israel, campaigning for its elimination, denying its Jewish character, and supporting Hamas.'

The Stop the War Coalition is an organization established by the British radical left. The PSC, while lacking the openly Islamist credentials of MAB and Friends of al-Aqsa, has held visits to Hamas-controlled Gaza, where its leaders have met with senior Hamas officials. Since October 7, leading activists of the movement have expressed their support for the Palestinian "resistance."

At the demonstration on March 9, this combination of Islamist and far-left affiliations was very apparent. The organizers claimed that 400,000 people attended the march, which proceeded from Hyde Park Corner to the US Embassy in central London. A young man I spoke to said he was concerned that the march would be smaller than usual because "it's nearly Ramadan."

While his fears proved unfounded, they accurately reflected the demographic at the march. I would estimate that roughly 50% of the demonstrators were visibly Muslim, with many women in hijabs and some men dressed in a way that identified them as Salafi Islamists. The other 50% appeared to be white British leftists who were visibly older. There were banners of various far-left organizations and labor unions. A few Irish flags and a banner representing a supporters' group of the Glasgow Celtic Football Club (whose hardcore supporters are associated with Irish Republicanism) were seen. But the energy of the march, the chanting and singing, all came from the Muslim contingent. Some of the chants were in Arabic, which would have passed the leftist elements by. I heard calls for Filastin Arabiye! (an Arab Palestine) and a chant of Dammi Falestini! (My Blood is Palestinian), referencing a recent hit song by Libyan-born, Gaza-raised singer Mohammed Assaf. I saw placards calling to "dismantle Zionism." One protester was wearing body armor and carrying a riot shield, along with a combat helmet adorned with a Palestinian flag. In another section of the march, a young female demonstrator wearing a black-and-white keffiyeh led a group of mainly hijabed young women in a chant of "It is right to rebel – US, UK: go to hell!" For Arab nationalists and Islamists, the Palestinian cause has long served as a kind of sounding board through which broader ambitions are expressed. In the demonstrations in London, this cause appears to be playing this familiar role once again. The flags at the demonstration were Palestinian, that is, the flag originally designed by Sir Mark Sykes as the banner of the Arab revolt against the Ottomans. But the underlying meaning of these marches is something else; it is the latest phase in an Islamist posing of the question of power on the streets of a major European city. Whose will can be enforced? Whose rules must be obeyed? Who must bow before the threat of a superior force? These are the questions currently being asked via the mechanism of the Islamist mob that has emerged as a significant force in British public life in the period following October 7, 2023. The issue is thus rather stark. This mob will either be dispersed or it may safely be assumed that it will continue to act to threaten and negate the will of elected representatives, thus eroding democratic governance in the UK.

[Jonathan Spyer](#) is director of research at the Middle East Forum and director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis. He is the author of [Days of the Fall: A Reporter's Journey in the Syria and Iraq Wars](#) (2018)..

Hezbollah using ambulances for terrorist purposes, says IDF Arabic spox.

Source: <https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-792790>

Mar 19 – Hezbollah and the Shi'ite [Amal Movement](#) have been using ambulances for transporting terrorists and weapons in southern Lebanon, the IDF's spokesperson for Arabic media, Avichay Adraee, said on Tuesday.

According to Adraee, the two terrorist movements use ambulances belonging to the Islamic Health Organization, a Shi'ite healthcare organization closely affiliated with Hezbollah. The organization says on its website that it has always "provided services for the activity of the Hezbollah fighters against the Zionist occupation."

According to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, more than 20 of the organization's operatives have been killed while fighting as part of Hezbollah. Several members of the organization have been killed in the clashes between Israel and Hezbollah since October as well.

Adraee said on Tuesday that the IDF had discovered that Hezbollah and Amal were using a yellow ambulance operated by Sheet Cargo, headed by Hassam Muhammad Sheet, who also runs the local government in Kfarkela.

The IDF noted that the ambulance traveled abnormally between Hezbollah sites after the sites were bombed, even when no people were injured, as well for a long period after the strikes.





The ambulance allegedly used by Hezbollah in Kfarkila in southern Lebanon. (credit: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

Two individuals who operated the ambulance, Musa and Muhammad Sheet, were claimed as Hezbollah members after they were killed in an Israeli strike in January.

In 2022, Adraee announced that a man named [Hatem Sheet](#), also a resident of Kfarkela, ran drug and weapons smuggling operations from his home for Hezbollah. It is unclear if Sheet is related to the Sheet involved in the latest exposé.

Adraee added on Tuesday that Hussein Khalil, a resident of the town of Baraachit who was killed in Israeli strike in Blida and identified as a member of the Islamic Health Organization, was photographed in the past wearing the badge of Amal.

Hezbollah's use of civilian organizations for terrorism

This isn't the first time that Hezbollah has been caught using civilian organizations for military purposes.

Hezbollah has repeatedly been accused of using the [Green Without Borders](#) environmental organization as a front for terrorist activities near the Lebanese-Israeli border.

In 2017, then head of the IDF's Intelligence Directorate, Herzi Halevi, stated that Hezbollah had established outposts marked with the logo of Green Without Borders along the border. According to the IDF, the organization is partially funded by Hezbollah.

The Green Without Borders organization was [sanctioned by the US](#) in August of last year for its ties to Hezbollah's terrorist activities.

Why is Pakistan attacking Afghanistan again?

Source: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/why-is-pakistan-attacking-afghanistan-again-as-pak-pm-shehbaz-sharif-warns-against-cross-border-terrorism/articleshow/108649318.cms?from=mdr>

Mar 21 – Pakistan has recently confirmed carrying out "intelligence-based anti-terrorist operations" inside Afghanistan, sparking a tense situation between the two neighboring countries. The escalation began after Afghanistan accused Pakistan of killing eight of its citizens in airstrikes. In response, the Taliban government fired at Pakistani troops along the border, further escalating tensions. Pakistan has accused Afghanistan of sheltering terrorists, a claim that the Taliban has denied.

Skirmishes and Accusations

After Pakistan's airstrikes, the Taliban government retaliated by firing at Pakistani troops along the border. The exchange of heated rhetoric between the two nations has escalated, with Pakistan accusing Afghanistan of sheltering terrorists, a claim denied by the Taliban.

The recent airstrikes come in the wake of a security post attack in Mir Ali, North Waziristan, which resulted in the deaths of seven Pakistani soldiers. Following the attack, Pakistan's President, Asif Ali Zardari, vowed retaliation. The strikes targeted terrorists from the Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group, which, along with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of civilians and law enforcement officials.

However, the airstrikes have resulted in civilian casualties, with reports indicating that five women and three children were killed. According to the Taliban, three women and three children were killed in Paktika, near Pakistan's South Waziristan District, while two women were killed in Khost, near North Waziristan.

Reasons Behind the Tensions

The deteriorating ties between Pakistan and the Taliban can be traced back to the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan. Pakistan, which had hoped for an ally in its neighborhood, now realizes that the Taliban's resurgence has emboldened the TTP and provided it with a safe haven. This is ironic, as Pakistan's policies promoting hardline Sunni Islam in north and west Pakistan, as well as in Afghanistan, helped create the Taliban in the 1980s.



While Pakistan's security forces have had some successes against the TTP, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has seemingly strengthened the TTP, showing more loyalty to the militant faction than to the Pakistan state. Another point of contention has been Islamabad's decision to deport thousands of Afghan immigrants, citing their involvement in street crimes and militant attacks.

Pakistan's Response

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has warned against cross-border terrorism, stating that Pakistan will not tolerate any such acts. He emphasized that Pakistan seeks peaceful relations with its neighbors but cannot tolerate terrorism emanating from across the border. Addressing the first meeting of the apex committee since the new government came to power, Shehbaz said: "We will not tolerate any kind of terrorism from across the border. Under no circumstances."

"We cannot tolerate this terrorism anymore. Pakistan's borders are a red line against terrorism," he added.

"We want to exist in a very peaceful environment with our neighbouring brothers — do trade, commerce and expand our relations — but unfortunately, if a neighbour's land is used for terrorism, this is intolerable" said Shehbaz.

Surge in Terror Incidents

Pakistan has experienced a significant increase in terror activities, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, following the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) decision to end its ceasefire with the government in November 2022 and the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021.

According to the South Asian Terrorism Portal, Pakistan witnessed 527 terror incidents in 2023, the highest since 2015. These incidents resulted in the deaths of nearly 400 civilians and over 500 security personnel, highlighting the grave impact of terrorism on the country.

KP and Balochistan have been the primary centers of violence, accounting for over 90% of all fatalities and 84% of attacks in Pakistan. These regions have witnessed a surge in terrorism-related activities, including attacks on security forces and civilian targets.

The recent airstrikes inside Afghanistan signal a dangerous escalation in tensions between Pakistan and its neighbor. The situation remains fluid, with both countries exchanging heated rhetoric and accusations. The international community is closely monitoring the situation, hoping for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Russia says 60 dead, 145 injured in concert hall raid; Islamic State group claims responsibility

Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/gunmen-combat-fatigues-open-fire-moscow-concert-hall-108395835>

Mar 22 – Assailants burst into a large concert hall in Moscow on Friday and sprayed the crowd with gunfire, killing over 60 people, injuring more than 100, and setting fire to the venue in a brazen attack just days after President Vladimir Putin cemented his grip on power in a highly orchestrated electoral landslide.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement posted on affiliated channels on social media. A U.S. intelligence official told The Associated Press that U.S. intelligence agencies had learned the group's branch in Afghanistan was planning an attack in Moscow and shared the information with officials. It wasn't immediately clear what happened to the attackers after the raid, which state investigators were investigating as terrorism. The attack, which left the concert hall in flames with roof, was the deadliest in Russia in years and came as the country's war in Ukraine dragged into Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin called the raid a "huge tragedy."

The Kremlin said Putin was informed minutes after the assailants burst into Crocus City Hall, a large music venue on Moscow's western edge that can accommodate 6,200 people.

The attack took place as crowds gathered for a performance by the Russian rock band Picnic. The Investigative Committee, the top state criminal investigation agency, reported early Saturday that more than 60 people were killed. Health authorities released a list of 145 injured — 115 of them hospitalized, including five children. Some Russian news reports suggested more victims could have been trapped by the blaze that erupted after the assailants threw explosives. Video showed the building on fire, with a huge cloud of smoke rising through the night sky. The street was lit up by the blinking blue lights of dozens of firetrucks, ambulances and other

Russian
a collapsing
a third year.



Terrorist attack in Crocus City Hall

Unidentified perpetrators opened fire at spectators of the concert hall. The building was set on fire.



Source: Sputnik

SPUTNIK

emergency vehicles, as fire helicopters buzzed overhead to dump water on the blaze that took hours to contain. The prosecutor's office said several men in combat fatigues entered the concert hall and fired on concertgoers.

Dave Primov, who was in the hall during the attack, described panic and chaos when the attack began.

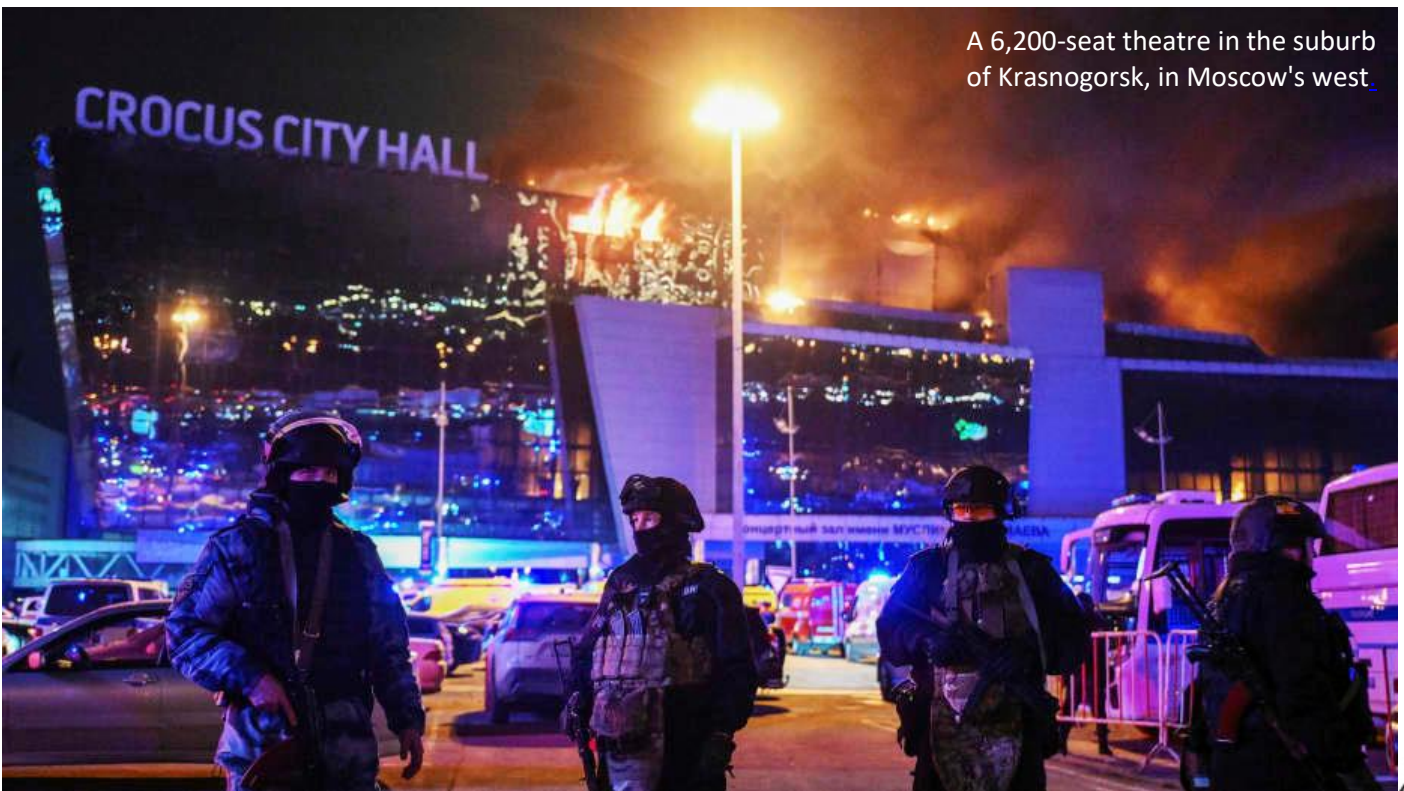
"There were volleys of gunfire," Primov told the AP. "We all got up and tried to move toward the aisles. People began to panic, started to run and collided with each other. Some fell down and others trampled on them." Videos posted by Russian media and on messaging app channels showed men toting assault rifles shooting screaming people at point-blank range. One video showed a man in the auditorium saying the assailants had set it on fire, as gunshots rang out incessantly. **Guards at the concert hall didn't have guns**, and some could have been killed at the start of the attack, Russian media reported. Some Russian news outlets suggested the assailants fled before special forces and riot police arrived. Reports said police patrols were looking for several vehicles the attackers could have used to escape.

In a statement posted by its Amaq news agency, the Islamic State group said it attacked a large gathering of "Christians" in Krasnogorsk on Moscow's outskirts, killing and wounding hundreds. It was not immediately possible to verify the authenticity of the claim.

However, U.S. intelligence officials confirmed the claim by the Islamic State group's branch based in Afghanistan that it was responsible for the Moscow attack, a U.S. official told the AP.

The official said U.S. intelligence agencies had gathered information in

A 6,200-seat theatre in the suburb of Krasnogorsk, in Moscow's west.



recent weeks that the IS branch was planning an attack in Moscow. He said U.S. officials privately shared



the intelligence earlier this month with Russian officials. The official was briefed on the matter but was not authorized to publicly discuss the intelligence information and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Noting that the IS statement cast its claim as an attack targeting Christians, Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, an expert on the terrorist group, said it appeared to reflect the group's strategy of "striking wherever they can as part of a global 'fight the infidels and apostates everywhere.'" In October 2015, a bomb planted by IS downed a Russian passenger plane over Sinai, killing all 224 people on board, most of them Russian vacation-goers returning from Egypt. The group, which operates mainly in Syria and Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Africa, also has claimed several attacks in Russia's volatile Caucasus and other regions in the past years. It recruited fighters from Russia and other parts of former Soviet Union.

On March 7, Russia's top security agency said it thwarted an attack on a synagogue in Moscow by an Islamic State cell, killing several of its members in the Kaluga region near the Russian capital. A few days earlier, Russian authorities said six alleged IS members were killed in a shootout in Ingushetia in Russia's Caucasus region.

On Friday, statements of outrage, shock and support for those affected by the concert call attack streamed in from around the world.

Some commentators on Russian social media questioned how authorities, who relentlessly surveil and pressure Kremlin critics, failed to identify the threat and prevent the attack.

Russian officials said security was tightened at Moscow's airports, railway stations and the capital's sprawling subway system. Moscow's mayor canceled all mass gatherings, and theaters and museums shut for the weekend. Other Russian regions also tightened security.

The Kremlin didn't immediately blame anyone for the attack, but some Russian lawmakers were quick to accuse Ukraine and called for ramping up strikes. Hours before the attack, the Russian military launched a sweeping barrage on Ukraine's power system, crippling the country's biggest hydroelectric plant and other energy facilities and leaving more than a million people without electricity.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said that if Ukraine involvement was proven, all those involved "must be tracked down and killed without mercy, including officials of the state that committed such outrage."

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, denied Ukraine involvement.

"Ukraine has never resorted to the use of terrorist methods," he posted on X. "Everything in this war will be decided only on the battlefield." John Kirby, spokesman for the White House National Security Council, said he couldn't yet speak about the details but "the images are just horrible. And just hard to watch."

Friday's attack followed a statement earlier this month by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow that urged Americans to avoid crowded places in view of "imminent" plans by extremists to target large gatherings in the Russian capital, including concerts. The warning was repeated by several other Western embassies.

National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said Friday the U.S. government had information about a planned attack in Moscow, prompting the State Department advisory to Americans. The U.S. government shared the information with Russian authorities in accordance with its longstanding "duty to warn" policy, Watson said.

Putin, who extended his grip on Russia for another six years in this week's presidential vote after a sweeping crackdown on dissent, denounced the Western warnings as an attempt to intimidate Russians. "All that resembles open blackmail and an attempt to frighten and destabilize our society," he said earlier this week.

Russia was shaken by a series of deadly terror attacks in the early 2000s during the fighting with separatists in the Russian province of Chechnya.

In October 2002, Chechen militants took about 800 people hostage at a Moscow theater. Two days later, Russian special forces stormed the building, and 129 hostages and 41 Chechen fighters died, most from the effects of narcotic gas Russian forces use to subdue the attackers.



In **September 2004**, about 30 Chechen militants seized a school in Beslan in southern Russia taking hundreds of hostages. The siege ended in a bloodbath two days later and more than 330 people, about half of them children, were killed.

Moscow terror attack: Suspects detained as death toll hits 115

Source: <https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-terror-attack-death-toll-suspects-arrested/>



Mar 23 – Russian authorities arrested 11 people in connection with the [terrorist attack](#) on a Moscow concert hall, as the death toll in Friday's shooting rampage rose to more than 100. Four of the people detained were [directly involved](#) in the attack, Russia's Investigative Committee said. The suspects were stopped in the Bryansk region of western Russia, "not far from [the border with Ukraine](#)," it said. The attack at the Crocus City Hall venue killed at least 115 people, including three children, authorities said. More than 100 other people were injured. Searches for more victims "will continue for at least several days," Ria Novosti [reported](#). The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) reported the arrests to Russian President Vladimir Putin, "including four terrorists directly involved in the terrorist attack on Crocus City Hall," Russian news agency Tass [reported](#).



Nasridinov Makhmadrasul, Isonov Rivozhidin, Safolzoda Shokhinjon, and Nazarov Rustam are all from Tajikistan.





A branch of the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the shooting, one of the most serious attacks Moscow has experienced in recent years, the Associated Press [reported](#). After the attack, “the criminals tried to escape by driving towards the Russian-Ukrainian border” and they “had relevant contacts on the Ukrainian side,” the FSB said in a statement, according to state-owned news agency Ria Novosti. “They are currently being transferred to Moscow,” the FSB said.

On March 7, the U.S. Embassy in the Russian capital issued [a warning](#) to U.S. citizens saying it was monitoring “reports that extremists have imminent plans to target large gatherings in Moscow, to include concerts.” The U.S. intelligence services had collected information that a branch of the Islamic State known as ISIS-K and based in Afghanistan was planning an attack on Moscow, the New York Times [reported](#). U.S. officials are said to have shared intelligence on an impending attack with Russian authorities, the newspaper said.

NOTE: All data presented in March issue of the “C2BRNE Diary” regarding the Moscow massacre, are subject to change as time passes by.

Why would Islamic State attack Russia and what does this mean for the terrorism threat globally?

By Greg Barton

Source: <https://theconversation.com/why-would-islamic-state-attack-russia-and-what-does-this-mean-for-the-terrorism-threat-globally-226464>



Mar 24 – It appears almost certain the brutal assault on a Russian crowd settling down to watch a rock concert in Moscow on Friday night was an Islamist terrorist [attack](#).

At least 133 people were left dead and scores more were injured after gunmen with automatic weapons [stormed](#) the Crocus City Hall in Moscow and opened fire, triggering a stampede.



Islamic State [claimed responsibility](#) for the attack, [initially](#) through its Amaq media channel and then directly. The modus operandi of the attack also fits with [previous](#) Islamic State attacks.

It has been widely reported the attack was the work of [Islamic State Khorasan](#) (ISIS-K), a [branch](#) established in 2015 in Afghanistan. So who is this group, why would they attack Russia and what does this mean for the broader terrorism threat?

What is ISIS-K?

ISIS-K is the Islamic State branch that has most consistently and energetically attempted terrorist attacks across Europe, including in [Russia](#). ISIS-K has [planned](#) some 21 [attacks](#) in nine countries in the past year, up from eight the previous year.

ISIS-K had been under tremendous pressure from the Afghan Special Forces and American troops before the United States full withdrew from the country in 2021. Although that pressure has continued under Taliban rule, ISIS-K has [grown in strength](#) in recent years, with several thousand fighters now operating in almost [every](#) one of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

If ISIS-K is indeed responsible for the Moscow attack, we should prepare for further attempted attacks – not just in Russia but across Europe.

European authorities have arrested ISIS-K operatives on multiple occasions. After years of warnings that Islamic State was rebuilding the capacity and resolve to resume an international terrorist campaign, Friday's attack shows the threat is immediate and substantial. Earlier this month, the US, together with five other nations, had [shared](#) intelligence they had of ISIS-K planning for attacks in Moscow. But these warnings were, as recently as last week, [rejected](#) by President Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin as being part of an attempt to discredit Russia.

The attack comes at the worst possible moment for Russia's despotic leader, in the wake of his successful "election campaign" to claim a mandate for a further six years in power.

And it is perhaps for this reason that Putin's five-minute televised [address](#) on Saturday, in which he directed blame toward Ukraine, came so late.

We don't yet know whether the Kremlin will continue to [blame](#) Ukraine or the West for the attack, or if it will pivot to accept Islamic State was responsible.

Either way, it's likely to respond with a wave of violence, cracking down on Russia's Muslim minority communities in the North Caucasus region and beyond.

Why would they target Russia?

Both Islamic State in general, and ISIS-K in particular, have long proclaimed their intention of striking Russia.

They have [cited](#) Russia's earlier military occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s and its long history of crackdowns on Muslim communities in Russia, particularly in the North Caucasus. They have also cited Russia's role in providing a lifeline to the brutal regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

But it was also likely [opportunity and personnel](#) that led the group to select a soft target in Moscow, as much as anything else.

Islamic State carried out multiple [attacks](#) in Russia from 2016–19, while several more plots were disrupted from 2021–23.

Many of the ISIS-K militants [arrested](#) across Europe, including in Russia, over the past two years have been Russian nationals and people from Central Asia with links to Russia.

The most recent arrests occurred this month when Russian authorities claimed they prevented a planned attack on a [synagogue](#) in Moscow.

And last month, a Russian national accused of having Islamic State links was arrested in [Poland](#), while another was [arrested](#) working at a nuclear facility under construction in Turkey.

In recent years, the vast majority of successful ISIS-K [attacks](#) have been in Afghanistan, with many targeting the minority Shia Muslim Hazara community.

For instance, the group launched a massive suicide bombing outside the [Kabul airport](#) in August 2021, in the midst of the chaotic evacuation of Kabul, which resulted in around 170 civilians and 13 US military personnel being killed.

ISIS-K also carried out a [bombing of the Russian Embassy](#) in Kabul in September 2022, killing at least six.

In January of this year, ISIS-K [launched](#) a massive suicide bombing in Kerman, Iran, killing nearly 100 people at a ceremony to mark the fourth anniversary of the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani.

What next for Putin and the broader terrorism threat?

Terrorist attacks, including those in brutal regimes like Iran or Russia, are tragic assaults on ordinary people who are not to blame for the politics of policies of the governments they are forced to live under.



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – March 2024

When attacked, authoritarian regimes tend to respond with brutal reprisals that are likely to lead to cycles of violence, with less restraint and accountability than is typically the case with counter-terrorism operations in open societies.

Friday night's attack in Moscow was nightmarish, but sadly the horror is likely to be just the beginning.

Regardless of how Putin and the Kremlin choose to respond, the attack comes as a reminder that the threat of terrorism posed by groups like Islamic State and al-Qaeda is now on the rise again. After five years of mostly operating in western Asia, the Middle East and Africa, these groups now pose a renewed threat to the West.

The continued [growth](#) of both ISIS-K and al-Qaeda under Taliban rule in Afghanistan should concern us much more than we have been acknowledging.

Friday's attack is a clear reminder we should not look away and continue to wash our hands of any attempt to improve things in Afghanistan. There are no easy answers, but turning away and doing nothing will only make the situation worse.

Greg Barton is Chair in Global Islamic Politics, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation; Scholar -In-Residence Asia Society Australia, Deakin University.

Unraveling the tangle of attack



According to data released by the Russian intelligence services a short time ago, it shows the leader of the Islamic terrorists who led the deadly attack in Moscow, Abdulhakim Shishani (Abdulhakim Shishani in the red circle of the photo), in the Russia-Ukraine border area near the city of Belgorod, during the attempt of Ukrainians to enter Russian territory.

Shishani, the Russians say, has been in Ukraine for a long time, and is the link between the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (GUR) and Islamic terrorists who fight in the ranks of Ukrainian troops as mercenaries.

The arrested terrorists shortly before entering the territory of Ukraine and managed to escape, were arrested after a chase by the special unit of the FSB and named Abdullah Shishani, as the head of the planning and execution of the operation,

Russia adds 'LGBT movement' to list of extremist and terrorist organisations

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-adds-lgbt-movement-list-extremist-terrorist-organisations-2024-03-22/>

Mar 22 – Russia has added what it calls the "LGBT movement" to a list of extremist and terrorist organisations, state media said on Friday. The move was in line with a [ruling](#) by Russia's Supreme Court



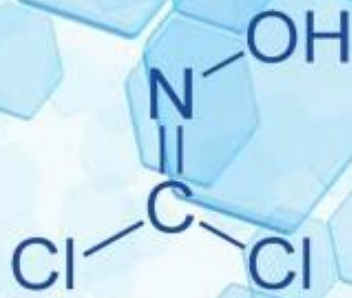
ICI C²BRNE DIARY – March 2024

last November that LGBT activists should be designated as extremists, a move that representatives of gay and transgender people said they feared would lead to arrests and prosecutions.

The list is maintained by an agency called Rosfinmonitoring that has powers to freeze the bank accounts of the more than 14,000 people and entities designated as extremists and terrorists. They range from Al Qaeda to U.S. tech giant Meta and associates of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. The new listing refers to the "international LGBT social movement and its structural units", state news agency RIA said. As part of a shift under President Vladimir Putin towards what he portrays as family values that contrast with decadent Western attitudes, Russia has tightened restrictions over the past decade on expressions of sexual orientation and gender identity. Among other steps, it has passed laws outlawing the promotion of "non-traditional" sexual relations and banned legal or medical changes of gender.



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



C²BRNE
DIARY



CHEM NEWS



Russia's FSB Foils Ukrainian Chemical Weapons Terror Plot in Zaporozhye Region

Source: <https://sputnikglobe.com/20240227/russias-fsb-thwarted-terrorist-attack-in-zaporozhye-region-1117007948.html>

Feb 27 – Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) thwarted a planned terrorist attack in the Zaporozhye region that would have involved the use of a **BZ chemical warfare agent analogue**, adding that three citizens of Ukraine were detained, the security agency announced on Tuesday. "Russia's Federal Security Service foiled an attempt by the Ukrainian special services to commit an act of terrorism in the Zaporozhye region using an analogue of the BZ chemical warfare agent per NATO classification. The seized substances are used to create chemical weapons of mass destruction and were developed in the US. Three citizens of Ukraine were apprehended," the FSB said in a statement.

The Investigation Department of the Federal Security Service of Russia has opened and is investigating a criminal case under Article 355 (Development, production, stockpiling, acquisition or sale of weapons of mass destruction) and Article 205 (Terrorist act) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. During a briefing held a week ago by Lieutenant-General Igor Kirillov, who heads the Russian Armed Forces' radiological, chemical, and biological defense forces, revealed the discovery of a Ukrainian stockpile containing an analog of the poisonous chemical agent BZ in Melitopol.

At the briefing, Lieutenant-General Kirillov stated that the substance was found on January 28, stored in vials labeled "**Biosporin**" in Ukrainian. According to publicly available information,

BZ (3-quinuclidinyl benzilate) is a toxic psycho-chemical warfare agent, causing acute psychosis, disorientation, and hallucination. It is an odorless, environmentally stable, white crystalline powder with anticholinergic activity. It was discovered by the Swiss pharmaceutical company Hoffman-LaRoche in 1951. BZ is currently the only incapacitating chemical agent in the military stockpile. **Its use in Vietnam has been reported by Pierre Darcourt of L'express**, who described in some detail an attack by the 1st Airmobile Division, involving BZ hand grenades, which took place in March 1966.

The other side of the moon

Source: <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/28716>



Biosporin is a Ukrainian-manufactured "probiotic," used to treat indigestion and other intestinal conditions caused by a bacterial imbalance in the gut that was originally developed in Ukraine's Institute of Microbiology and Virology of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Unless the contents in the seized vials have been replaced, they are in no way dangerous.

Avon Protection Launches EXOSKIN-S1 CBRN Suit

Source: <https://www.joint-forces.com/defence-equipment-news/71403-avon-protection-launches-exoskin-s1-cbrn-suit>

Feb 26 – Avon Protection, a leader in innovative CBRN personal protective equipment, proudly introduces its new EXOSKIN-S1 CBRN protective suit, a pivotal addition to its range of CBRN protective wear. This



launch marks a significant milestone in Avon Protection's mission to deliver advanced protective capabilities for individuals operating in a CBRN threat environment worldwide.



The EXOSKIN-S1 suit, EXOSKIN-B1 boots and EXOSKIN-G1 gloves, and FM50 respirator system [© Avon Protection]

Designed to meet the rigorous NATO AEP-38 standard, the EXOSKIN-S1 offers unmatched defence against vapour, liquid and particulate Chemical Warfare Agents (CWA), Toxic Industrial Chemical (TIC) and biological threats for up to 24 hours at a time, giving the wearer continuous protection for extended operational durations. It integrates seamlessly with Avon Protection's range of EXOSKIN CBRN protective wear and respiratory systems while maximising the safety, comfort and agility of operators in the field. The EXOSKIN-S1 suit completed its MIST testing to achieve the AEP-38 standard as part of Avon Protection's integrated outer protection ensemble, which includes the EXOSKIN boots and gloves. Achieving the AEP-38 standard means, that for the first time, users can purchase a full-body CBRN protective system from a single supplier, along with Avon Protection's market-leading range of CBRN respirators and accessories.

"Our goal is to take full responsibility for the entire protection system by controlling the design, integration and performance of all the components needed to keep personnel safe while operating in complex CBRN environments," Justin Hine, Director of Strategy & Capability at Avon Protection, said. "In doing so, we are approaching the CBRN protection market in a novel way: users can acquire their life-protecting ensemble equipment from a single supplier who is accountable for the entire CBRN equipment ecosystem, all while benefiting from the superior safety and assurance of the Avon Protection brand they know and trust."

Engineered with a cotton poly outer layer and activated carbon inner lining, the EXOSKIN-S1 features an integrated hood with a double elasticated aperture for a secure seal around the wearer's respirator. Hook and loop adjustable tabs on the lower legs, and an inner leg gaiter with stirrup prevent ingress at the ankle, and a unique smart layer design with a thumb loop prevents ingress at the wrist. The suit also features two jacket zip designs with hook and loop fastening for improved integration with body armour.

With NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) contracts for its EXOSKIN boots and gloves, as well as the FM50 respirator and accessories, Avon Protection remains at the forefront of CBRN protective technology. Its extensive range of CBRN respiratory technologies, including Air Purifying Respirators



(APRs), escape devices, Powered Air Purifying Respirators (PAPR), and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), delivers protection to over 4 million users worldwide.

Preventing chemical weapon re-emergence by countering chemical terrorism

Source: <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2024/03/preventing-chemical-weapon-re-emergence-countering-chemical-terrorism>



OPCW Working Group on Terrorism conducts first ever Tabletop exercise on chemical terrorism

Mar 04 – The OPCW Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) met in its first session of 2024 at the Headquarters of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to review activities from 2023 and elaborate on future plans. The risk of chemical weapons being used by non-state actors has been identified as an emerging challenge in the struggle for a world free of chemical weapons and poses a growing risk for all countries. The possibility of non-state actors using chemical weapons is furthered by technology advances, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools which could aid chemical synthesis and novel delivery mechanisms, such as drones.

The OEWG-T forms the nucleus of efforts by OPCW Member States in addressing the growing risk of chemical terrorism. Its first meeting for 2024 reviewed activities from the previous year, culminating in a two-day Tabletop Exercise organised in November 2023 with financial support from the European Union and facilitated by the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

The Tabletop Exercise centred around a simulated scenario of a chemical attack which participants were asked to manage and react to, and to develop best-practice recommendations for future action. Forty-eight participating professionals from 24 OPCW Member States shared recommendations for best practices, drawing on their personal and national expertise in emergency response, law enforcement, diplomacy, chemical industry, the military, and chemical incident investigation.

The Chair of the OEWG-T, H.E Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa, called on Member States to act: “Even after the destruction of the last declared stockpiles of chemical weapons in July 2023, we continue to live in precarious times, when there are still such weapons that may emerge in the hands



of non-state actors, which continues to pose a serious threat to international security. The insights gained from the Tabletop Exercise can significantly contribute to strengthening our global response mechanisms against the threat of chemical terrorism. Let us use the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism to enhance our knowledge, sharpen our skills and unify our efforts towards a safer and more secure world.”

The importance of the exercise in the current global environment was also highlighted by Mr. Marcin Wroblewski Director of the OPCW's Office of Strategy and Policy, stating: “Chemical terrorism is a significant emerging threat; terrorist actors using new technologies have unprecedented access to chemical weapons of mass destruction.”



Working group participants view demonstration of OPCW's mobile laboratory capabilities.

The Exercise's unique value was its simulation of the full life cycle of an imagined chemical terrorist attack, moving from pre-attack to immediate response and crisis management, to a post-attack investigation. This format challenged participants with the simultaneous and interrelated challenges of preparation, response, investigation, communications, and security following an incident. It required participants to develop comprehensive practical and efficient responses capturing the full effects of any choices made.

The Tabletop Exercise delivered key lessons for national chemical counterterrorism strategies. In their final evaluation, participants noted broad challenges of incident response, including holistic and comprehensive incident management, considered health, public security, communications, and emergency response implications, and urged all States to develop a centralised crisis command and control centre. Participants further emphasised the importance of clear and timely crisis communications to mitigate public panic and to counter mis- and disinformation.

Finally, participants noted that capacity building and preparation formed the bedrock of effective response. This ranged from having effective legislation and laboratory capacity in place, to having an established diplomatic framework to ensure rapid access to international assistance and dedicated expertise during the incident and investigation.

Participants expressed a broad satisfaction the success of the Exercise. Representatives from the Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office remarked: “The knowledge and lived examples shared during the table-top exercise was valuable to explain and give context to potential incidents and for



countries to take away tangible ways that the learnings that can be applied and shared with our industry and government stakeholders.”

Drawing from these outcomes, the OEWG-T highlighted five steps for consideration:

1. The importance of additional assistance — from OPCW and bilateral — in capacity building and implementation;
2. Conducting further practical exercises at a regional level to address local circumstances;
3. A mechanism to incorporate policies addressing emerging technological challenges and opportunities;
4. Streamlining OPCW efforts with those of other relevant international bodies such as INTERPOL or the World Customs Organisation; and
5. Streamlining information sharing among States Parties to provide a common knowledge base.

H.E. Ambassador Mika-Markus Leinonen, European Union Liaison Officer in The Hague noted on the long-term relevance of these steps and EU's support in the organisation of the Exercise that: “In the post-destruction phase, the European Union places the utmost importance on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. We are proud to have supported the first-ever OPCW Tabletop Exercise on how to prevent and respond to a chemical weapons attack by terrorists.”



Participants at the tabletop exercise on chemical terrorism held at the OPCW ChemTech Centre in November 2023.

Background

The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) is the main body at the OPCW for the coordination and discussion of policy measures to address chemical terrorism. The OEWG-T is an open group facilitated by but not part of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, in which any Member State can choose to attend any particular meeting or organised exercise. The Group gives Members States a venue for collective action and debate, with support, facilitation, and technical advice available from the Technical Secretariat.

As the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW, with its 193 Member States, oversees the global endeavour to permanently eliminate chemical weapons. Since the Convention's entry



into force in 1997, it is the most successful disarmament treaty eliminating an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. In 2023 the OPCW verified that all chemical weapons stockpiles declared by the 193 States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention since 1997 — totalling 72,304 metric tonnes of chemical agents — were irreversibly destroyed under the OPCW's strict verification regime.

Evacuation, decontamination drill hones troops' disaster preparedness in Thailand

By Alex Wilson | Stars and Stripes

Source: https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2024-03-03/cobra-gold-thailand-evacuation-13200102.html



A U.S. Marine, left, who specializes in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense, leads decontamination training during the Cobra Gold exercise in Rayong, Thailand, on March 3, 2024.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Are the Level-C PPEs worn waterproof as well? A chemical apron might be a good idea!

Mar 04 — Soldiers in protective gear breathed steadily through respirators outside a Thai airport hangar, where they prepared on Sunday to screen a group of volunteers for radiation during a simulated evacuation. Despite their imposing appearance, the soldiers patiently processed a group of about 50 role players from Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand and the United States. The drill was one piece of Cobra Gold, the largest military exercise in mainland Southeast Asia, according to the Army. The annual drills brought 4,500 U.S. service members from the four branches together with troops from Thailand, the host nation, and 30 other countries, including Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea. In the case of any large-scale disaster, the military will almost always play a significant role, said Col. Patrick Blankenship, assistant chief of staff of G9 civil affairs for the Army's I Corps. "Cobra Gold and this exercise is a premier time, location and opportunity to exercise these things," he told Stars and Stripes on Sunday. "I think this reflects the professional character of our militaries being able to work together with other militaries to do this." Troops from the U.S., Thailand and Japan, specially trained in



chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense, or CBRN, led the decontamination drill. No real radiation was involved, but the teams employed specialized equipment to check for it and after a search for contraband like weapons or drugs directed role players to gender-appropriate showers. “We were just using soap for this operation, just due to it being a radiation threat, and soapy water can take a lot of radiation particles off of you,” Marine Sgt. Jaden Graham, a CBRN specialist from Boise, Idaho, told Stars and Stripes.

The drill was meant to simulate as close as possible a real-world evacuation and prepare participants for any future disaster. It also provided the troops a chance to learn about their counterparts’ CBRN defense capabilities, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nick Weidner, who led the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit’s CBRN team. “When we do other partnerships, understanding what capabilities they bring to the table is a large one, and also seeing what they do for their training,” he said ahead of the drill. “It’s their capabilities, their training and figuring out how they communicate – that’s probably been the biggest barrier.” After the decontamination process, role players were directed to the nearby hangar where they were separated by nationality, had their passports and other documents verified and were screened for medical issues by teams from their respective countries. The drill remained dynamic throughout the morning. In some cases, role players failed to provide identification; in others, they became irate with their handlers and had to be detained. By the afternoon, major changes were introduced and threw more wrenches into the plan, including a scenario in which Japanese and Thai aircraft backed out because of bad weather, said Marine 1st Lt. Kaylee MacKenzie, who coordinated the American evacuation. “Now it’s only U.S. aircraft that has to evacuate the five different countries here,” she said during the drill. “It takes a lot of cross-coordinating, and ultimately that’s been one of the biggest things that I’ve had to really learn and get really good at.” The decontamination and evacuation process can be used to react to a plethora of situations, Weidner said. During the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, damage to weapons production facilities or clandestine chemical labs often required CBRN response teams, he said. On the civilian side, a natural disaster such as a wildfire or earthquake could damage an industrial chemical factory. The two-week Cobra Gold exercise concludes Thursday.

China: Scientists develop sensor to detect chemical weapons remotely

Source: <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/china-sensor-to-detect-chemical-weapons>



Mar 06 – Chinese scientists claim to have successfully developed a new wireless sensor for detecting chemical warfare agents (CWA). Being passive, the new sensor could significantly improve public safety by monitoring CWAs.

The device can identify substances like dimethyl methylphosphonate (DMMP), a stimulant for nerve agents. [CWA simulants](#) have chemical structures similar to real agents but are less toxic.

The new device does not require a direct power source or physical connection to work and is extremely reliable and efficient when monitoring for chemical threats.

This sensor is highly sensitive, compact, and has a rapid response, which makes it ideal for early detection of CWAs, especially remotely.

As the researchers highlight in a peer-reviewed study on the sensor, accurately detecting and monitoring CWAs is crucial for effective defense operations in military or civilian settings.

However, due to their dangerous nature, research is usually limited to authorized laboratories using simulants that replicate the chemical structure of CWAs without their toxic effects.

Sensor can detect chemical weapons remotely

Chemical warfare (CW) is among the most brutal Weapons of Mass Destruction created by mankind in comparison to biological and nuclear warfare. Such weapons are relatively cheap and easy to produce, even by small terrorist groups. This makes them a dangerous tool for creating mass casualties in small quantities.

“Chemical agents or ‘chemical warfare agents’ (chemical weapons) are chemicals used to cause intentional death or harm through their toxic properties,” explains the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction ([UNDRR](#)).

Munitions, devices, and other equipment that are created to weaponize toxic chemicals fall under the category of chemical weapons. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) prohibits the use of toxic chemicals, their precursors, and biological toxins. To this end, many nations, [like the United States](#), have made efforts to destroy any existing stockpiles of such weapons over the years.

In their study, Chinese researchers developed a novel wireless sensor system using surface acoustic wave (SAW) technology. The sensor operates at 433 MHz. It uses a unique coating of fluoroalcohol polysiloxane (SXFA) on a lithium niobate substrate, improving sensitivity and stability under different environmental conditions, claim the scientists.



It offers revolutionary CWA early-detection

The sensor's core is built around a YZ lithium niobate with interdigital transducers (IDTs) and an antenna. The interaction of SXFA film with DMMP changes the SAW's properties, allowing accurate detection.

This design is capable of stable operation within a 0-90 cm transmission range. It is resilient across a wide temperature range of -30 °C to 100 °C and humidity levels up to 60% relative humidity (RH).

According to the research team, this sensor system marks a significant leap forward in CWA detection technology. Its passive wireless nature allows operation in inaccessible or hazardous areas, ensuring safety and efficiency.

The technology has enormous potential in both military and civilian defense, providing a reliable and efficient method for early detection of CWA. Its wireless operation and ability to work in challenging environments make it a valuable tool in ensuring public safety and preparedness against chemical threats.

●► You can review the study for yourself in the journal [Microsystems & Nanoengineering](#).

Study abstract:

Long-term monitoring of environmental warfare agents is a challenge for chemical gas sensors. To address this issue, we developed a 433 MHz passive wireless surface acoustic wave (WSAW) gas sensor for dimethyl methylphosphonate (DMMP) detection. This WSAW gas sensor includes a YZ lithium niobate (LiNbO₃) substrate with metallic interdigital transducers (IDTs) etched on it, and an antenna was placed near the IDT. A DMMP-sensitive viscoelastic polymer fluoroalcoholpolysiloxane (SXFA) film was prepared on a LiNbO₃ substrate, and mode modeling coupling was used to optimize the design parameters. The sensor can function properly in an environment between -30 °C and 100 °C with humidity less than 60% RH. When the wireless transmission distance was within the range of 0-90 cm, the sensor noise increased with distance, and the stability was less than 32°/h.

While optimizing the film thickness of SXFA, a relationship was observed between sensor sensitivity and film thickness. When the film thickness of SXFA reached 450 nm, the optimal value was reached. At a distance of 20 cm between the transmitting and receiving antennas, DMMP was detected at different concentrations with the developed WSAW gas sensor. The lower detection limit of DMMP was 0.48 mg/m³, the sensitivity of the sensor was 4.63°/(mg/m³), and repeatable performance of the sensor was confirmed.

Finland to send expert to support Ukraine in preparing for CBRN risks

Source: <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/finland-to-send-expert-to-support-ukraine-in-preparing-for-cbrn-risks>

Mar 05 – Ukraine has requested assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in preparing for threats related to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear agents. Finland responds to the request by sending an expert to join the EU's international team. The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), operating under the European Commission, has put together an international team to support Ukraine in identifying and preparing for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats. Some of the seconded experts work in Ukraine and some in Poland. Finland will send the expert to join the team in Poland.

Finland is an active provider of expert assistance

International civil protection operations refer to the provision of assistance under international treaties and legislation. Operations are undertaken in situations such as natural or man-made disasters and incidents that overwhelm the country's own response capacities. Finland participates in international civil protection operations through the European Union and international organisations. Any country can request assistance via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism if it faces a crisis that it cannot handle alone. Requests for assistance are coordinated by the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) operating under the European Commission. Assistance provided through the Civil Protection Mechanism is based on national resources. The assistance may take the form of specialised rescue teams or expert and material assistance.

The Ministry of the Interior decides on the provision of international assistance in the field of rescue services, that is, civil protection. The Emergency Services Academy Finland is the employer of seconded experts and bears responsibility for the training, recruitment and logistics of experts and the practical implementation of international civil protection operations.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: It sounds a bit hypocritical to ask for assistance for CBRNE threats. Why don't they ask Americans directly?



ARZ 2023 (March 2024)

ARZ 2023 is a 3-day inter-agency field exercise and will focus on key aspects of detection and response to Chemical, Radiological, and Nuclear security threats. The exercise is funded by European Commission Foreign Policy Instrument (DG FPI) and it is carried out with the support of UNICRI (the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute), the ISTC (International Science and Technology Center), Fondazione SAFE and the on-site assistance expert of the EU CBRN Centre of Excellence Regional Secretariat in the Middle East, under the leadership of the CBRN National Coordinator and CoE National Focal Point of Lebanon. These exercises will constitute a follow-up of the Field Exercise ARZ 2021, ensuring continuity with the previous field exercise, further improving and testing the capacities to respond to CBRN events, and supporting the revision of the existing interagency SOP. ARZ 2023 was postponed and finally conducted in March 2024 in Beirut, Lebanon.



EDITOR'S COMMENT: There is something called "environmental protection from contaminated wastewater". If you cannot do it right during the training period, you will not do it right during the real thing.

Retired US Army Chemical Corps lieutenant colonel welcomed into Order of the Dragon

Source: https://www.army.mil/article/274299/retired_us_army_chemical_corps_lieutenant_colonel_welcomed_into_order_of_the_dragon

Mar 06 – A retired U.S. Army Chemical Corps officer was inducted into the Chemical Corps Regimental Association's Order of the Dragon on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Feb. 28.

Antonio J. Amos, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and senior Army civilian, was welcomed into the order that recognizes current and former Soldiers, Army civilians and other individuals who have contributed to the promotion of the Chemical Corps.



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – March 2024

Maj. Gen. Daryl O. Hood, the commanding general of the 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) Command, inducted Amos into the order.



Headquartered on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, the 20th CBRNE Command is the U.S. military's premier multifunctional CBRNE command. American Soldiers and U.S. Army civilians from the 20th CBRNE Command take on the world's most



dangerous hazards in support of joint, interagency and multinational operations.

With units on 19 bases in 16 states, the 20th CBRNE Command is home to 75 percent of the active-duty U.S. Army's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) specialists, as well as the 1st Area Medical Laboratory, CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity, five Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordination Teams and three Nuclear Disablement Teams (Infrastructure).

Amos served together with Hood during two previous Army assignments.

"I have known Maj. Gen. Hood for over 25 years," said Amos. "We served together at the U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in various positions in the 84th Chemical Battalion. He is a great leader and someone for whom I have great admiration and respect."

Amos currently serves as the chief of Plans and Future Operations (G3/5) at the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM).

He is responsible for synchronizing, integrating and coordinating actions supporting the successful management of strategic plans and programs across the CECOM Life Cycle Management Command (LCMC) and Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Materiel Enterprise (C5ISR-M).

"I continued my service as an Army civilian because it gave me an opportunity to serve the Army I love in another capacity," said Amos.

Originally from New Orleans, Amos served in the U.S. Army for 25 years and deployed for Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

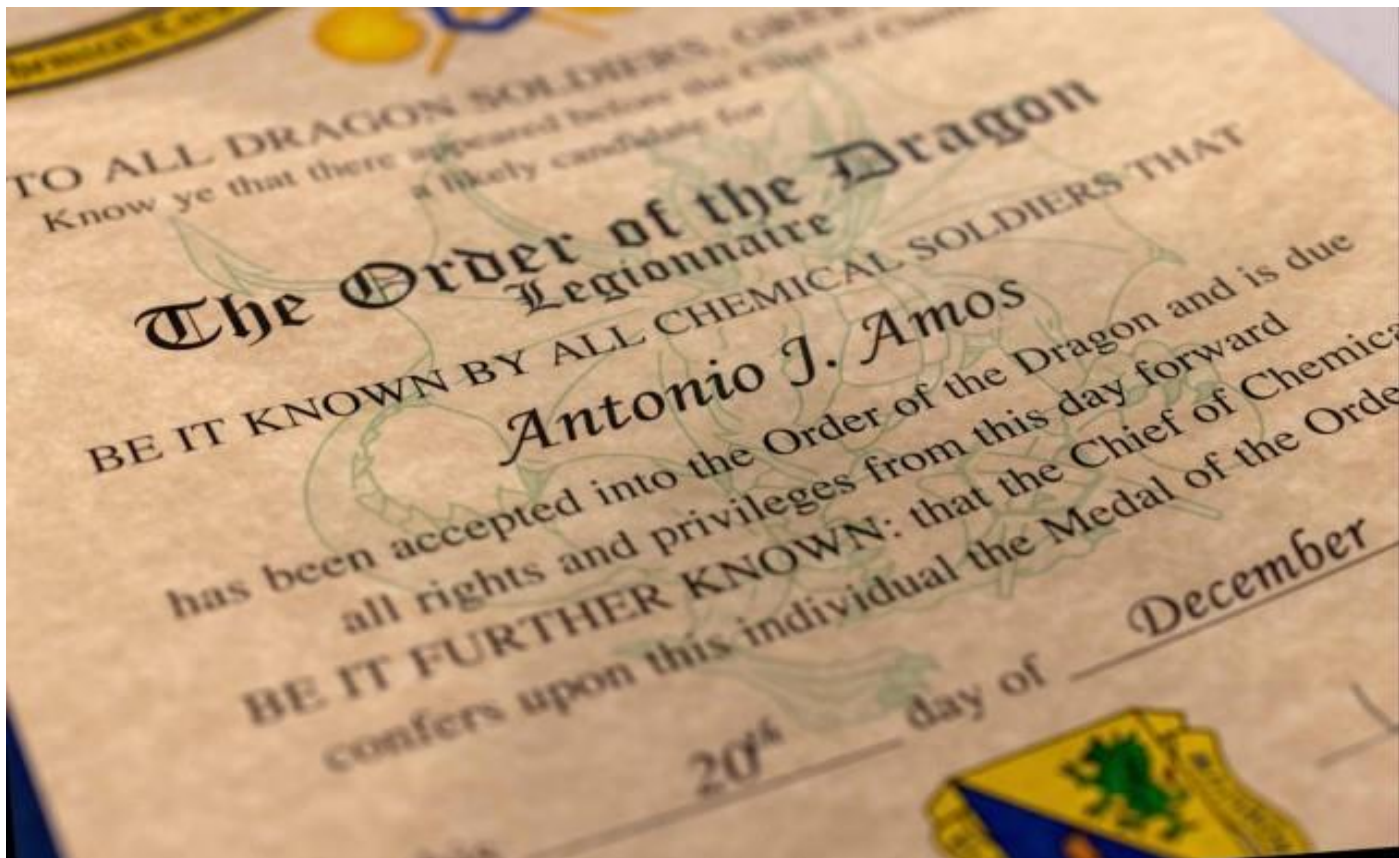
He worked at the White House, Pentagon and U.S. Central Command.

Amos earned his bachelor's degree in biology from University of Notre Dame. He also earned master's degrees in systems engineering from Johns Hopkins University and administration from Central Michigan



University. Amos said that serving as the commander of the 21st Chemical Company in the 82nd Airborne Division was one of the highlights of his U.S. Army career.

“I had the pleasure of serving with some of the most professional and combat-ready Soldiers imaginable,” said Amos. “I truly believe we were the best company in the division and represented the Chemical Corps well. Also serving as the CBRN Defense Program Manager in the White House Military Office was a highlight. But the real highlight of my career was meeting and serving with incredible Soldiers, civilians and family members.”



Often called Dragon Soldiers, CBRN officers and specialists assess, protect and mitigate Weapons of Mass Destruction and other CBRN hazards.

Amos encouraged today's CBRN Soldiers to take advantage of the numerous opportunities for growth and development available in the Army Chemical Corps.

“Diversify your Army experience by serving in various types of organizations, take advantage of the opportunities presented to you, learn everything you can, stay proficient in both CBRN and Army operations and help others along the way,” said Amos.

As the latest inductee into the Order of the Dragon, Amos was recognized for his steadfast commitment to the CBRN community and dedication to the Chemical Corps.

“I was humbled and honored to be inducted into the Order of the Dragon,” said Amos. “The highlight was receiving the award from Maj. Gen. Hood in the presence of other distinguished leaders and friends, including the CECOM deputy to the commanding general, Ms. Liz Miranda, retired Sgt. Maj. Bruce Griffin and my current team from the CECOM G3/5 Plans and Future Operations Branch.”



The 2024 China-US AI Dialogue Should Start With an Eye on Chem-Bio Weapons

By David Heslop and Joel Keep

Source: <https://thediplomat.com/2024/03/the-2024-china-us-ai-dialogue-should-start-with-an-eye-on-chem-bio-weapons/>

Mar 09 – In January 2024, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Beijing’s most senior diplomat, Wang Yi, held a low-key meeting in Bangkok. There, tentative plans were reportedly made for a [China-U.S. dialogue](#) on the risks posed by the new generation of artificial intelligence platforms, to be held sometime in the northern spring of this year. For many in the health security and arms control communities, this is a welcome development. Determining exactly what the priority issues are, however, seems to be a challenge for policymakers on both sides. U.S. officials have already voiced apprehension over the potential for AI-powered disinformation to corrupt democratic elections; Chinese authorities are no doubt worried about what the technology might mean for maintaining control over their population. Both governments have been exploring the many military applications that could be of use in the China-U.S. competition, from aerodynamics to autonomous targeting. However, a particular suite of AI platforms presents a risk to both countries, should they fall in the wrong hands – namely, tools with the potential to aid in the construction of biological and chemical weapons.



A Shared Interest

Most media reportage on the intersection of “chem-bio” weapons and new AI platforms has focused on large language models (LLMs), and the potential for them to provide actionable instructions for creating biological agents. A [now-infamous exercise](#) held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is often cited, in which students managed to elicit instructions from an LLM for acquiring and releasing a range of viruses. However, more recent analyses, including those [conducted by the RAND Corporation](#), have shown that LLMs provide little more help than the internet for unskilled actors seeking to obtain a viable biological weapon. While there remains some disagreement in this domain, it seems unlikely that an untrained individual using a chatbot would have the requisite tacit knowledge needed to make a deployable bioweapon, an undertaking that would require years of experience in wet labs.

A more serious danger is posed by a lesser-known class of AI platforms called biological design tools (BDTs). Since 2023, security [researchers at the University of Oxford](#), the [Nuclear Threat Initiative](#), and elsewhere have been appealing for the security community to take a long, hard look at these systems and their potential for weaponization. Among the most mature BDTs are protein design tools. These AI systems carry immense promise for human health, given their potential for helping in the design of novel molecules for the next generation of life-saving drugs. But they could also unleash a proliferation of technical expertise that could be used for malicious ends. The potential for protein tools to help design toxin weapons, such as ricin or botulinum toxin, has already [been explored](#). Using BDTs to aid in the construction of more complex pathogens, such as viruses with long, complex genomes, may soon be feasible (although many viruses have been reconstructed and revived in recent years [without](#) such tools, albeit by experienced scientists). There are a range of [other AI-powered biological platforms](#) that could be exploited by malicious actors: viral vector design tools, genome assembly tools, toxicity prediction tools, and others. When combined with the increasingly accessible and cost-effective ingredients of synthetic biology, the security implications of these new systems are real.

Most researchers believe that AI-driven biological design tools still require a solid base of technical knowledge and practical expertise to make proper use of them. However, it is clear these new platforms are both lowering the informational barriers to bioengineering, and “raising the ceiling” of potential harm for those who might misuse them.

The world of chemical weapons is also profoundly impacted by generative AI. In 2022, a private company showed how their AI-powered molecule generator could [produce a litany of chemical warfare agents](#), including the nerve agent VX, and a range of other as-yet-unseen molecules that have offensive potential. In 2023, a team of chemists built an [“LLM-powered chemistry engine”](#) that could perform complex operations when given simple text commands, such as “plan and execute the synthesis of an insect repellent.” One can imagine the risk of such a system in the hands of a militant group bent on destruction.

A Shared Opportunity

While there are many points of contention between the United States and China on the future of AI, neither power wants to see chemical and biological weapons spread any further than they already have. Talks on



strategic nuclear controls may be difficult, but this is one area in which there are clear, shared interests. Both countries have publicly stated their distaste for such weapons. The United States [recently completed](#) the destruction of its historical chemical weapons stockpile. China, which was the victim of biological and chemical warfare during World War II, has allowed hundreds of inspections on its territory by officials from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and maintains chemical control lists on par with that of the Australia Group.

Domestic regulations aimed at controlling new AI platforms are only in their formative stages in both countries. Most, in the Chinese case, have focused on the implications for “social stability”; in the United States, concern has revolved around threats to job security, information integrity, and democratic processes. And while military applications of AI have been discussed in some policy documents, there has been little focus on the connection with “chem-bio” weapons. U.S. President Joe Biden’s recent [Executive Order](#) on the Safe, Secure and Trustworthy Development of Artificial Intelligence is the first significant step in this direction. Section 4.4 of the Executive Order calls on the Department of Homeland Security to assess how artificial intelligence might enhance chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats. A related component of the order focuses on nucleic acid synthesis technology – the increasingly accessible suite of machines that are used to make custom DNA and RNA. These “desktop” synthesizers, which can sit on any lab bench, are a key enabling technology in synthetic biology. Biological agents remain theoretical for as long as they are digital – the key interception point is where they are made physical. For this reason, many of the non-proliferation experts [we have interviewed](#) in recent months say targeting regulations at the “[digital-physical frontier](#)” of synthetic biology and artificial intelligence is a key priority. Cooperation between Washington and Beijing on “chem-bio-AI” would also benefit the leadership of both nations politically. The death and misery wrought by COVID-19 has demonstrated the destructive power of an infectious biological agent, whatever its provenance. Both countries emerged from the pandemic deeply affected, with scores of deaths and infections on both sides, and a legacy of distrust between the two capitals amid disagreements on who was to blame for the catastrophe. Embarking on concrete steps for controlling the intersection of chemistry, synthetic biology and artificial intelligence would signal a fresh start, and herald a new commitment to global health security.

Algeria warns of Israel occupation possibly using chemical weapons in Gaza

Source: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240309-algeria-warns-of-israel-occupation-possibly-using-chemical-weapons-in-gaza/>

Mar 09 – Algeria alerted the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that the Israeli occupation may resort to using chemical weapons in its aggression against the Gaza Strip, given its insistence on violating international law.

This came after [Algeria was elected](#), through Permanent Representative of Algeria to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for the African region Ambassador Salima Abdelhak, to assume the position of vice-president of the Organisation’s Executive Council for a one-year term starting from 12 May, 2024.

In her speech during the discussion at the 105th session of the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, held in The Hague on 5-8 March, Ambassador Abdelhak warned against: “The risks of the re-emergence of chemical weapons and the threat of their use by non-state actors, particularly in the context of ongoing armed conflicts worldwide.”

She also expressed: “Algeria’s concerns regarding the Palestinian tragedy and condemned the acts and atrocities committed by the Israeli occupier against the Palestinian people in blatant violation of international law.”

Abdelhak highlighted: “The risk that the occupying power may resort to the use of chemical weapons in its war against the Palestinians, given that the Zionist occupation is not a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and is not bound by its provisions.”

In the same context, the ambassador stressed: “Algeria’s support for the request for assistance submitted by the State of Palestine to the Technical Secretariat related to opening an investigation into the use of this type of weapon in Palestine.” She also called on the Technical Secretariat to: “Provide Member States on a regular basis with information about the results of these investigations.”

Abdelhak noted: “The tragic and catastrophic situation in Gaza confirms the need for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to continue its efforts to ensure the comprehensiveness of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the compliance of all states with its provisions.” The representative of Algeria also emphasised: “The increasing threat of chemical terrorism due to the spread of hotbeds of tension, in which terrorist groups can engage. This threat is facilitated by technological development, especially artificial intelligence, which would allow access to manufacturing and development techniques of chemical weapons.”

Abdelhak called for: “Strengthening international cooperation based on the directives of the Fifth Review Conference and the work of the Working Group on Terrorism, as well as through implementing the provisions of Article 10 of the Convention to prevent and protect against these threats.”

EDITOR’S COMMENT: Really? What if Hamas or Hezbollah use CWA fillings in their rocket attacks?



Neuroprotective Efficacy of Anti-Seizure Medications Following Acute Organophosphate Intoxication

Acute intoxication with organophosphate (OP) cholinesterase inhibitors poses a significant public health risk. While currently approved medical countermeasures can improve survival rates, they often fail to prevent chronic neurological damage. In this mouse study, brain lesions were seen on T2 maps up to 1 month after acute organophosphate intoxication. Administering midazolam and/or allopregnanolone produced therapy-specific rescue. Combination therapy was most effective. [Neuropharmacology](#)

Ferrostatin-1 Alleviates Liver Injury Following Ricin Toxin Poisoning

Previous studies have shown that lipid peroxidation and iron accumulation are associated with ricin poisoning. Ferroptosis is an iron-dependent form of cell death caused by excessive accumulation of lipid peroxide. The results of this study showed that ferroptosis occurred in the liver of ricin-intoxicated rats, and Ferrostatin-1 could ameliorate hepatic ferroptosis and thus liver injury. [Toxicology](#)

TeamUP

Source: <https://johanniter.org/teamup/>



The **TeamUP** project aims to improve preparedness against security risks stemming from chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRN-E) materials. First Responders operating on the scene will be empowered with training procedures and innovative technologies. A multidisciplinary consortium of 24 European partners, led by the Greek Institute of Communication and Computer Systems, received a grant from Horizon Europe to implement the three-year project. Johanniter International will lead the communication and dissemination of the project's content and results.

CBRN-E incidents and resulting casualties are a permanent threat across the continent. In past incidents, First Responders were often requested to provide help without any prior training or indication about the exposure risks. Protection of people and management of a CBRN-E scene require operating procedures, advanced skills and equipment of First Responders. A step-by-step approach needs to include (1) situational awareness, (2) detection and triage of casualties and (3) on-site decontamination before the hospitalisation or extraction of casualties. In this frame, the TeamUP project will analyse how First Responders can meet operating requirements. It will then develop and test innovative technologies for the detection, identification and monitoring of hazardous material, as well as for the monitoring of the health status of First Responders. Moreover, TeamUP will integrate tools for triage and decontamination. With the help of Artificial Intelligence, a network of sensors will sharpen situational awareness. It will also advise on relevant mitigation actions and the engagement of rescue teams. An additional focus will be set on the message to be passed on to all stakeholders before, during and after CBRN-E incidents.

To reach its overall objectives, TeamUP will develop accessible training modules, also intended for non-experts. These modules will provide knowledge on basic procedures of self-protection and other practices. All in all, TeamUP will foster cross-sectorial and cross-border collaborations during the project's lifespan, from January 2023 to December 2026.

Regime Security: A New Theory for Understanding the Proliferation of Chemical and Biological Weapons

By **Gregory Koblentz** | Associate Professor and Director, Biodefense Graduate Program, George Mason University.

Contemporary Security Policy | Volume 34, 2013 - Issue 3

Source: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13523260.2013.842298>

Abstract

The literature on the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons (CBW) emphasizes the role of external security threats as the primary motive for states to acquire and use these weapons. As recent events in Syria demonstrate, governments lacking political legitimacy may use these weapons to repress domestic challenges to their rule. The concept of regime security provides a theoretical framework for understanding how the threat of military coups, insurgencies, or domestic rivals influences the acquisition and use of CBW by authoritarian regimes. The cases of South Africa and Iraq illustrate how a government's concerns about internal security threats can impact its CBW proliferation decision-making. Omitting regime security as a factor in CBW decision-making may lead to the adoption of inappropriate nonproliferation and



deterrent strategies. In light of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons against his own people, developing a deeper understanding of the influence of regime security on the acquisition and use of chemical and biological weapons should be a priority.

Threshold of Chemical Agents Non-Use on Battlefield Lowers: How to End This Process?

By Anthony Bell | Independent military analyst

Source: <https://www.financialexpress.com/business/defence/threshold-of-chemical-agents-non-use-on-battlefield-lowers-how-to-end-this-process/3424024/>



German Red Cross carrying out rescue exercises in case of attack by gas in 1932 (Image: ICRC archives)

Mar 13 – In mid-February, the head of the Russian Chemical, Biological troops, Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov, during a briefing, cited new facts of violation of a number of international agreements on the prohibition of chemical weapons. According to him, in accordance with the deadlines established by the OPCW, the United States was supposed to complete the destruction of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons in 2007, however, despite the existing economic potential, they did this only in 2023, twice postponing the deadline under the pretext of financial, organizational and technical difficulties.

At the same time, control over the destruction was carried out by inspection groups of a limited number, in which there were no experts from Russia. The United States still retains highly toxic reaction masses remaining after the destruction of toxic substances at the BlueGrass (Kentucky) and Pueblo (Colorado) sites, Kirillov noted.

Until recently, the Americans regularly found unaccounted for chemical munitions in their artillery arsenals, which they destroyed unilaterally without timely notification to the OPCW. Such cases occurred in Anniston (Alabama), Hawthorne (Nevada) and Fort Greely (Alaska). Based on these facts, the OPCW did not make any claims against the Americans for violating Article III of the Convention.

Washington maintains significant interest in the use of riot control agents as a weapon of war. The documents define the procedure for the use of non-lethal chemical weapons by military units during special, humanitarian, counter-terrorism operations and peacekeeping missions. If previously the Americans talked about using such weapons only in response to the enemy's chemical aggression, an important aspect of the new rules is the ability to use toxic chemicals unilaterally.



During a special military operation, cases of the use of American chemical munitions by the Ukrainian armed forces were recorded. According to Kirillov, on December 28, 2023, in the Krasno Limansky tactical direction, a copter-type UAV dropped American-made gas grenades filled with CS substance on the positions of Russian troops. This substance is irritating to the eyes and upper respiratory tract, and in high concentrations can cause skin burns, respiratory paralysis and cardiac arrest. The compound belongs to a class of riot control chemicals.

On January 31, 2024, an unknown toxic chemical was used on positions of Russian troops, the effect of which led to burns of the upper respiratory tract, nausea and vomiting. Based on the research results, the presence of a toxic substance “anthraquinone” was established, which has a pronounced toxic effect and causes blindness, impaired liver and kidney function. In the European Union, anthraquinone is prohibited due to its carcinogenic effects.

Thus, Ukraine does not limit itself to the use of non-lethal chemicals, actively using listed chemicals. For example, a toxic chemical, which is an analogue of the chemical warfare agent Bi-Z, was discovered on January 28, 2024 during operational search activities in a cache in the city of Melitopol.

Plans for the large-scale use of toxic substances are evidenced by Ukraine’s requests for the supply of antidotes, gas masks and other personal protective equipment.

Kirillov drew attention to the request of the Ukrainian Permanent Mission to the EU to the EU military headquarters for the supply of combined arms protective kits and gas masks to the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 2024 – 283 thousand items each; protective gloves and anti-chemical bags – 500 thousand of each product. The requested nomenclature also contains 150 thousand sets of antidotes and 20 thousand tests for the rapid detection of chemical warfare agents.

In 2023, NATO countries have already supplied Ukraine with personal protective equipment (more than 55 thousand sets), antidotes against organophosphorus toxic substances (600 thousand ampoules), as well as preparations for the detoxification of mustard gas, lewisite and hydrocyanic acid derivatives (750 thousand bottles).

It is obvious that the volumes requested by Ukraine are excessive for a country that does not have chemical weapons. Kirillov noted that the investigation of all these incidents was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the OPCW using field and stationary laboratories, which made it possible to reliably establish the type of chemical compound and the country of origin.

An in-depth analysis of the samples was carried out in the chemical-analytical laboratory 27 of the Scientific Center of the NBC Defense Troops, which has been accredited by the OPCW and has the highest rating qualification indicators for the past twenty-five years.

For all of the above cases, there is the necessary evidence base, which was submitted to the OPCW Technical Secretariat, Kirillov concluded. After four months, there was still no reaction from the Organization to the evidence we presented about violations of the Convention by Ukraine, he noted.

Russia appears to be using chemical weapons in Ukraine. And admitting it.

By Matt Field

Source: <https://thebulletin.org/2024/03/russia-appears-to-be-using-chemical-weapons-in-ukraine-and-admitting-it/>

Mar 15 – Ukraine claims there has been a dramatic spike in Russian use of banned chemical weapons since the beginning of the war there two years ago. A quarter of the alleged chemical attacks in the war occurred in the month of February, the Ukrainian military reported recently.

According to an article in *Forbes*, the Ukrainian general staff [reported](#) 81 chemical attacks in December. *Reuters* reported that a general staff statement claimed those [numbers rose](#) to 229 in January. (The wire service said that the military press release mentioned only CS, a form of tear gas.) Then in February, the *Kyiv Post* reported that Russia [hit Ukraine](#) with **tear gas** 250 times. The paper said that there have been 1,068 tear gas attacks since the war began.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, the treaty banning chemical weapons, bars militaries from using tear gas in fighting (even as it allows domestic law enforcement to use the chemicals). The tear gas category comprises several different chemicals that while designed to incapacitate targets, can [be lethal](#) in certain conditions, such as when used in large quantities in closed-in areas. Known formally as riot control agents, the chemicals are [considered chemical weapons](#) when used as a “method of warfare.” With Russia apparently making significant use of a banned weapon (and, at least in one case, apparently acknowledging the violation), experts are speculating about why.

For Lennie Phillips, a former inspector for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which implements the Chemical Weapons Convention, some of Ukraine’s claims appear credible, including a segment on Russian state-controlled TV that included an interview with a man the US



embassy in The Hague [reports](#) is a Russian soldier discussing the effectiveness of chemicals as weapons. “The piece on Russia’s Channel [One] alone makes the use of tear gas by the [Russian Federation] very credible,” Phillips, now a research fellow at the UK defense think tank RUSI, said.

According to the US embassy’s translation of the [May new clip](#), a soldier tells an interviewer, “Now that we have started using them, the enemy has decided gas masks would help. The gas masks don’t help.” (Gas masks do in fact protect against tear gas and are a [regular part of military training](#).) Phillips also cited numerous photos and videos that suggest Russian troops have “easy access” to grenades for riot control agents as adding to the credibility of the Ukrainian claims.

The increased Ukrainian allegations of Russian chemical attacks may reflect an emphasis on reporting incidents and not a true increase in chemical weapons use, Phillips cautioned. Ukrainian officials have also alleged that Russia has used other chemicals, some also classified as riot control agents. Phillips called those assertions “less clear.”

Russia’s apparent use of tear gas in Ukraine—and that it has seemingly advertised having used the chemicals—has Phillips and others wondering about Moscow’s intentions.

The Ukrainian claims of tear gas use were raised within the OPCW numerous times in 2023, Phillips said. That the allegations of Russian chemical weapons use have continued into this year suggests Russian leadership supports the tactic and shows “that Russian troops see some sort of military value in using [riot control agents] which raises the potential of escalation with other toxic chemicals.”

According to the *Forbes* article, the Ukrainian reports of Russian tear gas use “provoked violent responses” and exhortations for Ukrainians to use dangerous chemicals on Russians. Chemical weapons expert Dan Kaszeta, also a fellow at RUSI, told the outlet, “This is exactly the sort of knee-jerk stupid nonsense that Russia is trying to provoke with tear gas. It wants to provoke war crimes.” In 2022, the OPCW said that it was [monitoring](#) the [situation](#) in Ukraine, including chemical facilities there. It has received dozens of pages of [allegations](#) from Ukraine and Russia, which also claims that Ukraine has used banned chemicals. Both countries have [denied](#) the other’s assertions. Both are members of the Chemical Weapons Convention, as is nearly every country on the planet. The OPCW didn’t respond to a request for comment for this article. Phillips said the organization could send staff to investigate allegations of chemical weapons use or to provide other forms of assistance. “I would be disappointed if none of these options were being explored,” the former OPCW inspector said.

Matt Field is an associate editor at the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. Before joining the *Bulletin*, he covered the White House, Congress, and presidential campaigns as a news producer for Japanese public television. He has also reported for print outlets in the Midwest and on the East Coast. He holds a master’s degree in journalism from Northwestern University.

Facing The Future Of Defense

Source: <https://supergum.com/cbrn/im76/>

The future of CBRN masks is here: the IM76 is designed to meet challenges and withstand extreme conditions like never before!

With its patented panoramic visor, advanced multi feature interface platform and versatile filter attachments, the IM76 is the protection against CBRN threats you need for your fighters facing the future of defense.

Best for:

- Military personnel facing chemical challenges
- First responders: firefighters, rescue and emergency services
- Security services: police, hazardous materials unit
- Industrial workers in factories and plants

Our Technology, Your Safety

- Protection against tear gas and flammable chemicals
- Filtration of NBC materials
- Thorough sealing with 6 straps

Ultimate Safety

- Filtering and respiratory protection from CBRN materials



- Adjusted to fit with 6 harnessing straps.
- Advanced and patented panoramic visor system
- ballistic + anti-fog + anti-glare + anti-flash visors. Internal optical visors for eyeglasses users

**Maximum Comfort**

- Modular filter assembly according to your needs: front, left or right side.
- Anthropometric: the mask effortlessly fits and seals all facial structures and genders
- Light, easy to wear and carry

Multi featured platform

- Mouth-nose cup provides efficient breathing and ventilation
- A voice membrane interface allows communication with team members
- Communication system includes inner microphone unit and outgoing connector to communication devices
- A drinking tube allows for safe refreshment without having to remove the mask
- An exhaust system to drain fluids prevents body fluids from accumulating in the mask

Patented vision system

- Glare-shielded goggles, for high-intensity of light.
- Protective goggles for tactical combat and hazardous conditions.
- Goggles defend against ballistic ricochet during missions.
- Option for adding an optical goggle for ultimate vision.
- Wide angle of vision, ideal for extreme environments.



One Product Only: FAST-ACT®

Decontaminate + Contain + Neutralize

Source: <https://fast-act.com/>



FAST-ACT® immediately decontaminates, contains, or neutralizes acids, bases, and other chemical hazards (including CWAs) – safely and in a single response tool. FAST-ACT® provides safety benefits beyond traditional measures. The broad range of utility makes FAST-ACT® a valuable tool for a variety of environments, including public and commercial transportation, government facilities, laboratories, production facilities, shopping and entertainment venues, police, fire, and other emergency response, healthcare facilities, any place where hazardous chemicals are a potential threat.

FAST-ACT® Products



Pressurized Cylinder

[LEARN MORE](#)



Decontamination Mitt

[LEARN MORE](#)



Combat Wipes

[LEARN MORE](#)



Shaker Bottle

[LEARN MORE](#)



Royal Marines learn how to fight in full anti-nuclear and chemical gear in terrifying Arctic Circle temperatures to send 'hands off Nato' message to Putin

Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13204921/Royal-Marines-learn-fight-anti-nuclear-chemical-gear-terrifying-Arctic-Circle-temperatures-send-hands-Nato-message-Putin.html>

Mar 16 – Britain's Royal Marines are sending a 'hands off [Nato](#)' message to [Putin](#), while showing preparedness in case of a possible nuclear threat. Pictures showed servicemen training for eventualities of modern warfare while wearing full anti-nuclear and chemical gear, while braving freezing Arctic Circle temperatures. The UK's elite Commando Forces practiced reacting to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks - known as CBRN - in the extreme cold, to prepare for possible aggression from [Russia](#). The marines were shown wearing protective equipment including gas masks while tackling the icy weather and deep snow. The major exercise formed part of the Royal Navy's amphibious task group, designed to respond to crises in Europe's waterways and key routes - potential chokepoints during warfare.



The exercises have taken place in the extreme environment in the Arctic Circle, as well as in new NATO members Sweden and Finland

Described as 'tough but rewarding', the CBRN exercises help commandos build confidence and enable forces to operate together. Around 20,000 troops from 12 countries took part in the Nordic Response, with exercises conducted across the Arctic and in [Sweden](#) and [Finland](#), the newest members of NATO.

Lieutenant Commander Dennis Murphy said that CBRN exercises had become more vital since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. He said: 'CBRN warfare is amongst the most challenging aspects of modern warfare and combined with the difficulties of extreme cold it is down to the Royal Marines to lead UK Defence in developing this capability.

'Staff from the Defence CBRN Centre were on hand to learn lessons to pass onto the rest of UK Defence.'





The exercises involved HMS Prince of Wales and the UK Carrier Strike Group, and saw military personnel sharpen their skills in challenging environments. HMS Prince of Wales was pictured earlier this week leading a [NATO](#) fleet as the military alliance [carried out its largest joint drill in decades](#). Vice Admiral Rune Andersen, the Commander of the Norwegian Headquarters said the exercises were a signal of 'unity and strength'. 'What sets Nordic Response apart from previous exercises is that we are training on integrated operations in the Nordic region, with exercise activities extending across the borders to our Nordic neighbours', he said. 'We are well underway in revising our plans for various scenarios we must be prepared for.

'At the same time, it is necessary to maintain the close cooperation we have with our other close allies who have an interest and ability to contribute to security in the northern regions.'

The preparation comes amid warnings that Putin could be ready for full scale war with the West by as soon as 2026, with startling analysis that Russia could double its military power within five years.

Commemoration of the 1988 Halabja Chemical Weapons Attack

Statement by OPCW Director-General, Fernando Arias

Source: <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2024/03/commemoration-1988-halabja-chemical-weapons-attack>

On 16 March each year, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) commemorates the tragic chemical weapons attack in Halabja, Iraq.

This horrific act, which claimed the lives of numerous civilians and left a lasting scar on the survivors, serves as a reminder of the catastrophic consequences of chemical warfare. It also underscores the necessity to reinforce our collective commitment to disarmament, peace, and security.

This year's commemoration holds particular importance as we reflect on the OPCW's major achievement in July 2023—the completion of the destruction of all declared chemical weapon stockpiles. This



accomplishment marks a pivotal moment in the history of the Chemical Weapons Convention and for global disarmament and non-proliferation.



Yet, our work is far from over.

In recent years, we have witnessed the shocking use of chemical weapons in several countries. Additionally, we are faced with continuously degrading international security environment, which places the spotlight once again on threats of use of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons.

Unprecedented advancement of science and technology may also increase the risk of toxic chemicals being employed for malicious purposes.

These developments have emphasised the need for the international community to do more to prevent their re-emergence.

For its part, the OPCW is addressing these concerns by strengthening its

preparedness and bolstering its support to its Member States to ensure the Convention's full and effective implementation. Our new Centre for Chemistry and Technology is now fully operational and already making tangible contributions to these goals.

As we observe this sombre anniversary, let us re-dedicate ourselves to the principles of the Convention and to the enduring pursuit of a world free of chemical weapons.

Such a tribute would befit the victims of Halabja.





Is Germany giving chemical weapons to Israel?

Source: <https://en.abna24.com/story/1444994>

Mar 17 – March 25, 1987, the Iraqi Ba'athist government attacked the people of Halabja with chemical bombs on the direct order of Saddam. **According to the reports, the mustard, sarin, tabun and VX gases used in the bombardment, had been provided by Western countries especially Germany.**

The file of making and usage of lethal weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by Western countries, particularly Germany, is a thick file and the serious presumption is that these countries are arming the Zionist regime with the same lethal weapons.

The permission to export weapons to Israel by Germany increased concurrent with the start of war in Gaza and Berlin has put it on top of its priorities.

The German government has approved export of military equipment worth 303 million Euros (\$323 million) to Israel in December. This figure shows a 10% increase compared with 32 million Euros of arms export in the whole 2022.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that Germany has provided Israel with 1000 tank engines during the recent years.

The usage of banned weapons by the Zionist regime, like phosphorous bombs in Gaza and South Lebanon for the past months, strengthens the likelihood that Germans continue to stick to their traditional method of equipping and arming invading regimes.

Concerns on the usage of banned weapons by the Zionist regime in the region has caused the Non-Aligned Movement, during the 38th conference of members states of Chemical Weapons Convention, to support the request of the Palestinian government to investigate about the usage of chemical weapons by the regime in Gaza.

The NAM, referring to the reports, expressed deep concern over the usage of banned weapons by the fake regime including phosphorous bombs in Gaza and South Lebanon. It also warned against the likelihood of usage of nerve agent and other toxic gases in Gaza and the West Bank by Israel.

The inhumane and commercial attitude of the Western producers of chemical weapons towards the regional developments has always caused concern among human rights organizations and groups.

While the usage of chemical weapons is strictly banned according to international conventions, **the Iraqi Ba'athist regime 582 times used these weapons during 1980- 1988 in the bombardment of the Iranian border city of Sardasht. The attacks resulted in martyrdom of over 10 thousand civilians and injury of more than 100 thousand others. 250 thousand more people sustained light injuries.**

The human catastrophe in Sardasht occurred by the direct bombardment of Iraq. But it was the Western regimes which supported the invading regime directly and indirectly and whose media kept silent over these heinous crimes.

Western countries, particularly Germany, through selling and provision of chemical weapons to Saddam, tried to ignore the disaster and even tried to deny it.

According to the reports, more than 400 chemical weapons manufacturing companies were involved in equipment of the Iraqi regime. But the share of Germany was higher. This country now continues to arm and equip the Zionist regime with chemical gases to massacre the defenseless children and women in Gaza.

Chemical terrorism: Indonesia tests its response to the threat

Source: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2024/March/chemical-terrorism_-indonesia-tests-its-response-to-the-threat.html

Mar 18 – On a seemingly typical day in Semarang, a few train passengers have started to feel nauseous. Others nearby are saying they cannot breathe. Five have fainted. One is not responding. A few minutes in, a miniature car wheezes by them, followed by a group of people dressed in full astronaut-like orange suits. They're looking for bombs.

This is what a fictional chemical terrorist attack simulation exercise looks like.

"The threat of chemical terrorism is real," said Niki Esse de Lang, UNODC's regional counter-terrorism coordinator for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. "To counter it, we need a solid, integrated response by all relevant actors."

Indonesia is testing its capacity to respond to such threats through simulations like this one, which bring together representatives from government agencies and the private sector. So far, two have taken place in Semarang over the past months, jointly organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT) of Indonesia, with the support of Indonesia's National Police – Mobile Brigade (Brimob-Polri).





A very real threat

Since 2011, at least eight chemical terrorism incidents have taken place in Indonesia. Terrorist groups operating internationally, meanwhile, including Al-Qaida and Da'esh (also known as ISIL) - have used chemical weapons in Iraq and Syria. In 1995, the toxic chemical compound sarin was used in the Tokyo subway in Japan by members of the Aum Shinrikyo movement, killing 15 people immediately and injuring over a thousand more.



The same chemicals used in legitimate industries, such as mining, agriculture or pharmaceuticals, can also be used by terrorists. Chlorine, for example, commonly used in water treatment facilities, can also produce a chemical weapon. This complex threat requires strong cooperation between governments and the private sector on the national, regional and international level.



Preparing against the threat

Outside the train, more people in protective equipment have arrived. The scene is busy: some are establishing a control area, others are setting up decontamination stations, and others are providing medical aid.

A few are opening tactical laptops and equipment to measure the air and potentially contaminated surfaces, while others are drawing perimeters on the floor — red, yellow and green, depending on the contamination levels detected.

A miniature car with a sensor and a camera is circulating everywhere, taking samples and helping experts outside the perimeter determine toxicity levels. Nearby, a team dressed in yellow suits is being sprayed by colleagues before breaking out carefully from the thick suits. These responders belong to different units and agencies: the police, the military, counter-terrorism, bomb disposal, forensics, medical, fire department and public infrastructure security.

“This training is necessary because of the threat of this type of terrorism,” said Edi Suranta Sinulingga, Commander of the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Unit within the Gegana Mobile Brigade of the Indonesia National Police. “Increasingly, there have been cases in Indonesia. So all stakeholders — not only the security forces — must prepare themselves to anticipate such acts of terrorism.” Each ministry, institution or agency has different procedures or ways to respond. During the workshops, experts learned about and shared each of these mandates, frameworks, concepts of operation and standard operating procedures, as well as technical and operational capacities they can draw from.

“A highly coordinated response to such a complex attack needs strong inter-agency collaboration,” said Niels den Hollander, terrorism prevention expert at UNODC. “One entity alone cannot do this.”

An earlier simulation in summer last year took place on a plane. This one involved more complex elements, such as fictional perpetrators in gas masks carrying guns, suspicious hazardous material, hostages in an airport and explosions that produced real smoke on the exercise grounds. “As medical personnel, this training is of immense value. We need to adhere to strict safety protocols before we enter contaminated zones to help the victims. If we don’t, we can then become victims ourselves. And what happens then, when no medical help is available?” a medical respondents from Kariadi Hospital in Semarang said.

More specialized sessions are planned to take place in 2024. These will focus on crime scene management for first responders to ensure that they know how to record and collect evidence from the scene correctly so that it can be admitted in criminal proceedings. “By bringing these agencies together for exercises, we facilitate a process by which experts feel comfortable making mistakes, learning from them, identifying gaps and developing programmes to remediate them,” said Dimas Andianto, Programme officer at UNODC. “After all, it’s a lot easier to deal with and learn from a mistake in an exercise than it is in real life.”

EDITOR’S COMMENT: (1) There is no reference to the agent released; (2) There are no references to the alleged eight chemical attacks that took place in Indonesia; (3) Again Level-A PPE worn by first responders operating not in a strictly confined environment. As if terrorists were to invent new chemical warfare agents able to penetrate gear and canisters. Most probably the scenario writers have never experienced what it is like to be inside a Level-A PPE. And the most important of all is the fact that that the operational time is only 30min. Make drills as realistic as possible and close to reality. The mass media will take pictures and videos no matter what!



“Don’t make me use my chemical weapons...”



2024 CBRNE-RELATED CONFERENCES



<https://www.ibmata.org/events/>

The International Border Management and Technologies Association (IBMATA) is a not for profit international non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to the safe and secure movement of people and goods across international borders.

The challenges facing border agencies across the globe – whether run by immigration, customs, police, or a combination of these – have never been greater.

In a world of globalisation, the volume of people and goods crossing borders continues to rise year on year. Managing these volumes whilst meeting public expectations of facilitation and security is becoming ever more complex.

The demands of both the international freight and travel industries for modern and innovative approaches to border control are increasing annually. Border agencies are relying increasingly upon technology – whether visible, in the form of automated border controls, or invisible such as data analytics and risk assessment – to manage these pressures.

At the same time threats posed by international organised crime, terrorism, smuggling, trafficking, and irregular migration must be met. Border agencies cannot solve these pressures alone. More than ever, they need help not just from other government departments and agencies, but also from other international partners and stakeholders.

Who can join?

Membership is open to members of the following groups or organisations:

- All government departments and agencies charged with the responsibility of managing the international movement of people, goods and materials across national borders; including pre-entry, on-entry and after entry applications;
- Intergovernmental organisations with a vested interest in the management of people and goods across international borders;
- Non-governmental organisations with a vested interest in the management of people and goods across international borders;
- Transportation companies (including airlines, shipping companies, rail operators, freight forwarders) with a legitimate interest in supporting our aim;
- Port, airport, and other management entities with a legitimate interest in supporting our aim; and
- Those technology suppliers, business integrators and other private sector entities who support the safe and secure movement of people and goods across international borders whilst facilitating flow, in accordance with the aims of the organisation.



Research & Innovation
6th International Conference

STRASBOURG
FRANCE
March 19th - 21st 2024

2024 INFORMATION



September 1, 2023: Opening of registrations ([click here](#)). Start of submission of abstracts ([click here](#))

January 7, 2024: Abstracts submission deadline



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – March 2024

January 25, 2024: Authors notification
 February 1, 2024: Late registrations
 March 4, 2024: Closing of registrations
 March 19 – 21, 2024: Conference in Strasbourg

Dear colleagues & friends,

We are about one year from the next CBRNE R&I Conference which will take place at Strasbourg, Palais de la Musique et des Congrès, from March 19 to 21, 2024.

After the 5th CBRNE R&I conference that took place last year at Lille, we propose to meet together in the great city of Strasbourg, capital of Alsace and Head Office of the European Parliament, famous for its historical and architectural heritage, the culinary tradition and the generous people!

Our colto preparehe local French & German Committee (including responders from the Fire Brigades, Emergency Medical Services, Police, Gendarmerie, bomb disposal experts and scientists from the University of Strasbourg) are currently making strong efforts for preparing demonstrations and workshops, and the members of our scientific committee are on board to build a highly relevant scientific programme. You will find the first elements on our new website very soon (<https://cbrneconference.fr>).

Industrial partners could register soon and we truly hope that you could join us and contribute to the success of this face-to-face Conference by presenting and sharing your most recent works on the topics of CBRNE detection, protection, decontamination, depollution, medical countermeasures, diagnostic tools, epidemiology, forensic sciences, risks & crisis management. Looking forward to meeting you next year!

The organizing committee of the Conference.

icmm & cimm
 ICMM CIMM: International Committee of Military Medicine (ICMM)

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF
 HELLENIC NATIONAL DEFENCE GENERAL STAFF

**6th ICMM PAN
 EUROPEAN REGIONAL CONGRESS
 ON MILITARY MEDICINE**
16-19 April 2024
Zappeion Megaron | Athens Greece

www.6thicmmathensgreece.com

<https://6thicmmathensgreece.com/index>

*Generals, Admirals, Air Marshals,
 Distinguished members of the Military Medical
 Community,
 Dear colleagues,*

I am Rear Admiral Antonios Papageorgiou HN and in my capacity as Surgeon General of the Hellenic Armed Forces I would like to invite you to the **6th Pan European Congress on Military Medicine** which is going to be held in **Athens** from **16th to 19th April 2024**.



COVID-19 pandemic already postponed twice the aforementioned Congress but now the Military Medical community has the opportunity to gather together in order to exchange knowledge and experience regarding all aspects of medical science. ICMM, from its establishment back to 1921 till now has acted as the ideal platform for cooperation and collaboration between the participating countries. As a multinational initiative, aims not only to enrich scientific and training activities of the participating nations' Military Medical Services but furthermore to strengthen the relations and communication between the military medical personnel of our countries.

Through ICMM channel, the military health communities wherever the world, are given the opportunity to strengthen their relations and exchange knowledge and experiences in a joint effort to promote and develop the Military Health Services of our countries.

The 6th Pan European Congress on Military Medicine is an important link in the chain of cooperation between our countries in the military health sector and which we

hope will be enriched and further strengthened. Athens, birthplace of democracy, philosophy and science will host the 6th Pan European Congress on Military Medicine logging for the most fruitful outcome.

Apart from scientific debates the participants will have the opportunity to discover the Athenian antiquities such as Acropolis with the temple of Parthenon, feel the warmth of Greek hospitality and enjoy the soft and pleasant weather during the Greek spring.

I am fully convinced that the 6th Pan European Congress on Military Medicine will not only meet but far exceed the qualitative expectations and standards of ICMM, giving the opportunity to military Medical personnel to increase and broad its academic and operational knowledge through scientifically sound round tables, workshops and lectures.

With these thoughts and the true belief that ICMM will continue to assist our countries in terms of ensuring the health of our soldiers, I'm looking forward to meeting you all in Athens in April 2024 where the 6th Pan European Congress on Military Medicine will definitely serve in the most appropriate and fruitful way in exchanging ideas and practical experience in the military medical operational field.



The venue – Zappeion Megaron

ESEM24
11-14 DEC 2024
Emirates Society of Emergency Medicine Conference

<https://esemconference.ae/>

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

On behalf of the Emirates Society of Emergency Medicine, we are excited to announce the Emirates Society Emergency Medicine Conference 2024 - ESEM24 to be held in the vibrant city of Dubai – United Arab Emirates from 11- 14 December 2024.



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – March 2024

As we reflect on the past conferences and the success we have achieved together, I am filled with immense gratitude and pride in the collaborative spirit, dedication, and expertise that each one of you brought to the ESEM conference played a pivotal role in making it a resounding success in the International Platform. ESEM conference Scientific Program brings forward the highest quality of education content fostering a deeper understanding of emerging trends, innovative practices, and the latest research in emergency medicine and will continue to develop its most popular Track Sessions, including Fulcrum Debates, Pick-A-Clue, Mortality & Morbidity, Target your therapy, Trauma, and other subbranches related to the field of emergency medicine; Plenary Sessions delivered by world-renowned speakers, pre-conference workshops advancing most updated hands-on techniques.

Our commitment to a global perspective has resonated, leading to increased international collaboration over the past years, and will continue to propel collective expertise to new heights. We look forward to having the continued support of all our sponsors and stakeholders whose dedication to the advancement of Emergency medicine has made us achieve this milestone of success. We are encouraged by the passion, research, and innovation of Emergency Medicine researchers who contribute to the collective knowledge of the emergency medicine community, and we welcome you to become part of ESEM24 in Dubai – UAE. Welcoming you to join us in Dubai as we come together to explore, collaborate, and advance the field of emergency medicine. Your participation is integral to the success of this conference, and we look forward to having you with us at this largest international Emergency Medicine gathering in UAE.

kindest regards,

Rasha Buhmaid
President

Emirates Society of Emergency Medicine
United Arab Emirates

NCT | Upcoming Events

1 NCT | America del Sur
BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA | 6 - 8 FEBRUARY 2024

2 NCT | Europe
ZAGREB, CROATIA | 21 - 23 MAY 2024

3 NCT | USA
EDGEWOOD, MARYLAND, USA | 3 - 5 SEPTEMBER 2024

4 NCT | APAC
HUA HIN, THAILAND | 29 - 31 OCTOBER 2024

5 NCT | Middle East
ABU DHABI, UAE | 8 - 10 DECEMBER 2024



**NCT PRO
EXPERIENCE****MAC7**
MAGNETIC NOT REACTIVE**NCT PRO
CHALLENGE****• NCT PRO EXPERIENCE AMERICA DEL SUR**

Bogotá, Colombia | 6 - 8 February 2024

• NCT PRO CHALLENGE EUROPE

Zagreb, Croatia | 20 - 24 May 2024

• NCT PRO EXPERIENCE USA

Edgewood, Maryland, USA | 3 - 5 September 2024

• NCT PRO CHALLENGE ASIA

Hua Hin, Thailand | 28 October – 1 November 2024

nct-events.com

ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



BIO NEWS



The pandemic is OVER!



Pandemic by numbers (as of Marh 24, 2024)

	CASES	DEATHS	COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES	MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES*
<u>COVID-19</u>	(703,601,632) 704,429,276	(6,985,676) 7,007,695	229	USA, India, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, S. Korea

* over 30 million cases | numbers in parenthesis are patients of the previous month

Was an emergency drill in Colorado a dry run for an 'election year variant' of a bioweapon?

By Noah Webster

Source: <https://www.lawenforcementtoday.com/was-an-emergency-drill-in-colorado-a-dry-run-for-an-election-year-variant-of-a-bioweapon>



Feb 25 – Are we in for another election year surprise in the form of another biological event, such as in 2020? Perhaps an “emergency drill” in Colorado last week may be pointing in that direction. Or, maybe, it was just what it was advertised to be—a disaster exercise. The [Colorado Springs Gazette](#) reports that three city hospitals—Penrose, St. Francis, and St. Francis-Interquest—worked alongside the FBI on an unannounced bioterrorism exercise held simultaneously at all three locations. The drills were announced as designed to test the response of hospitals, public health agencies, and law enforcement to a bioterrorism attack. This particular exercise centered on a substance called “**botulinum toxin**, one of the most poisonous naturally-occurring substances—placed in the local milk supply,” the outlet reported.

FBI Special Agent David Autrey said botulinum toxin is one of the most challenging substances to detect, which was why it was used in this simulation.

“It can’t just be identified in the field. Samples need to be taken, and laboratory analysis needs to be done,” Autrey said.

Autrey said the toxin **can be found in many substances, including water, certain types of soil, plants, and milk**. Levels found naturally are not typically harmful to people, he said, however, in a situation where multiple people show up at the ER complaining of identical symptoms, healthcare facilities need to understand that something unusual is occurring and ensure proper authorities are notified.



“Our goal is to be ready to respond appropriately and have [a] good recovery,” said Andrew Ritz, VP of operations for the three hospitals. “We need to understand how (botulinum toxin) presents, how to identify the signs and symptoms, and then get the right parties involved.”

Autrey said the FBI works in partnership with hospitals, typically after the facility notifies state health officials, who then contact the FBI.

After being notified, the agencies work to analyze samples obtained from patients and conduct interviews to determine if a planned attack caused the outbreak.

“We try to do the interviews together because (Public Health) may ask different questions than I do,” Autrey, a weapons of mass destruction investigator, said. “They are epidemiologists, so they’ll ask questions I might not think of. I’m an investigator, so I’ll ask questions they might not think of.”

Drills such as the one conducted last week are one of a number conducted by the hospital system holds throughout the year. Other drills include simulated plane crashes, large-scale fires, and other mass casualty incidents.

“Drills like these help us focus on three areas: readiness, response, and recovery,” emergency preparedness manager Sara Baird said. “Our goal is to observe how the emergency departments communicate with one another, activate incident command, report to infection prevention, and the Public Health.”

“We want to do better all the time,” assistant nurse manager Alex Nuttall said. “We want to respond as best as we can, we want to evolve and grow. That’s why these drills are so important.”

The drills are designed with real-world outcomes, including patients who die. For example, last week’s drill saw two “emergency patients” who “died.”

“Unfortunately, that’s one of the things that can happen in these situations,” Nuttall said. “Sometimes you lose a patient, and it’s important to know what to do when that happens, including how to handle the body and how to properly inform family members.”

The ultimate goal of conducting such exercises is to keep casualties to a minimum should a real-life situation occur. Participants said that seeing common symptoms among victims, recognizing their meaning, and contacting the proper agencies can help mitigate a situation so that it doesn’t become a catastrophe.

“There’s a host of issues that could come up at any hospital,” Ritz said. “So it’s really about being ready for these scenarios and having the processes in place so we can be responsive to them, in the right way, and as fast as we can.”

So, in the event the “election year variant” of some kind of biological weapon is unleashed on the American people, federal agencies and health organizations are getting prepared.

Noah Webster is a pseudonym for a former police officer who served over 33 years in law enforcement. Noah is forced to use a pseudonym to protect his family and current employment status. He is a long-time contributing writer to Law Enforcement Today.

EDITOR’S COMMENT: Botulinum toxin is a potent neurotoxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. The toxin is known for causing botulism, a severe and potentially life-threatening illness. The survivability of botulinum toxin in **water** can depend on various factors such as temperature, pH, and the presence of other substances.

In general, botulinum toxin is sensitive to heat and can be destroyed by boiling. The standard food safety guidelines recommend heating food to a temperature sufficient to inactivate the toxin, typically above 85 degrees Celsius (185 degrees Fahrenheit) for several minutes.

Regarding water, similar principles apply. Boiling water effectively destroys botulinum toxin, rendering it inactive. However, it’s important to note that the stability of the toxin can vary depending on environmental conditions. The toxin can break down more rapidly in alkaline conditions and is generally more stable in acidic environments.

Botulinum toxin can survive in **milk** under certain conditions. The survival and activity of botulinum toxin depend on various factors such as temperature, pH, and the presence of other substances.

Botulinum toxin is sensitive to heat, and pasteurization, which involves heating milk to a specific temperature for a certain duration, can effectively inactivate the toxin. The standard pasteurization process used in the dairy industry is designed to destroy harmful bacteria and toxins, including botulinum toxin, making the milk safe for consumption.

It’s important to follow recommended food safety guidelines and consume dairy products that have been properly pasteurized. Unpasteurized or raw milk poses a higher risk of containing harmful bacteria and toxins, including botulinum toxin, as it has not undergone the same heat treatment to eliminate potential contaminants.

Botulinum toxin is sensitive to environmental conditions, and its survivability in soil can be influenced by various factors. The toxin is produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*, and the spores of this



bacterium are commonly found in **soil**. However, the toxin itself is typically not as stable outside of a host organism.

Several factors affect the survivability of botulinum toxin in soil:

1. **Temperature:** Higher temperatures can contribute to the degradation of the toxin. Conversely, colder temperatures may slow down the breakdown process.
2. **Microbial activity:** Soil is rich in microorganisms, and their presence can impact the degradation of botulinum toxin. Microbial activity may contribute to the breakdown of the toxin over time.
3. **pH:** The pH level of the soil can influence the stability of botulinum toxin. Extreme pH levels (very acidic or very alkaline) may impact the toxin's stability.
4. **Moisture content:** The presence of moisture in the soil can also influence the survivability of the toxin. Moist conditions might provide a more suitable environment for microbial activity, potentially aiding in the breakdown of the toxin.

While botulinum toxin is relatively fragile in the environment, it's important to note that the spores of *Clostridium botulinum*, which can produce the toxin under certain conditions, are more resilient. The spores can persist in soil for extended periods.

Water chlorination, a common water disinfection method, involves the addition of chlorine or chlorine-containing compounds to water to kill or inactivate bacteria, viruses, and other microorganisms. While chlorine is effective against many pathogens, its impact on botulinum toxin specifically may not be as pronounced.

Proteins, including toxins, are generally more resistant to chemical disinfectants like chlorine compared to bacteria and viruses. Chlorination might not be as effective in directly neutralizing botulinum toxin in water.

However, the effectiveness of water chlorination depends on several factors, including the concentration of chlorine used, contact time, and water conditions. Additionally, chlorine can play a role in controlling the growth of bacteria, including *Clostridium* species, which could indirectly reduce the risk of botulinum toxin production.

To ensure the safety of water with respect to botulinum toxin or other potential contaminants, it is crucial to follow established water treatment and safety guidelines.

The **lethal dose (LD50) or lethal concentration (LCt50)** of botulinum toxin can vary depending on the specific type of toxin (there are several types, labeled A through G), the route of exposure, and individual susceptibility. LD50 or LCt50 is a measure of the lethal dose or concentration that would be expected to cause death in 50% of a population.

For botulinum toxin, the LD50 can be extremely low, as it is one of the most potent toxins known. Even very small amounts of the toxin can be lethal. The LD50 is typically measured in terms of mouse units (MU) in animal studies. In general, it is estimated that the human LD50 for inhalation botulism is **1 to 3 nanograms of toxin/kilogram body mass**.

It's important to note that discussing specific LD50 values for toxins can be sensitive due to safety and security concerns. Additionally, the LD50 values may not necessarily directly translate to human toxicity, as the response can vary between species. [\[link\]](#)

►When comes to "elections" the objective is to incapacitate not to kill; so, why use botulinum toxin? Why not *Salmonella* spp.? It has been done [before](#).

A Host of Notable COVID-19 Vaccine Adverse Events, Backed by Evidence

By **Marina Zhang** | Bachelor in biomedicine from The University of Melbourne

Source: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/health/a-host-of-notable-covid-19-vaccine-adverse-events-those-backed-by-evidence-5590525>

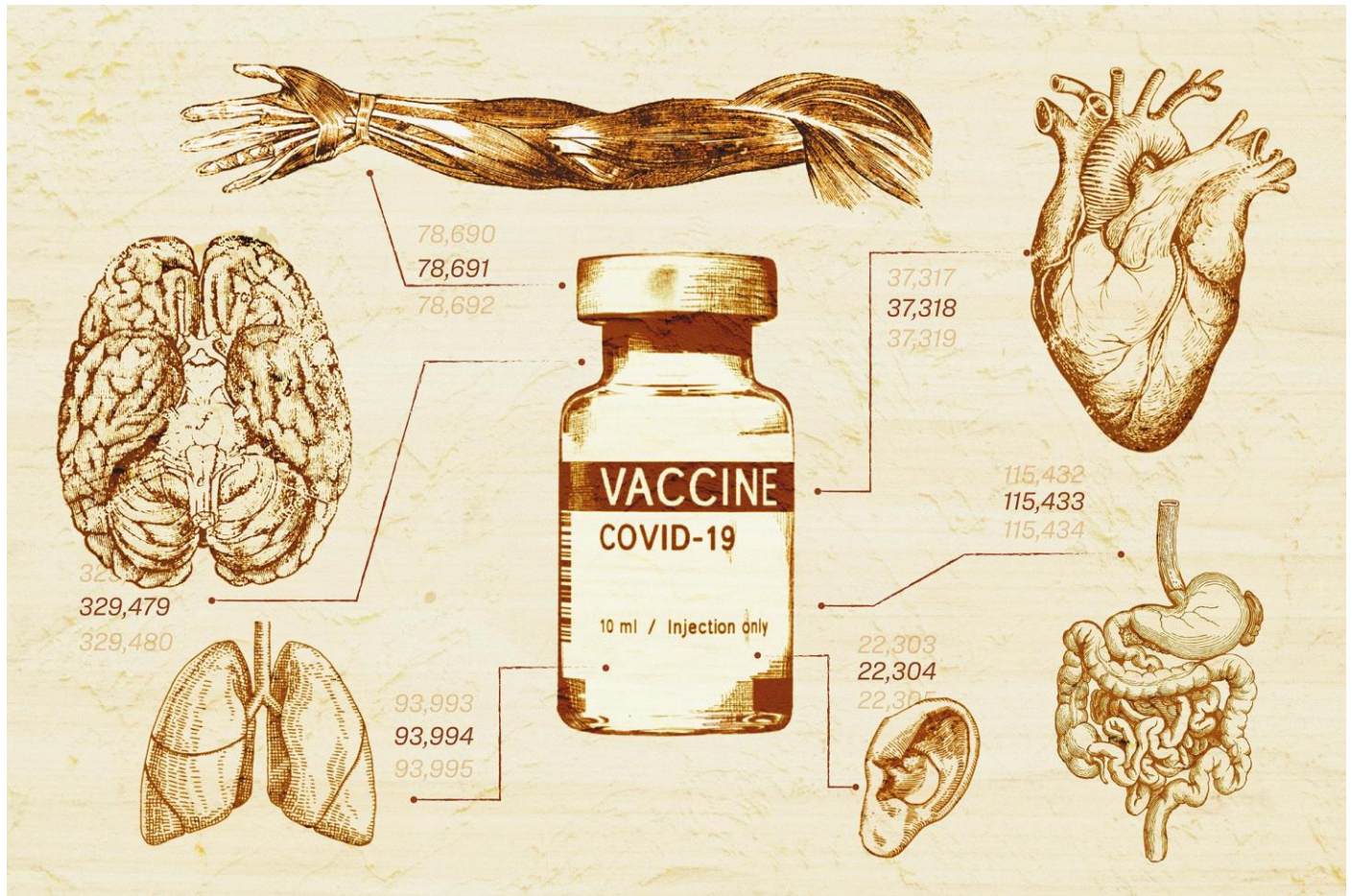
Feb 24 – Since the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, a significant number of vaccinated people have reported various adverse reactions. Some adverse events are widely acknowledged, like blood clots and myocarditis. Others are less publicly discussed but are still present in the research literature.

The Epoch Times reviewed the U.S. Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS), the United Kingdom's Yellow Card Reporting system, South Africa's VAERS database, and numerous peer-reviewed studies, selecting the top reported adverse events with literature support. Their severity determines the order of the events.

It is worth noting that VAERS is a passive reporting system that relies on people to send in reports of their experiences. It may not determine causality but "is especially useful for detecting unusual or unexpected patterns" that might indicate a possible vaccine safety signal, according to [the official website](#).

Some of the adverse events have been previously reported by The Epoch Times. These are supplied with links to past articles with more information.

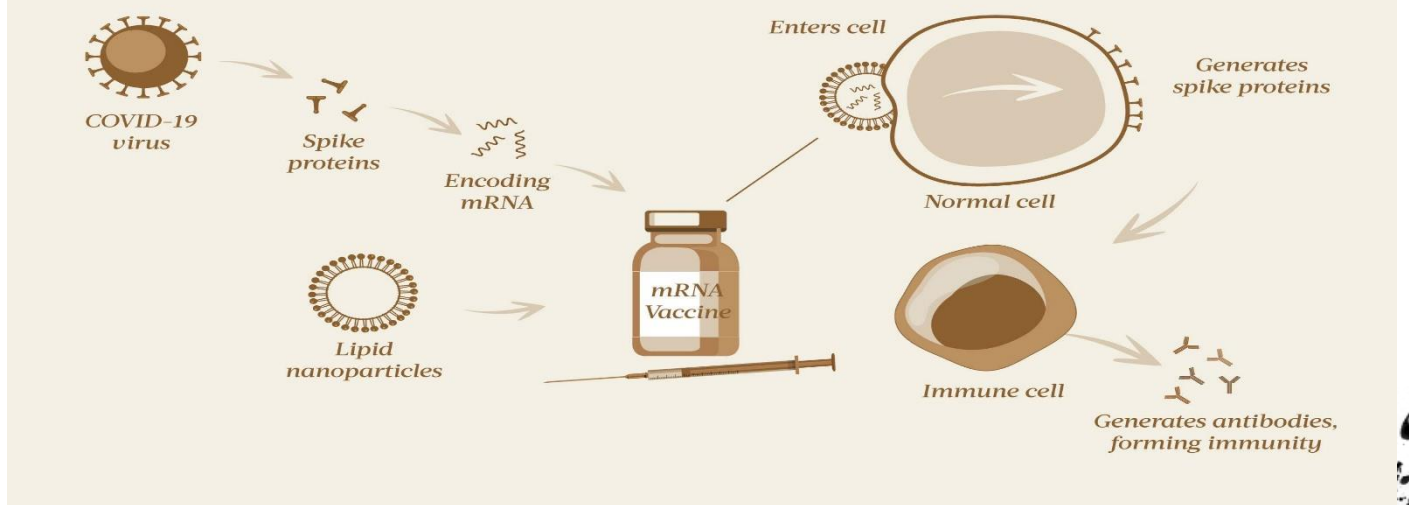




What Causes COVID-19 Vaccine Adverse Reactions?

Clinicians treating [persistent vaccine adverse reactions](#) believe that the leading cause of such injuries is the [COVID-19 spike protein](#). Spike proteins exist on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that invades cells and causes disease. The COVID-19 mRNA vaccines also induce the body to make spike proteins. The cells that are exposed to the mRNA produce spike proteins and then display these proteins on their surfaces. The immune system then attacks these spike proteins, thereby forming an immunity against them. The cells may also be destroyed.

How COVID-19 Vaccines Stimulate the Body to Produce Spike Proteins



Other types of COVID-19 vaccines use similar tactics.

The COVID-19 mRNA vaccines induce the body to make spike proteins, which then stimulate the body's immune system to generate immunity. (Illustration by The Epoch Times, Shutterstock)

However, the spike protein is highly inflammatory and toxic, and clinicians have observed that although people generate antibodies after vaccination, some start suffering from a wide variety of unexplainable symptoms.

Clinicians have put forward six pathways through which the spike protein can cause damage:

1. Immune dysregulation
2. Blood clotting and vascular damage
3. Mitochondrial dysfunction
4. Mast cell activation syndrome
5. Autoimmune reactions
6. Tissue damage through spike persistence

The lipid nanoparticles in the mRNA vaccines may also contribute to reported adverse events. [Studies show](#) that lipid nanoparticles activate inflammatory chemicals and [affect immune activity](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine General Adverse Events

The most common COVID-19 vaccine adverse events are those that affect the body generally.

- **Chest pain** may be a sign of myocarditis, but it can also be due to inflamed rib joints, lung inflammation, or neuropathy in the chest—all of which will be explained later in the article.
- **Fatigue** after vaccination is mostly transient. However, some people may experience persistent and debilitating fatigue, where even taking showers or doing a basic chore leaves them exhausted for the remainder of the day. [Around 8 percent to 80 percent](#) of vaccinated individuals report fatigue as a side effect, with most cases being mild. However, for some people, fatigue may never seem to get better. [A study](#) that followed 498 vaccinated physicians and dentists showed that around 6 percent reported long-term fatigue post-vaccination. One possible reason for the fatigue is [mitochondrial dysfunction](#). Mitochondria are the body's cellular powerhouse, present in most cells and responsible for producing energy for the body.
- **Fever and chills** may manifest due to the body's immune system fighting off the vaccine and are usually transient.
- **Swelling and pain** at the injection site is usually transient. Pain can also happen throughout the body.
- **Armpit pain** may indicate that the body's immunity is fighting off infections. The armpit area houses a cluster of lymph nodes that contain immune cells. These lymph nodes can become swollen after infection and vaccinations, leading to pain in the underarm area.

Nervous System Disorders

Nervous system disorders are some of the most common adverse events reported. In [the Pfizer trials](#), these disorders were the third most common, coming after general and muscle-related adverse events, while they were the second most common in the [Moderna trials](#).

Animal and [model studies](#) have shown that spike proteins can cross the blood-brain barrier. A [2023 preprint study](#) found spike proteins in the brain tissues of deceased COVID-19 patients. The [histological brain examinations](#) of the late German pathologist Dr. Arne Burkhardt showed that spike proteins damage blood vessels in the brain.

Spike proteins share structural similarities with proteins present in the human nervous system, and when our bodies attack the spike protein, collateral damage to the nerves may also occur. mRNA vaccines also contain a prion region and have been shown to accelerate the formation of misfolded proteins, which are [potentially linked](#) to Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

Guillain-Barré Syndrome

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes [Guillain-Barré syndrome](#) (GBS) as [a safety signal](#) of the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine. A study published in [Scientific Reports](#) found that COVID-19 vaccine recipients have a 42 percent increased incidence of developing GBS.

GBS is an autoimmune disease. COVID-19 spike proteins share similarities with [over 28 human proteins](#), including glial tissues and brain growth factors. Therefore, if the body attacks the spike protein, some of the antibodies formed may also attack the brain and the nervous system, potentially leading to neurological disorders.

Dementia

While COVID-19 vaccination has not been directly linked to dementia, it has been linked with [cognitive deficits](#), [memory loss](#), and delirium, all of which are symptoms of dementia.



A study funded by the [National Institute on Aging](#) reported delirium the day after vaccination in older people in a nursing home, but it was resolved within two weeks.

The [Italian NEURO-COVAX](#) population-based study evaluating over 19,000 people found that almost 2 percent reported cognitive fog after vaccination.

Seizures

In October 2022, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [researchers detected seizures](#) as a safety signal for children aged 5 and under who received the mRNA vaccines. A [Japanese study](#) that followed 332 people with epilepsy observed seizure worsening following vaccination in 5.7 percent of those who received their first and second COVID-19 vaccines.

Data from the Global Vaccine Data Network (GVDN) [showed that](#) the first and second doses of the Moderna vaccine were associated with an increased risk of febrile seizures, convulsions in children caused by a fever. The first dose of the Moderna vaccine and fourth dose of the Pfizer vaccine were associated with an increased risk of generalized seizures.

Additionally, the first dose of the Moderna vaccine was also associated with acute disseminated encephalomyelitis, a type of autoimmune condition that may present as seizure attacks.

Gait Disturbance

[One review](#) linked four cases of gait disturbance to the COVID-19 vaccine. Another [paper published in Cureus](#) reported four neurological case studies, with one patient developing gait disturbance from Guillain-Barré syndrome and one from meningitis-retention syndrome.

Researchers at the University of Florida [followed several](#) Parkinson's disease patients who experienced worsening Parkinsonian symptoms after vaccination, with gait disturbance being the most common.

Bell's Palsy

Bell's palsy manifests as facial muscle weakness or paralysis and has been recognized as a COVID-19 vaccine safety signal by researchers at the FDA. [An FDA preprint found](#) that older people who received the Pfizer booster had a higher rate of developing Bell's palsy.

Data from the GVDN similarly found that the first doses of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were associated with an increased risk of Bell's palsy.

Tremors

Tremors may be a sign of brain and neural damage, causing impairment in motor control.

[A case study](#) published by clinicians at the Cleveland Clinic reported a man who developed tremors in all four limbs 12 days after he took the second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Additionally, the Italian NEURO-COVAX study found that 1.5 percent of vaccinated individuals reported tremors, and the same amount reported muscle spasms.

Sensory Changes

Sensory changes such as pins and needles, temperature intolerance, pain, and lack of sensation are all indicators of neuropathy. The Epoch Times [has reported on neuropathy](#) that occurs after vaccination.

Neuropathy is when sensory neurons in the periphery are damaged. If the neuron is meant to detect heat, then the damage may cause a burning sensation or reduced ability to detect temperature. Damage to the neurons meant to detect touch may result in a pins-and-needles feeling, diminished sensation, or even a feeling of electric shock.

Headaches and Dizziness

Though many people have temporary headaches or dizziness after vaccination, some may also experience persistent and painful migraines that affect daily living. These headaches may be the result of neuroinflammation induced by the spike protein.

Fainting, or a temporary loss of consciousness, can occur due to decreased blood flow to the brain.

Cardiac Disorders

Spike proteins have been shown to damage the endothelium lining of the heart, causing inflammation and fusing the heart muscle cells, as demonstrated by research [conducted at the Mayo Clinic](#). Both processes can harm the heart muscles' functioning, leading to various conditions.



A German study published in the [British Journal of Pharmacology](#) showed that heart cells exposed to the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines produce spike protein and exhibit different abnormalities.

Cardiac Arrest

There has only been a few studies linking cardiac arrest with COVID-19 vaccination. [Analysis of the World Health Organization's](#) (WHO) adverse events database showed that the COVID-19 vaccines were associated with an increased risk of cardiac arrest in those older than 75 years of age.

[Only one peer-reviewed study](#) has linked cardiac arrest with the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine, in which a 59-year-old male with no significant past medical history received a third dose of the mRNA shot and experienced cardiac arrest within seven hours.

Cardiomyopathy

Cardiomyopathy is a condition affecting the heart muscle. The heart cavities may become enlarged, with the muscles becoming thicker or stiffer, causing a weakened heart and even leading to heart failure or cardiac arrest.

[A 2022 global review](#) on stress cardiomyopathy cases reported post-vaccination found that, on average, most symptoms occurred around three days after vaccination. The authors concluded that the problem is rare but can be life-threatening. Medical journals documented several cases of cardiomyopathy, including one [healthy 63-year-old woman](#) with no cardiovascular risk factors who was admitted to the emergency room one day after her first dose of the Moderna vaccine.

Heart Attack

Spike protein [damages blood vessels](#) and is also prone to forming blood clots, which can block coronary arteries, leading to heart attacks. The WHO's adverse events database showed that the COVID-19 vaccines are associated with an elevated risk of heart attacks in those older than 75.

Several case studies have reported heart attacks within 24 hours of vaccination, including [one Japanese case study](#) and [one Harvard University study](#).

Myocarditis and Pericarditis

Reports of myocarditis as a safety signal [have been extensively reported](#) in The Epoch Times' premium reports. Recently, FDA researchers [have also detected](#) myocarditis as a safety signal for the latest COVID-19 monovalent vaccines.

It can occur as a result of spike protein damaging the heart muscles. A paper published in the [Journal of the American College of Cardiology](#) found that the Moderna vaccine was associated with a higher rate of myocarditis than the Pfizer vaccine for young men. Like myocarditis, pericarditis is also a type of heart inflammation, but the outside heart lining is affected rather than the heart muscles. Pericarditis can lead to pericardial effusion, which occurs when fluid builds up around the heart. The Epoch Times [has reported](#) on a professional mountain biker who was diagnosed with pericarditis after vaccination and was hospitalized.

Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS)

Cases of POTS have increased in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. POTS is a condition that causes rapid heart rate when a person changes positions from lying down to standing up, indicating dysfunction between the nervous and cardiovascular systems. Dr. Tae Chung, director of the Johns Hopkins POTS program, noticed [some unusual cases](#) among medical students or physicians who were vaccinated but not infected with COVID-19. Later, [a large cohort study](#) identified a possible link between the COVID-19 vaccine and the disease.

In July 2023, The Epoch Times [spoke to two women](#) in their 20s who were diagnosed with POTS after COVID-19 vaccination.

Arrhythmia

Arrhythmias occur when there is an electrical malfunctioning of the heart, with heartbeats becoming too rapid, slow, or irregular.

A study [published in Vaccine: X](#) found an increased risk for arrhythmias without myocarditis within 14 days of a second dose of mRNA vaccine in adults. The Moderna vaccine presented a greater risk than the Pfizer. [A systematic review](#) concluded that "the incidence rate ... of cardiac arrhythmia post-COVID-19 vaccination is rare and ranges between 1 and 76 per 10,000." [Another 2023 review](#) said the problem is "not uncommon."

Atrial fibrillation, the most common type of arrhythmia, [has also been reported](#) in the literature.



Hypertension

As the vaccination campaign continues, evidence of possible blood pressure alteration [has accumulated](#). The mechanism is unknown; it may be linked to the reduction of angiotensin-converting enzyme-2 (ACE-2) receptors in the body, as spike proteins bind to ACE-2 receptors to enter cells.

A [meta-analysis study](#) published in the Journal of Cardiovascular Development and Disease examining data on 357,387 vaccinated individuals found that around 3.2 percent reported an increase in blood pressure in post-vaccination reports filed 15 minutes to days after vaccination.

Heart Palpitations

Heart palpitation is a sign of underlying heart disease, though [it is typically transient](#) and non-severe.

Blood Disorders

A major side effect reported following vaccination is blood clots. Spike proteins are particularly prone to clotting. While most blood clots require the presence of thrombin and platelets, spike proteins can form clots even in the absence of these proteins.

Early in the vaccine rollout, the now discontinued J&J vaccine was [shown to cause blood clotting](#) despite low platelets in the blood. The mRNA vaccines have similar problems.

Spike proteins also change the structure of the proteins inside the clot, resulting in amyloid-like blood clots that are much larger and harder to break down. [Multiple studies](#) have shown that spike proteins [directly bind to clotting factors](#) in the blood, promoting both large and [microclot formations](#).

Depending on where the blood clots form, patients may develop various pathologies related to the clotting.

Stroke

In early 2023, the FDA and CDC [released a joint statement](#) declaring stroke as a new safety signal in older people who took Pfizer bivalent boosters. However, months later, they [reversed the statement](#).

A self-controlled case series that followed 32 million British people found that COVID-19 vaccination was associated with a [38 percent increased risk](#) of hemorrhagic stroke, or brain bleeds.

A study published in the [Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease](#) followed a woman in her 80s who first had a stroke three days after she took her first COVID-19 mRNA vaccine. She then had a second stroke three days after her second dose.

A statewide study that followed [5 million people living in Georgia](#) found that those who contracted COVID-19 within 21 days of vaccination were at the highest risk of stroke.

Signs and symptoms of stroke include the [inability to understand language](#) (aphasia) and [difficulty speaking](#) (dysarthria), both of which have been reported following COVID-19 vaccination.

Pulmonary Embolism

Pulmonary embolism occurs when blood clots form inside the lungs. This can impair oxygen exchange and excretion of carbon dioxide within the lungs and is potentially fatal.

Data from the GVDN showed that the recipients of the first mRNA vaccine doses or the AstraZeneca vaccine were all associated with an increased risk of pulmonary embolism between 20 and 33 percent.

A [case study](#) published by clinicians at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center discussed two cases of pulmonary embolism after patients had been administered the Pfizer vaccine, both of which affected those who were otherwise not at higher risk for blood clots.

A Korean study [published in Vaccines](#) reported a case of pulmonary embolism that occurred seven days after the patient took his first mRNA vaccine shot.

Deep Vein Thrombosis

Blood clotting in the veins in the limbs is also potentially fatal if the clot stops blood from flowing back to the lungs. While large studies have not found an increased risk of deep vein thrombosis with COVID-19 vaccination, several case studies have linked patients' deep vein thrombosis to vaccination. For example, [a 75-year-old male](#) developed swelling in his left leg 10 days after his second dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

Vasculitis

Vasculitis is damage and inflammation to the blood vessels, which could further encourage blood clotting.



The more common vasculitis diseases affect the smaller blood vessels, causing red spots and lumps on the skin and possible organ damage.

A paper published in the Journal of Rheumatology associated the COVID-19 vaccine [with an uptick in IgA vasculitis](#), a type of vasculitis.

Another mini-review [published in Frontiers in Medicine](#) also stated that cases of vasculitis of the skin “have been more frequently reported” after COVID-19 vaccinations than after infection.

Raynaud’s Phenomenon

Raynaud’s phenomenon is a condition in which some areas, usually the fingers, feel numb and cool due to restricted blood supply to these areas.

A [study followed 19 patients](#) who developed Raynaud’s phenomenon after COVID-19 vaccinations. Around 80 percent of the participants had no preexisting Raynaud’s phenomenon. The authors concluded that while their study does not infer a causal relationship between vaccination and the occurrence of Raynaud’s phenomenon, they found the temporal relationship “unsettling.” Cyanosis, a condition where a person’s fingers and lips turn blue due to poor circulation, can also occur due to Raynaud’s phenomenon.

Skin Disorders

A plethora of skin symptoms [have been reported](#) after COVID-19 vaccination.

Skin reactions can manifest as signs of an allergic or immune response to the vaccine. While the reactions are generally transient, some people may suffer from the condition for a long time.

[A large study](#) published in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology identified several common adverse reactions: rashes, itchy, red skin, and hives.

“Some rashes may appear a day or two after vaccination, and some have a delayed onset, as long as 7–14 days after vaccination. Most of these rashes resolve on their own with time,” the lead author Dr. Esther Freeman, director of Global Health Dermatology at Massachusetts General Hospital, said in a press release.

Vitiligo

Vitiligo is an autoimmune condition where pigment is lost from areas of the skin, causing whitish patches. [A systematic review](#) of vitiligo cases linked to COVID-19 vaccines published in September 2023 identified 15 new or worsened cases.

Livedo Reticularis

The skin condition is thought to be caused by inflamed blood vessels and often presents with blotchy, reddish-blue to purple, net-like patterns on the skin.

A case study published in the [Journal of Rheumatology](#) followed an 80-year-old woman who developed livedo reticularis on her left upper arm and surrounding areas a day after her third vaccination dose. [Another case study](#) identified a case occurring in the knee cap, also after a third COVID-19 vaccination. The patches, however, resolve when the skin is warmed.

Hair Loss

Hair loss can be due to hormonal changes, stress, and autoimmune conditions.

A study published in [Skin Appendage Disorders](#) reported five cases of hair loss after the people received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. While the condition mostly resolved, one patient suffered progressive worsening alopecia with each subsequent vaccination.

A study [published in Vaccines](#) discussed several cases that involved a female patient who had no history of COVID-19. Three days after her first AstraZeneca booster, she reported to a clinic complaining of excessive hair loss.

Sun Allergy

A sun allergy describes a condition where a person’s skin becomes itchy with rash formations a few hours after exposure to the sun. It is often caused by excessive histamine release and is usually linked to mast cell activation syndrome, which will be introduced in the “Immune and Autoimmune Disorders” section.



Psoriasis

In psoriasis patients, skin cells multiply too quickly due to immune dysregulation, causing patches of skin to become scaly and inflamed.

[A review study](#) conducted by Taiwan researchers found 314 cases of new-onset psoriasis or flares. “First, second, and third vaccine doses were associated with psoriasis incidents, with the second dose most frequently associated with psoriasis flares,” the authors wrote.

Eczema

Eczema is a condition caused by inflammation, leading to dry and itchy skin.

A paper published in the [British Journal of Dermatology](#) followed over 1,900 people with a history of eczema or psoriasis. Ninety percent experienced at least one flare-up following vaccination. [Another study](#) linked the cases of 22 patients in the United States who reported either itchy skin or eczema to prior COVID-19 vaccination.

Excessive Sweating

Excessive sweating has been [identified as a side effect](#) by the United Nations Children’s Fund.

Erythema Multiforme

A skin disorder characterized by bull’s-eye-shaped lesions, erythema multiforme is often thought to be caused by an allergic reaction.

[A review](#) investigated 31 studies and identified 90 patients with erythema multiforme “as a side effect of COVID-19 vaccination.”

Pityriasis Rosea

Pityriasis rosea is a rash that often begins as an oval spot on the face, chest, abdomen, or back. A review published in [Immunity, Inflammation and Disease](#) identified 111 people who developed pityriasis rosea after COVID-19 vaccination. Most had symptoms in their trunk area, and the average time of onset was nine days. Recovery, on average, took a month and a half.

Psychiatric Disorders

The Epoch Times’ premium reports [have extensively discussed](#) various psychiatric disorders reported in the literature and by clinicians.

The problem can be as mild as sleeplessness or as severe as psychosis.

Studies have also found the reverse, stating that COVID-19 vaccinations [improved mental health conditions](#).

Hallucinations

This phenomenon has developed in some of those vaccinated, often reported in the literature as psychosis.

[An Indian review](#) documented 11 cases of psychiatric adverse events from COVID-19 vaccinations, of which five patients also developed hallucinations. One such case manifested on the same day as the vaccination. [Another case study](#) described a 45-year-old woman with no history or family history of mental disorders who developed psychosis a month after COVID-19 vaccination. The woman abruptly quit her job of 18 years and would only get dressed in the dark due to her delusions.

“Rare occurrences of psychosis” after the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine are possible, the authors wrote.

Anxiety and Depression

In a [previous premium report](#), psychiatrist Dr. Amanda McDonald told The Epoch Times that she observed patients’ anxiety and depression suddenly became resistant to psychiatric medication after their vaccination or COVID-19 infection.

[A study](#) presented two patients whose bipolar disorder was previously stable for years on the same medications. Both experienced worsened depression and mania after vaccination.

[A 2021 report](#) by the CDC found that four out of five vaccine-administration sites had to temporarily suspend vaccination due to anxiety-related symptoms, such as fainting soon after patients were given a dose of the J&J vaccine.

Panic Attack

Multiple case studies documented the sudden onset of panic attacks following vaccination.

[One case involved](#) a 26-year-old woman who first developed suicidal ideation from panic attacks after a COVID-19 infection. After she recovered, she took a second dose of the Pfizer mRNA vaccine, and within



four hours, she started to experience panic attack symptoms again. [A 48-year-old man](#) developed a fear of death and an impending sense of doom after taking a second dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

Insomnia

Though few studies have singled insomnia out as an adverse event following vaccination, sleep disturbance is often reported in association with other conditions. [A Turkish study](#) that tracked 787 vaccinated health care workers found around 11 percent reported at least one sleep disturbance. The Italian NEURO-COVAX study that evaluated over 19,000 people found that 1.6 percent reported insomnia, with the Moderna vaccine most linked to insomnia as an adverse event.

[Another study](#) that tracked more than 69,000 individuals' sleep, cardiovascular, and respiratory changes through their biometric device found that more of their sleeping time was spent in light sleep rather than restorative sleep for the first few days after vaccination.

Infections

COVID-19 vaccinations are supposed to improve immunity against the virus. However, [a growing number](#) of studies have found that repeated COVID-19 vaccination potentially weakens the immune system, putting the body at risk of infection from COVID-19 and [other viruses](#).

Pneumonia

Several case studies have recorded pneumonia or lung infection associated with COVID-19 vaccines, though there have been no large reviews. A case study [published in Bronchoneumolgia](#) reported a patient who developed mild fever, shortness of breath, oppressive chest pain, and other symptoms within eight to 10 hours of taking a second vaccine dose.

Another study published in the [International Journal of Infectious Diseases](#) reported the appearance of pneumonia symptoms in an 83-year-old man within a day of getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 disease itself is among the top 10 most common adverse reactions reported to VAERS. [Studies from Cleveland Clinic](#) have shown that repeat COVID-19 vaccinations are associated with increased risks of COVID-19 infections.

Research led by professor Vladimir Uversky from the [University of Florida](#) predicted that repeat vaccination of the non-live COVID-19 vaccines could cause the body to become more tolerant of potential COVID-19 infections rather than boosting its own defense.

Viral Reactivation and Infections

Herpes zoster, chicken pox, and Epstein-Barr viruses are [commonly reported](#). Opportunistic [bacterial and fungal infections](#) may also manifest due to a period of immunodeficiency.

Eyes, Ears, Nose, and Mouth Issues

The [immune response](#) following COVID-19 vaccination may lead to temporary lesions and inflammation affecting the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

Tinnitus and Hearing Loss

Tinnitus has been regularly reported both in VAERS and the Yellow Card reporting system. The exact mechanism for tinnitus is unknown, though some studies suggest neurological damage.

Perhaps the [most famous case](#) of tinnitus was reported by Dr. Gregory Poland, director of the Mayo Clinic's Vaccine Research Group, who developed severe tinnitus after he took his second dose of a Moderna shot in 2021.

While the [CDC has said](#) it has not found evidence of a link between COVID-19 vaccination and tinnitus, the organization's internal documents show tinnitus as a safety signal in the VAERS system. [Many studies](#) have also made the connection.

Sudden sensorineural hearing loss, or hearing loss 30 decibels or greater, is rarely but still reported after vaccinations. A [68-year-old female](#) developed a ringing in her ears four days after the third dose of the Pfizer vaccine. A specialist follow-up appointment showed that she had significant hearing loss.

A study published in the [International Journal of Infectious Diseases](#) reported three cases of sudden hearing loss around three days after vaccination. However, the researchers did not find a direct association with the vaccine.



Visual Impairment and Eye Disorders

The most common eye disorders reported are conjunctivitis and uveitis, both caused by inflammation of the eye tissues.

An [eye clinic in New Zealand](#) tracked over 3,000 patients with eye conditions before and after COVID-19 vaccination. The authors concluded that vaccination increased their patients' risks of uveitis.

Other eye disorders affecting visual acuity and eye movement discoordination have also been reported. These disorders may be caused by damage to the optic and oculomotor nerves. [A study reported 63 cases](#) of oculomotor disorders following the first, second, or third COVID-19 vaccinations. Most of the conditions were due to cranial nerve palsy. Cranial nerves innervate all of the nerves in the eyes.

Vertigo

Vertigo is often linked to the ears, which help keep us in balance.

Research conducted on [British health care workers](#) showed that vertigo was reported in around 2.5 percent of workers.

Analysis of Korea's VAERS equivalent showed that between February 2021 and July 2022, vertigo was the [third most common adverse reaction](#) reported following COVID-19 vaccination in Korea. The authors calculated an incidence of 54.3 per 100,000 vaccinations.

Smell and Taste Disorders

Loss of smell and taste [are common and persistent](#) conditions following COVID-19 and its vaccinations. [A Belgian study](#) published in the Ear, Nose & Throat Journal followed six people who developed smell and taste disorders following vaccination in the absence of a positive COVID-19 test.

Mouth Inflammation and Ulcers

Pain and ulcers of the mouth, tongue, and gums can occur due to the inflammation the vaccine induces. Mouth ulcers can also occur as a result of reactivated viruses and fungi. Most cases are transient and [respond well to treatment](#).

Dry Mouth

Dry mouth is a common reaction reported during viral infections and after using certain drugs and is linked with poor breath and an increased risk of cavities.

A [December 2023 study](#) compared vaccinated children against unvaccinated and found that vaccinated children secreted less saliva. The European Union Drug Regulating Authorities Pharmacovigilance (EudraVigilance) database, [accessed in August 2022](#), found dry mouth fairly common—with 0.215 cases out of each 100 reports.

Respiratory System Disorders

Shortness of breath, rapid breathing, and cough are symptoms that arise or worsen following vaccination.

Shortness of Breath

Shortness of breath (dyspnea) is a widely acknowledged vaccine side effect that is usually transient. Australia's [COVID-19 Critical Intelligence Unit](#) reported in 2022 that shortness of breath is among the most commonly reported symptoms after COVID-19 vaccine-associated myocarditis and pericarditis.

Shortness of breath may be a sign of [interstitial lung disease](#), with [some cases](#) linked to the COVID-19 vaccine.

One case [published in Chest](#) identified a healthy 24-year-old male who—five days after receiving the Pfizer vaccine—developed shortness of breath and sharp chest pain. He was also coughing up blood due to blood clots in his lungs.

Asthma

Asthma exacerbation and worsening have been reported. [One study](#) published in the International Journal of Infectious Diseases examined a medical resident who had a history of asthma. An occasional smoker, the woman reported respiratory symptoms 10 hours after she took the second Pfizer vaccine. [Another 55-year-old patient](#) became short of breath a day after she took her booster. A CT scan showed wheezing in both lungs.



Muscle and Joint Disorders

[A study](#) that followed 803 vaccinated health care workers for their reported side effects found that about 60 percent reported general weakness or fatigue, 45 percent reported muscle pain, and roughly 10 percent reported spasms and stiffness.

Joint pain was reported in more than 16 percent of the workers. Another study evaluating common side effects reported that joint pain tends to be a common side effect of vaccinations.

Muscle Weakness and Spasms

Muscle weakness, [spasms](#), and loss of sensation can often indicate [neurological injury](#). A review published in [Acta Neurologica Belgica](#) reported eight cases of muscle weakness, pain, or loss of sensation, and all of these patients were diagnosed to have Guillain-Barré syndrome or some type of neuropathy.

Muscle pain can also be caused by myositis, inflammation of the muscles. [A case study in India](#) described a man who had severe muscle pain two days after his COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccination. The doctors found that the pain was caused by direct damage to the muscles in his arms.

Arthritis

[A Belgian study](#) published in the journal Rheumatology followed 17 people who developed arthritis soon after being given the COVID-19 vaccines. Other studies have [reported new](#) and [flared cases](#) of arthritis in people days to weeks after being administered the mRNA and DNA vaccines.

Costochondritis

This is a condition where the joints in the rib cage become inflamed, leading to chest pain. Painful ribs are a less common phenomenon, with only a [handful of cases](#).

Gastrointestinal Disorders

Digestive symptoms, including nausea and diarrhea, can range from [mild to severe](#) following COVID-19 vaccination.

Appendicitis

Studies in long-COVID patients showed that spike protein and its RNA can [persist in the appendix](#), which may also apply to vaccine adverse events.

Swedish researchers have [identified appendicitis](#) as a possible safety signal after examining the WHO's VigiBase. One case study identified the Pfizer vaccine as [being the possible "trigger"](#) to a 69-year-old woman's appendicitis.

Pancreatitis

One possible explanation for pancreatitis developing post-vaccination is that [the damage is induced](#) through the organ's ACE-2 receptors, which the spike proteins can bind to, causing inflammation.

Several papers [have reported](#) acute pancreatitis soon after COVID-19 vaccinations. [One such case](#) identified an 82-year-old man who had sudden abdominal pain following his third Pfizer vaccine dose. A scan showed an abnormal decline of fat in the pancreas, suggesting acute pancreatitis.

Pfizer and Moderna's clinical trials [have also shown](#) that vaccinated people have a higher incidence of pancreatitis than the unvaccinated.

Liver Injury

A systematic review published in [BMC Gastroenterology](#) identified 275 cases of liver injury following vaccination, most of which were caused by autoimmune actions.

A letter to the editor published in the [Journal of Hepatology](#) described 16 patients, aged 25 to 74 years, who developed liver injury five to 46 days after mRNA vaccination. The majority of cases presented after the second dose of the vaccine. Some had preexisting liver disease.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

IBD is an autoimmune condition where the body has a chronically inflamed and swollen gut. [Ulcerative colitis](#) and Crohn's disease all fall under the umbrella of IBD.



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – March 2024

COVID-19 vaccinations have been shown to trigger IBD. [A study that tracked](#) 411 patients with IBD following vaccination found that following the first dose, around 2 percent of the patients experienced flares. Most cases occurred within a week of vaccination; two needed hospitalization, with one needing surgery.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

IBS is a chronic condition with no known cause. Studies suggest that [COVID-19 infections may trigger IBS](#), but there are no studies so far indicating a link to vaccination.

Evaluation of the severe adverse events reported during the Pfizer and Moderna clinical trials showed that both vaccines are linked to an [increased risk of colitis](#), which can occur in both IBS and IBD.

Immune and Autoimmune Disorders

COVID-19 vaccines activate the immune system, and immune-related adverse events such as inflammatory, autoimmune, and allergic conditions may manifest due to the vaccine-induced immune responses.

Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS)

MIS is most commonly associated with severe COVID-19 and immune dysregulation in children (MIS-C). However, both children and adults (MIS-A) have reported multisystem inflammatory syndromes after vaccines in the research literature and the reporting system.

A study published in the [CDC's journal](#) Emerging Infectious Disease discussed two teenagers who developed multisystem inflammatory syndrome within a week of receiving their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. [Another CDC study](#) reported the cases of six California adults, three of whom developed the disease after getting the vaccine.

Lymphopenia

This is a sign of immunodeficiency disorder that occurs when the body's lymphocytes, a class of immune cells, are low in number. The Epoch Times has reported on this phenomenon [in a past article](#).

In a study [published in Future Medicine](#), the authors recognized that in COVID-19 infections, spike proteins bind to ACE-2 receptors, which may cause a depletion of T lymphocytes. The same thing may also happen as a result of vaccine spike proteins, the authors added.

An [early Nature study](#) on the Pfizer vaccines showed a decrease in lymphocyte count after the first dose.

Cancer

Cancer can be a sign of immunodeficiency and suppression and may manifest when a person's immune system becomes dysfunctional. However, some studies have suggested that spike protein may be a cancer promoter.

A study in [Translational Oncology](#) predicted that the spike protein structure allows it to interact and possibly switch off tumor suppressor genes. The spike proteins are also [highly inflammatory](#), with vaccination shown to reduce the body's own immune defenses. All of these things may be related to increased cancer risk. [Authors of one case study](#) on lymphoma discussed that prior to the case in question, eight cases of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma developed shortly after COVID-19 vaccination.

[A Romanian study](#) discussed two cancer diagnoses made within a week of vaccination. According to a review published in the [European Journal of Cancer](#), taking the COVID-19 vaccine may put breast cancer patients at risk of developing enlarged lymph nodes. An [Italian study](#) reported a case of enlargement of metastatic lymph nodes within two days of patients taking a second dose.

Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS)

MCAS occurs when the mast cells, known as the "sentinels" of the immune system, become overly sensitive. As a result, any stimulus can cause allergy-like inflammatory reactions with [a number of symptoms](#).

While no studies currently associate MCAS with vaccine adverse reactions, the syndrome has been reported in VAERS and the UK's Yellow Card system.

[Several papers](#) by mast cell activation expert professor Theoharis C. Theoharides at Nova Southeastern University recognized that spike proteins could activate mast cells in the body, leading to the release of inflammatory molecules.

Hypersensitivity or Allergic Reactions

Clinicians at Baylor College of Medicine [published a commentary](#) on allergic reactions in JAMA Pediatrics. The authors said that, though rare, some people may be allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG), which is



present in the mRNA and J&J vaccines. Other potential allergens include latex and polysorbate 80, which are present in the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Some studies have shown that the spike protein may also be causing allergic reactions. [One paper](#) said the spike protein contains regions that may act as allergens. Furthermore, [a paper](#) studied 51 COVID patients injected with spike proteins and more than 84 percent developed prolonged allergic reactions.

The CDC has acknowledged possible anaphylaxis from COVID-19 vaccines.

Reproductive Disorders

COVID-19 vaccination has been linked to reproductive concerns for both men and women.

Spontaneous Abortions

Researchers who [analyzed the VAERS database](#) found COVID-19 vaccines, when compared to influenza vaccines, were associated with an increase in all reports of miscarriage, fetal deaths, and fetal abnormalities.

Male Fertility

COVID-19 vaccination is linked with impairment in semen quality, as shown in [an Israeli study](#) that reported reduced semen concentration by 15.4 percent and declined total motile count.

Pain and Ulcers

One study published in June 2023 [identified eight cases](#) of vulvar ulcers in teenagers aged 12 to 17 after getting vaccinated.

A [14-year-old girl](#) experienced burning vaginal pain, distinct lesions, reddening, and pain in the five days after her second dose of the Pfizer vaccine. A 22-year-old female who had [prior histories of vulvar ulcers](#) developed vulvar ulcers within two days of her Pfizer vaccine booster but experienced gradual recovery several weeks after being given anti-inflammatory drugs.

Menstrual Disorders

[A study](#) that examined non-menstruating women, including women on contraceptives, women approaching menopause, and menopausal women, found that abnormal and unexpected vaginal bleeding could persist for eight to nine months. Up to 14 percent of women approaching menopause experienced menstruation, while 3.3 percent of menopausal women had vaginal bleeding.

[In a systematic review](#) of vaccinated menstruating women, more than half of the 78,138 women studied had some type of menstrual problem.

Endocrine Disorders

Endocrine-related conditions, including hyperglycemia, have been reported as vaccine adverse reactions, beginning in the initial COVID-19 vaccine trials.

Hyperglycemia and Diabetes

Hyperglycemia, also known as high blood sugar, may be due to spike protein damage to the pancreas, the organ responsible for blood sugar regulation. Spike protein interactions with ACE-2 receptors can also promote an inflammatory state, which tends to correlate with higher blood sugar levels.

Research led by emergency medicine physician Dr. Joseph Fraiman showed that while the placebo group had zero hyperglycemia incidence per 10,000 people, the [Moderna group](#) had an incidence of hyperglycemia at 0.7 per 10,000 events.

[A systematic review](#) published in October 2023 on Type 1 and 2 diabetes following COVID-19 vaccination identified several cases of new-onset diabetes and increased severity following vaccination.

Multiple studies, including papers [published in Frontiers Endocrinology](#) and the [World Journal of Diabetes](#), have also reported poorly controlled diabetes in those with Type 1 and 2 diabetes following vaccinations.

Thyroid Disorders

Thyroid dysfunction and thyroiditis [have been linked](#) to COVID-19 spike proteins. Since the spike proteins share similarities with thyroid proteins, the body may also attack the thyroid when it attacks spike proteins.

A review published in the Journal of Endocrinological Investigation in 2022 [identified over 80 cases](#) of thyroid disorders, namely thyroiditis and hypothyroidism, after COVID-19 vaccination.



Urinary and Renal Disorders

Studies have shown that spike protein [can cause direct kidney damage](#). COVID-19 patients [have been found to have](#) spike protein in their urine, suggesting renal complications.

Acute Kidney Injury

Kidneys are [particularly vulnerable](#) since the spike proteins bind to ACE-2 receptors, which are abundant in the kidneys.

A paper published in [QJM: An International Journal of Medicine](#) identified 97 people who developed acute kidney injuries following vaccination.

A [Taiwan study](#) followed 27 patients who developed acute kidney disease following vaccination, six of whom progressed to end-stage kidney disease. The authors noted this was more concerning for high-risk patients receiving multiple vaccine doses.

Nephrotic Syndrome

Nephrotic syndrome is a type of kidney disorder that occurs when the kidney passes too much protein into the urine.

A 2022 systematic review by [researchers at Mount Sinai](#) examined 78 cases of nephrotic syndrome that occurred following COVID-19 infection or vaccination. Of these, 26 developed nephrotic syndrome after receiving the vaccine. The authors concluded that “nephrotic syndrome is a possible complication of both COVID-19 infection and the COVID-19 (sic) vaccine and should be considered in patients exhibiting sudden onset edemas or deterioration in kidney function.”

Another study [published in the Journal of Nephrology](#) examined 74 patients who developed nephrotic syndrome after vaccination, with researchers attributing it to the activation of ACE-2 receptors.

Urinary Complications

Vaccine recipients have also reported urinary adverse events.

A study that [followed 889 patients](#) with preexisting lower urinary tract symptoms showed that up to 13 percent experienced worsened urinary storage symptoms following vaccination. Around 8 percent reported frequent urination at night, about 6 percent reported urinary urgency, about 2 percent reported incontinence, and over 5 percent sought medical help. Cystitis could be potentially related to the symptoms, as with urinary tract infection, the authors added. [A UK case study](#) described a 74-year-old woman. After her first vaccine dose, she experienced inconsistent coordination between her urinary organs and a weak urinary flow. The doctor suspected she had cystitis. A week after she got her second dose, she admitted herself again to the hospital due to frequent urination.

Man Versus Bio-Bugs: The Challenges in MCMs

By Dr. Joy Calayo

CBNW | February 2024

Source: <https://nct-cbnw.com/man-versus-bio-bugs-the-challenges-in-mcems/>

The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that between 2020-2023, 12-17% of global deaths are and will be attributed to communicable diseases. Meanwhile in 2021, excess global deaths due to COVID-19 was estimated at 14.9 million. These figures show that, despite the decreasing mortality due to communicable diseases, the potential for a biological threat to cause massive disruption in the population's health remains substantial. Expectedly, continued scientific research and innovation led to the development and use of medical countermeasures (MCMs) against biological threats. These range from chemotherapeutic agents, vaccines, detection systems, medical devices, and protective equipment, to other goods and services for health preparedness and response.

Revisiting MCMs During COVID-19

Analyzing MCMs during the recent pandemic is an appropriate starting point for this discussion. These MCMs were subjected to challenges during the early phase and at least up to the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the outset, fear of the novel pathogen prompted the heightened use of MCMs such as personal protective equipment (PPE), chemical disinfectants/germicides, and more. However, several factors disordered the access, distribution, and use of MCMs, including biologic agents, geography, communication, legislation, and people.

What You Do Not Know Can Hurt You

SARS-CoV-2 was designated as a Risk Group (RG)-4 pathogen because of its likelihood to cause serious or lethal human disease for which preventive or therapeutic interventions are not usually available. An RG-



4 agent is a high-risk agent for the individual and the community, thus, warranting the maximum protection of humans and their environment. Moreover, at the outset, limited knowledge and differing understanding of SARS-CoV-2 including but not limited to transmissibility, host range, susceptibility and adaptation characteristics allowed for either an overstated or unassuming use of MCMs. Later, fear of SARS-CoV-2 decreased, and it was eventually characterized as a lower RG-3 human pathogen and an RG-2 animal pathogen.

► Read the full article at the source's URL.

Dr. Joy Calayo is a professor of Microbiology and Public Health at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Medical Technology and Biochemistry at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines. She is also the Chief Medical Technologist at the San Lazaro Hospital (SLH), National Referral Center for Infectious Diseases under the Department of Health. She is the point person for the SLH-Nagasaki University Research Collaboration laboratory.

Biological Sex Differences: Key to Understanding Long COVID?

By Claire Sibonney

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/biological-sex-differences-key-understanding-long-covid-2024a10003vh>

Feb 28 – Leticia Soares was infected with COVID-19 in April 2020, in the final year of postdoctoral studies in disease ecology at a Canadian University. What started with piercing migraines and severe fatigue in 2020 soon spiraled into a myriad of long COVID symptoms: Gastrointestinal issues, sleep problems, joint and muscle pain, along with unexpected menstrual changes. After an [absence of menstrual bleeding](#) and its usual signs, she later suffered from severe periods and symptoms that worsened her long COVID condition. "It just baffled me," said Soares, now 39. "It was debilitating." Cases like Soares's are leading scientists to spend more time trying to understand the biological sex disparity in chronic illnesses such as long COVID that until recently have all but been ignored. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, long COVID affects nearly [twice as many women as men](#). What's more, up to two thirds of female patients with long COVID report an increase in symptoms related to menstruation, which suggests a possible link between sex hormone fluctuations and immune dysfunction in the illness. "These illnesses are underfunded and understudied relative to their disease burdens," said [Beth Pollack](#), a research scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, who studies complex chronic illnesses. Addressing knowledge gaps, especially around sex differences, could significantly improve our understanding of complex chronic illnesses, said Pollack, who coauthored a [2023 literature review](#) of female reproductive health impacts of long COVID.



Emerging 'Menstrual Science' Could Be Key

There is a critical need, she said, for studies on these illnesses to include considerations of sex differences, hormones, reproductive phases, and reproductive conditions. This research could potentially inform doctors and other clinicians or lead to treatments, both for reproductive symptoms and for the illnesses themselves. Pollack noted that reproductive symptoms are prevalent across a group of infection-associated chronic illnesses she studies, all of which disproportionately affect women. These associated conditions, traditionally studied in isolation, share pathologies like reproductive health concerns, signaling a need for focused research on their shared mechanisms. Recognizing this critical gap, "menstrual science" is emerging as a pivotal area of study, aiming to connect these dots through focused research on hormonal influences.

Researchers at the University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia, for example, are studying whether hormones play a role in causing or worsening the symptoms of long COVID. By comparing hormone levels in people with these conditions with those in healthy people and by tracking how symptoms change with hormone levels over time and across menstrual cycles, scientists hope to find patterns that could help diagnose these conditions more easily and lead to new treatments. They're also examining how hormonal life phases such as puberty, pregnancy, or perimenopause and hormone treatments like [birth control](#) might affect these illnesses.

How Gender and Long COVID Intertwine

The pathologies of long COVID, affecting at least [65 million people](#) worldwide, currently focus on four hypotheses: Persistent viral infection, reactivation of dormant viruses (such as common herpes viruses), inflammation-related damage to tissues and organs, and autoimmunity (the body attacking itself).



It's this last reason that holds some of the most interesting clues on biological sex differences, said [Akiko Iwasaki](#), PhD, a Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, immunologist who has led numerous research breakthroughs on long COVID since the start of the pandemic. Women have two X chromosomes, for example, and although one is inactivated, the inactivation is incomplete. Some cells still express genes from the "inactivated genes" on the X chromosome, Iwasaki said. Those include key immune genes, which trigger a more robust response to infections and vaccinations but also predispose them to autoimmune reactions. "It comes at the cost of triggering too much immune response," Iwasaki said. Sex hormones [also factor in](#). Testosterone, which is higher in males, is immunosuppressive, so it can dampen immune responses, Iwasaki said. That may contribute to making males more likely to get severe acute infections of COVID-19 but have fewer long-term effects. [Estrogen](#), on the other hand, is known to enhance the immune response. It can increase the production of antibodies and the activation of T cells, which are critical for fighting off infections. This heightened immune response, however, might also contribute to the persistent inflammation observed in long COVID, where the immune system continues to react even after the acute infection has resolved.

Sex-Specific Symptoms and Marginalized Communities

Of the more than [200 symptoms](#) long haulers experience, Iwasaki said, several are also sex-specific. A recent draft study by Iwasaki and another leading COVID researcher, David Putrino, PhD, at Mount Sinai Health System in New York City, shows hair loss as one of the most female-dominant symptoms and sexual dysfunction among males.

In examining sex differences, another question is why long COVID rates in the trans community are disproportionately high. One of the reasons Iwasaki's lab is [looking at testosterone closely](#) is because anecdotal evidence from female-to-male trans individuals indicates that testosterone therapy improved their long COVID symptoms significantly. It also raises the possibility that hormone therapy could help. However, patients and advocates say it's also important to consider socioeconomic factors in the trans community. "We need to start at this population and social structure level to understand why trans people over and over are put in harm's way," said [JD Davids](#), a trans patient-researcher with long COVID and the cofounder and codirector of Strategies for High Impact and its [Long COVID Justice project](#). For trans people, said Davids, risk factors for both severe COVID and long COVID include being part of low-income groups, belonging to marginalized racial and ethnic communities, and living in crowded environments such as shelters or prisons. The disproportionate impact of long COVID on marginalized communities, especially when seen through the lens of historical medical neglect, also demands attention, said Iwasaki. "Women used to be labeled hysteric when they complained about these kinds of symptoms."

Where It All Leads

The possibility of diagnosing long COVID with a simple blood test could radically change some doctors' false perceptions that it is not a real condition, Iwasaki said, ensuring it is recognized and treated with the seriousness it deserves.

"I feel like we need to get there with long COVID. If we can order a blood test and say somebody has a long COVID because of these values, then suddenly the diseases become medically explainable," Iwasaki added. This advancement is critical for propelling research forward, she said, refining treatment approaches — including those that target sex-specific hormone, immunity, and inflammation issues — and improving the well-being of those living with long COVID.

This hope resonates with scientists like Pollack, who recently led the first National Institutes of Health-sponsored research webinar on [less studied pathologies](#) in [myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome](#) (ME/CFS) and long COVID, and with the experiences of individuals like Soares, who navigates through the unpredictable nature of both of these conditions with resilience.

"This illness never ceases to surprise me in how it changes my body. I feel like it's a constant adaptation," said Soares. Now living in Salvador, Brazil, her daily life has dramatically shifted to the confines of her home.

"It's how I have more predictability in my symptoms," she said, pointing out the pressing need for the scientific advancements that Iwasaki envisions and a deepening of our understanding of the disease's impacts on patients' lives.

International panel calls for tighter oversight of risky pathogen studies

By [Jocelyn Kaiser](#) | Staff writer for *Science* magazine

Source: <https://www.science.org/content/article/international-panel-calls-tighter-oversight-risky-pathogen-studies>

Feb 28 – Research on dangerous human pathogens is essential to protect people from epidemics and pandemics, but safety rules for such work need to be tighter and more consistent around the world, according to a [report](#) released today by a broad international task force launched in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. "All countries





must look carefully at pathogen security, and we hope our report provides a universal framework,” said co-chair Ravindra Gupta, a virologist at the University of Cambridge. The report drew praise from scientists who acknowledge the risks of some types of virological experiments but worry more safety rules might hamper biomedical progress. It “attains a balance that has sometimes been lost in the past when the focus was on risks, with little attention paid to benefits,” says virologist Michael Imperiale of the University of Michigan. “The recommendations are reasonable.”

The **Pathogens Project** was launched in the fall of 2022 by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a group best known for its [Doomsday Clock](#) assessing nuclear and other threats. Organizers were concerned about the [growing number](#) of high-containment labs around the world that work with deadly pathogens, and the risk that an accident or a deliberate release of a virus or bacterium could spark a health catastrophe.

The project also addressed concerns about so-called gain-of-function (GOF) studies, a controversial type of research that involves modifying potential pandemic pathogens, such as H5N1 avian influenza, in ways that could make them more harmful to people. Some experts worry such research could have led to the release of SARS-CoV-2.

The bulletin assembled a 28-member [independent task force](#) consisting of experts in biosafety, biosecurity, microbiology, epidemiology, ethics, and other areas from around a dozen countries. Among them are virologist George Gao, former director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention; chemist and former Mauritian President Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, a co-chair; and molecular biologist Alina Chan of the Broad Institute, who has promoted the notion that COVID-19 originated in a Wuhan, China, lab. The international expertise and diversity of viewpoints make the 53-page report stand out, says co-chair David Relman, a microbiologist at Stanford University.

The task force embraces a proposal from a U.S. government advisory group reviewing rules for taxpayer-funded GOF studies to [expand the definition](#) of a potential pandemic pathogen to include moderately virulent or transmissible viruses—which includes SARS-CoV-2—that could pose serious public health risks. (Current rules require stricter review only of studies using pathogens that are both highly virulent and highly transmissible, such as H5N1 and Middle East respiratory syndrome.)



The report also recommends that proposed studies on both natural and manipulated pandemic pathogens be done only if safer, alternative methods, such as studying the properties of a virus' surface proteins, aren't sufficient. These "surrogate" studies have benefits, the report points out: They can be far cheaper than working in high-containment labs and allow for more statistically rigorous experiments.

But the panel stopped short of ruling out work with dangerous live viruses or even GOF studies on potential pandemic pathogens, which some scientists and lawmakers [want to ban](#). Surrogate methods have "caveats and limitations," and results "often need to be confirmed using actual virus research," the report concludes. Despite the dangers, "We all agreed that work on some of the more potentially risky pathogens needs to happen for a whole lot of important reasons," Relman says.

The panel also supports the practice of [collecting wild viruses in nature](#) and studying them in the lab in hopes of predicting which of them could trigger a pandemic. Some scientists have called for limiting or ending such studies, in part because they sometimes take place in so-called biosafety level-2 (BSL-2) laboratories, which have fewer security safeguards than BSL-3 or BSL-4 labs designed to contain more dangerous pathogens. Chinese scientists, for example, have drawn criticism for studying bat coronaviruses related to SARS-CoV in BSL-2 laboratories.

But the task force found these field studies to be valuable, Relman says. However, it urges that viruses of unknown risk be studied at the same biosafety level as well-characterized, "taxonomically close relatives." Under that approach, poorly understood bat coronaviruses, for example, would likely be studied in BSL-3 laboratories. The idea is "common sense" and would likely be the norm in the United States, says task force member Gustavo Palacios, a virologist at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

Reviewers of proposed studies on pandemic pathogens should weigh studies' public health benefits—such as the development of drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics—against their risks, and should seek input from outside groups for especially risky studies, the report says. The report also calls for laws and policies specifically regulating research on potential pandemic pathogens, international protocols for lab work and field studies, mandatory reporting of lab accidents—which sometimes get swept under the rug—and more research on lab safety and security risks.

Johns Hopkins University biosecurity expert Gigi Kwik Gronvall praises the report's biosafety recommendations. But achieving those goals "really comes down to the details," she says. "The next step is to actually drill down into what procedures, notifications, or processes are required to have oversight" while allowing "meaningful work [to] proceed in a way that doesn't hobble our ability to create vaccines and to do public health surveillance."

COVID brain fog drains 3-6 IQ points for more than a year

Source: <https://newatlas.com/health-wellbeing/mild-covid-cases-linked-cognitive-deficits/>



Feb 28 – Even mild cases of COVID cause significant, measurable cognitive deficits compared to those never infected with the virus, according to one of the largest studies of its type. COVID brain fog is real, and it can sap up to six IQ points for at least a year.

"The potential long-term effects of COVID-19 on cognitive function have been a concern for the public, healthcare professionals, and policymakers, but until now it has been difficult to objectively measure them in a large population sample," explained Adam Hampshire, first author on the newly published study.

The research comes from one of the world's largest and longest running COVID studies, dubbed **REACT** (Real-Time Assessment of Community Transmission). The project, which kicked off in April 2020, follows nearly

three million people in England. The goal is to better understand who is suffering from long-term symptoms with COVID and what those symptoms actually are.

This particular REACT investigation homed in on around 112,000 people who completed online assessments uniquely developed to measure cognitive domains that have been known to be affected by COVID. Each participant also supplied COVID infection history allowing the researchers to compare cognitive findings with symptom duration and severity.

Between three and four percent of the total cohort qualified as suffering from long COVID, reporting symptoms lasting more than 12 weeks. The majority of that long COVID group were still experiencing symptoms up to one year later. Of those long COVID patients the researchers suggest their cognitive



assessments showed deficits that correlated with a drop in about six IQ points compared to those with no history of infection. The deficits were primarily detected in cognitive domains associated with memory, spatial planning and verbal reasoning. “By using our online platform to measure multiple aspects of cognition and memory at large scale, we were able to detect small but measurable deficits in cognitive task performance,” said Hampshire. “We also found that people were likely affected in different ways depending on factors such as illness duration, virus variant and hospitalisation.” More interestingly, the researchers found small but statistically significant differences in cognition between people who recovered quickly from short bouts of COVID and people with no history of infection. The cognitive assessments correlated with differences of about three IQ points.

While a drop in three IQ points from a mild, passing COVID infection would not be particularly noticeable in an average person’s day-to-day life, experts commenting on the study suggest these kinds of deficits may be relevant on a population level, considering the scale of the pandemic. “Even if cognitive deficits after COVID-19 are of small magnitude on average, a substantial minority of people have more significant deficits which are likely to affect their ability to work and function,” said Maxime Taquet, a psychiatrist from the University of Oxford who did not work on the new study. “Given the scale of the pandemic and the number of people affected, this is particularly worrisome.” In a commentary on the study published in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#), long-COVID experts Ziyad Al-Aly and Clifford Rosen called the findings concerning. They noted that the pandemic has impacted millions around the world and even small cognitive deficits from the virus could have larger long-term implications.

“For example, what are the functional implications of a three-point loss in IQ?” the pair asked in their commentary. “Whether one group of persons is affected more severely than others is not clear. Whether these cognitive deficits persist or resolve along with predictors and trajectory of recovery should be investigated. Will COVID-19-associated cognitive deficits confer a predisposition to a higher risk of Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia later in life?”

However, the findings are not all bad news. Participants with long-COVID symptoms that resolved over time showed only small cognitive deficits that resembled what was seen in people with short, mild illness. Paul Elliot, senior author on the study, said this indicates the potential for long-COVID patients to get better over time.

“Furthermore, the cognitive impact of COVID-19 appears to have reduced since the early stages of the pandemic, with fewer people having persistent illness, and cognition being less affected amongst those that were infected during the time when Omicron was the dominant strain,” Elliot added. “However, given the large numbers of people who were infected, it will be important to continue to monitor the long-term clinical and cognitive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

●► The study was published in [The New England Journal of Medicine](#).



As only female mosquitoes spread the disease, one firm is trying to kill them all of using the species males (stock image) (Image: Getty Images)

NEWS

POLITICS

FOOTBALL

CELEBS

TV

CHOICE

ROYALS

Genetically modified Brit mosquitoes could stamp out malaria with Bill Gates' backing

Billionaire Bill Gates is backing the efforts of UK firm Oxitec who are genetically modifying this country's mosquitoes to turn them into weapons in the global war against malaria



Paratek Pharmaceuticals Announces Breakthrough in Anthrax Prophylaxis, Secures Additional BARDA Contract



Source: <https://bnnbreaking.com/breaking-news/health/paratek-pharmaceuticals-announces-breakthrough-in-anthrax-prophylaxis-secures-additional-barda-contract>



Mar 05 – Boston-based Paratek Pharmaceuticals, Inc., has made significant headway in the battle against anthrax, revealing compelling top-line efficacy data for its antibiotic **NUZYRA®** in a recent study. The non-human primate model demonstrated a 100% survival rate post-exposure to inhalational anthrax, marking a pivotal advancement in public health and biodefense. This success led to an additional procurement under the company's Project BioShield contract with BARDA, highlighting the importance of onshoring drug manufacturing in ensuring national security against bioterrorism threats.

Revolutionizing Anthrax Prophylaxis

The study's success underscores NUZYRA's effectiveness as a post-exposure prophylaxis against anthrax, a potentially deadly disease caused by *Bacillus anthracis*. With a **survival rate exceeding 90%** over a 60-day observation period, **NUZYRA sets a new standard in anthrax treatment protocols**. [click on photo above] This achievement not only validates the drug's potent antimicrobial properties but also reinforces Paratek's commitment to addressing critical public health emergencies.

Enhancing National Security and Public Health

Paratek's recent procurement agreement with BARDA, valued at approximately \$304 million, underscores the strategic importance of developing robust countermeasures against biological threats. By providing NUZYRA tablets manufactured in the United States, Paratek strengthens the nation's biodefense capabilities and addresses the growing concern of antibiotic resistance. This partnership with BARDA is a testament to the collaborative effort required to safeguard public health and national security in the face of potential bioterrorism threats.

Looking Ahead: Regulatory Pathways and Global Impact

As Paratek Pharmaceuticals plans a meeting with the FDA to align on final studies for NUZYRA's sNDA submission for anthrax treatment and prophylaxis indications, the global medical community watches closely. The successful development and onshoring of NUZYRA not only represents a significant leap in anthrax prophylaxis but also highlight the critical need for international cooperation in combating antibiotic resistance and preparing for bioterrorism threats. With its potential global impact, NUZYRA is poised to change the landscape of infectious disease treatment and prevention.

Paratek's breakthrough in anthrax prophylaxis with NUZYRA offers a glimpse into a future where public health and national security are bolstered by innovative medical therapies. As the company continues to navigate regulatory pathways and expand its global footprint, the implications of this development extend



far beyond the immediate benefits of a new anthrax treatment option. It represents a significant milestone in the ongoing battle against infectious diseases and a reaffirmation of the critical role of pharmaceutical innovation in ensuring a safer world.

What happened to the guy who had 217 COVID vaccinations?

Source: <https://newatlas.com/health-wellbeing/vaccine-217-covid-doses/>



Mar 05 – A man that police caught taking 217 doses of COVID vaccine has offered himself up to researchers for a study looking into what happens to the immune system after so many doses. The results offer surprising insight into these new mRNA vaccines.

In March 2022 a 62-year-old man in Germany was caught by police getting multiple COVID vaccine shots. It was suspected he had personally received more than 90 doses as a way of accumulating vaccination cards to sell to people who were avoiding the job.

An investigation ultimately led to no criminal charges, however, a team of researchers from Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg was fascinated by the case. What exactly did this many COVID vaccinations do to a human immune system?

“We learned about his case via newspaper articles,” said Kilian Schober, an author of the newly published case study. “We then contacted him and invited him to undergo various tests in Erlangen. He was very interested in doing so.”

In chronicling his case, the man claimed to have received 217 COVID vaccinations, of which more than half could be verified by clinical records. The vast majority were mRNA doses, with a small amount of [AstraZeneca](#), Johnson & Johnson, and Sanofi also in the mix. All the doses spanned a total period of 29 months but most were clustered in a nine-month stretch from mid-2021.

One of the key things the researchers set out to look at was whether the man was suffering from what has been informally referred to as ‘immune exhaustion’. As people around the world began to receive their third, fourth or fifth COVID vaccine dose, some researchers emerged to suggest hitting the immune system with the same antigen over short periods of time could actually be harmful. According to Schober, this idea comes from observations in patients suffering from chronic viral infections such as HIV.

“That may be the case in a chronic infection such as HIV or Hepatitis B, that has regular flare-ups,” noted Schober. “There is an indication that certain types of immune cells, known as T-cells, then become fatigued, leading to them releasing fewer pro-inflammatory messenger substances.”

So if this held true for multiple COVID vaccine doses then someone who received dozens of doses over a short period of time would surely display molecular signs of immune impairment. But it turns out, at least for this man, that was not the case.

Looking at blood work conducted both recently and over the last couple of years, the man showed extraordinarily high levels of antibodies and T-cells targeting SARS-CoV-2. Investigating more general T-cell responses to other antigens, the man’s immune cells were as effective as any of the control cells. This suggests his immune system was not fatigued or exhausted and could fight off pathogens as well as any average person.



Perhaps even more striking, the researchers report the man displayed no negative side effects from any of his multiple vaccine doses – even when he was receiving them daily for weeks on end. On top of that the man reported no history of ever being infected with SARS-CoV-2.

During the study, the man even received another COVID vaccine dose, at his insistence, in order to examine his acute immune response following all of his previous shots. He had an effective antibody response indicating the vaccine was still doing its job. Schober is cautious to stress this doesn't mean we should all go out and get extra vaccine doses whenever we want. This is just a single case study, and an incredibly strange one at that. But what this story does tell us is that COVID vaccines are generally pretty safe and it is unlikely issues of immune exhaustion will arise after just a handful of doses.

"The observation that no noticeable side effects were triggered despite this extraordinary hypervaccination indicates that the drugs have a good degree of tolerability," said Schober. "Current research indicates that a three-dose vaccination, coupled with regular top-up vaccines for vulnerable groups, remains the favored approach."

●► The new study was published in the journal [The Lancet Infectious Diseases](#).

How the Biological Weapons Convention could verify treaty compliance

By James Reville

Source: <https://thebulletin.org/2024/03/how-the-biological-weapons-convention-could-verify-treaty-compliance/>



The former Stepnogorsk biological weapons complex in Kazakhstan. (US Department of Defense)

Mar 05 – While significant chemical and nuclear weapons agreements contain verification provisions, the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) does not. World governments have not discussed this topic within the treaty framework for two decades, after several years of work to develop a verification system failed in 2001.

Much has changed in science and security since then: Artificial intelligence (AI), genome editing, and other capabilities continue to accelerate and converge, resulting in ever more powerful technologies in the hands



of a growing number of actors. In parallel, the international security environment has become more complex and competitive. Under these circumstances, it was remarkable that at the Ninth BWC Review Conference in late 2022, 185 countries agreed on a [report](#) with a forward-looking strategy to form a working group to discuss the long-standing issues of compliance and verification of the BWC, among several other matters.

Despite the challenging geostrategic context, the group engaged in a constructive dialogue over three days in December 2023, managing to move beyond the impasse around the failed verification protocol negotiations decades ago that stymied discussion on verification and compliance ever since. Moreover, the group recognized significant scientific and technological developments, including new open source verification opportunities and [microbial forensic](#) techniques that weren't available in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but may be now. But there remains a gap between what is technically possible in terms of verifying that countries are in compliance with the treaty, and what BWC member states view as politically feasible and financially acceptable.

A path to verification?

Before any new methods of treaty verification, whatever their merit, can be deployed, BWC members must overcome several hurdles to develop a verification system.

Conceptual clarity. During the December working group session, it was apparent that many countries were in the “[early stages of conceptual thinking](#)” about verification, with differing visions on the definition, objectives, and scope of any BWC verification mechanism. To progress, states will have to develop a shared understanding of the scope and purposes of BWC verification ahead of a working group meeting later this year.

Defining biological weapons. Several BWC member states also indicated the need for clarity around the definition of biological weapons. [Article I](#) of the convention includes an intent-based definition of biological weapons. This approach has future-proofed the prohibition on biological weapons against changes in science and technology. However, other treaties using a similar intent-based definition, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, have supplemented this comprehensive approach with [lists of chemicals](#) and threshold quantities for the application of verification measures. Furthermore, the draft [text](#) under negotiation in the protocol process included a non-exhaustive list of agents that could be used in biological weapons.

Agreement around a list of agents for verification purposes—potentially building on earlier work during the protocol talks—may be possible. Moreover, such a list could help focus any verification mechanism, particularly if negotiators envisage some system of declarations and routine inspections. However, negotiating a list or lists of agents will take considerable time, and any list will remain vulnerable to gaps generated by new or novel agents excluded from it.

In terms of setting limits to the permitted amount of listed agents, methods of calculating threshold quantities have been [studied and discussed in the past](#). However, developing threshold quantities is likely to be difficult and of limited value in building confidence in compliance with the BWC because, as discussed during the protocol negotiations, “[the self-replicating nature of microorganisms means that an agent amount at or below a threshold could be exceeded within a matter of hours.](#)”

Verification methods. As illustrated in presentations by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) during the December working group meeting, routine industry inspections are possible as part of a disarmament verification system. The IAEA conducted [2975 verification missions in 2022](#), and before the pandemic, the [OPCW undertook 241 facility inspections](#) a year. A number of countries, including the Russian Federation and China, indicated support for some sort of routine on-site industry inspections, which are often seen as a core component of traditional disarmament verification regimes.

But others, including the United States, have expressed doubts over the value of routine on-site inspections in the BWC context. This is in part because of the sheer number of life science research facilities operating around the world; in 2022 alone some 17,000 institutions around the world published papers on the topic of “biology” (broadly understood), and more than [15,000 unique applicants](#) submitted biotechnology-related patents. Also, some observers note the difficulties in reliably assessing compliance in a diverse range of dual-use facilities around the globe and the limitations of [material accounting-type verification methodologies](#)—as applied in other weapons of mass destruction treaties—in the biological weapons context.

Some form of routine inspection system may be technically possible. But this area will require considerable additional work to determine the extent to which routine inspections can build greater confidence in compliance, and, if so, how much BWC members are really willing to pay for such a system.

Resources. The [BWC budget for 2023 was \\$2.1 million \(€1.9 million\)](#). This covers the costs of BWC meetings and a four-person Implementation Support Unit, which works on the implementation and universalization of the BWC, as well as organizing and staffing BWC meetings and administering [confidence building measures](#). If governments are serious about developing a verification regime, considerable additional resources will be required. For



example, in 2022 the [OPCW spent more than \\$32 million \(€30.3 million\) on verification and inspections](#), and the [IAEA allocated more than \\$166 million \(€153.7 million\) to nuclear verification](#).

Expectations for the BWC working group

In addition to political challenges, the working group is also up against very real practical limitations. It has only [seven days](#) through the end of 2025 booked for discussion on compliance and verification. This is insufficient on its own to generate a blueprint for biological verification that is [“politically palatable, technologically feasible and financially viable and sustainable.”](#) However, this doesn't preclude the working group developing what its chair, Brazilian Ambassador Flávio Soares Damico, has termed a “roadmap” for strengthening the BWC.

In developing such a roadmap, BWC member states may want to explore additional parallel tracks of activity to lock in work on verification and generate new insights to inform and advance the ongoing discussion of the working group.

One obvious track could involve the establishment of a group to further consider the scientific and technical aspects of verification and how they have changed since 2001. The BWC established a group of verification experts (VEREX) in 1991 to explore verification measures. This group met on four occasions in the early 1990s, generating findings that informed the protocol negotiations in the following years. A new group could be mandated to identify and evaluate biological verification technologies (both old and new), effectively initiating a form of [VEREX 2.0](#).

[Trial inspections](#) to determine the efficacy of on-site inspections were important in developing the verification mechanism for the Chemical Weapons Convention. Such exploratory exercises could be undertaken transparently through a geographically representative “collective of the interested,” with the findings subsequently feeding into the working group. Such experiences could help in assessing the benefits and limitations of routine on-site or challenge inspections.

Segments of the pharmaceutical industry were critical of the 2001 protocol efforts and expressed concern over the impacts of an intrusive verification system. A constructive industry relationship—along the lines of the [partnership](#) forged between the OPCW and the chemical industry—will be important to achieving any sustainable BWC verification regime. Such a relationship needs to be carefully nurtured to avoid alienating or alarming a trillion-dollar global industry.

Such external initiatives should augment, not distract or detract, from the activities of the working group itself, which will also need sustained attention to stimulate thinking around verification and other agenda items, including [international cooperation](#), [science and technology review mechanisms](#), confidence building measures, transparency, and national implementation.

It will also be important over the course of the working group process to manage expectations. No politically palatable, technologically feasible, and financially sustainable system is going to be able to guarantee the detection of any form of biological weapon. However, there are measures that in combination could generate considerably greater confidence in compliance by BWC states parties and provide a route to robust investigation of credible allegations of non-compliance. In this sense, the challenge for the working group is not to develop a roadmap to a perfect system, but to chart a route towards a system in which the security benefits of being on the inside are greater than the overall benefits of remaining on the outside. Even an imperfect multilateral verification mechanism would provide a valuable defense against a class of weapons rightly deemed [“repugnant to the conscience of \[hu\]mankind.”](#)

[James Revill is the Head of the WMD and Space Security Programmes at UNIDIR. His research interests focus on the evolution of regimes dealing with weapons of mass destruction, and he has published widely in this area](#)

The Smallpox Chiefs: Bioterrorism and the Exercise of Power in the Pacific Northwest

By John Sutton Lutz and Keith Thor Carlson

Western Historical Quarterly, whae001 | Published 07March 2024

Source: <https://academic.oup.com/whq/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/whq/whae001/7624135>

Abstract

Although there has been much writing and speculation on the deliberate use of smallpox as a tool of genocide, this article documents the use of the bluff threat of spreading smallpox as a tool of power and manipulation in the early days of European trade and settlement in the Pacific Northwest. By documenting ten cases when a bluff threat was used, the article argues that it was a common strategy of Europeans when they felt threatened or thwarted. Because it was compatible with existing Indigenous beliefs about the spread of disease, it was highly credible and was occasionally used by Indigenous people to manipulate others. While Europeans in this era did not actually



have the power to control smallpox, the fact that outbreaks of the disease often occurred following a threat to spread it gave credence to the threat and to today's widespread belief that some or all of the epidemics were deliberate genocide. Recognizing bluff threat bioterrorism as a tool in the newcomer's arsenal is essential to understanding how the heavily outnumbered and out-gunned newcomers were so often able to manipulate Indigenous people and then establish the settlements that eventually evolved into full scale colonial occupations of Indigenous territory.

CRISPR-SIBA for Targeted Detection of *Bacillus anthracis* Sterne

In this study, researchers developed a nucleic acid pre-amplification based CRISPR diagnostic for detection and surveillance of *Bacillus anthracis* Sterne. Efficiency of the detection system was evaluated by detecting *Bacillus anthracis* Sterne in complex wastewater sample backgrounds. CRISPR-SIBA can be translated into developing cost-effective diagnostics for pathogens in resource constrained settings. [International Journal of Biological Macromolecules](#)

Vector-Borne Pathogen Surveillance in a Metagenomic World

Against the backdrop of abundant and expanding genomic data, it becomes increasingly challenging to develop assays for species-specific detection and to accurately assess primer specificity for targets in silico. A well-documented example of these difficulties exists for *Rickettsia* species within the Spotted Fever Group, where a single genomic target is not sufficient to reliably discriminate species, but rather multiple targets are required. [PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases](#)

With a Million Cases of Dengue So Far This Year, Brazil is in a State of Emergency

At least six Brazilian states in addition to the Federal District are facing dengue epidemics and 17 cities have declared a state of emergency as the country has already registered 1 million cases of dengue in the first two months of 2024, more than half the 1.6 million cases confirmed last year — which was already almost 18% higher than in 2022. The fatality count in those same two months was 214. As a result, Brazil's public health-care system, known as SUS, has been grappling to keep up, resorting to field hospitals. [NPR](#), [Washington Post](#)

What are the Biggest Misconceptions About Biosecurity and Pandemic Risk?

"We have never in human history created a virus from scratch to exploit a new vulnerability in a biological system. I can't imagine that taking place in less than a couple of years. Over the course of those years the individuals will be throwing off lots of signals that would be detectable. And so the idea that those weaponeers would race to the finish in six months and have a little tube that they could throw around — I just don't buy it. I see no evidence of what humans have done so far that would get us anywhere near any of that. And telling ourselves stories about how hard that is or how easy that is, I think is really harmful." [8,000 Hours](#)

Plague Still Exists. Here's Where and How It Spreads in the U.S.

By Joanna Thompson

Source: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/plague-still-exists-heres-where-and-how-it-spreads-in-the-u-s/>



Credit: George D. Lepp/Getty Images

Mar 04 – Earlier this month a person in rural Oregon was diagnosed with plague—the state's first case in eight years. According to health officials in Oregon's Deschutes County, the person likely [contracted the disease from a pet cat](#).

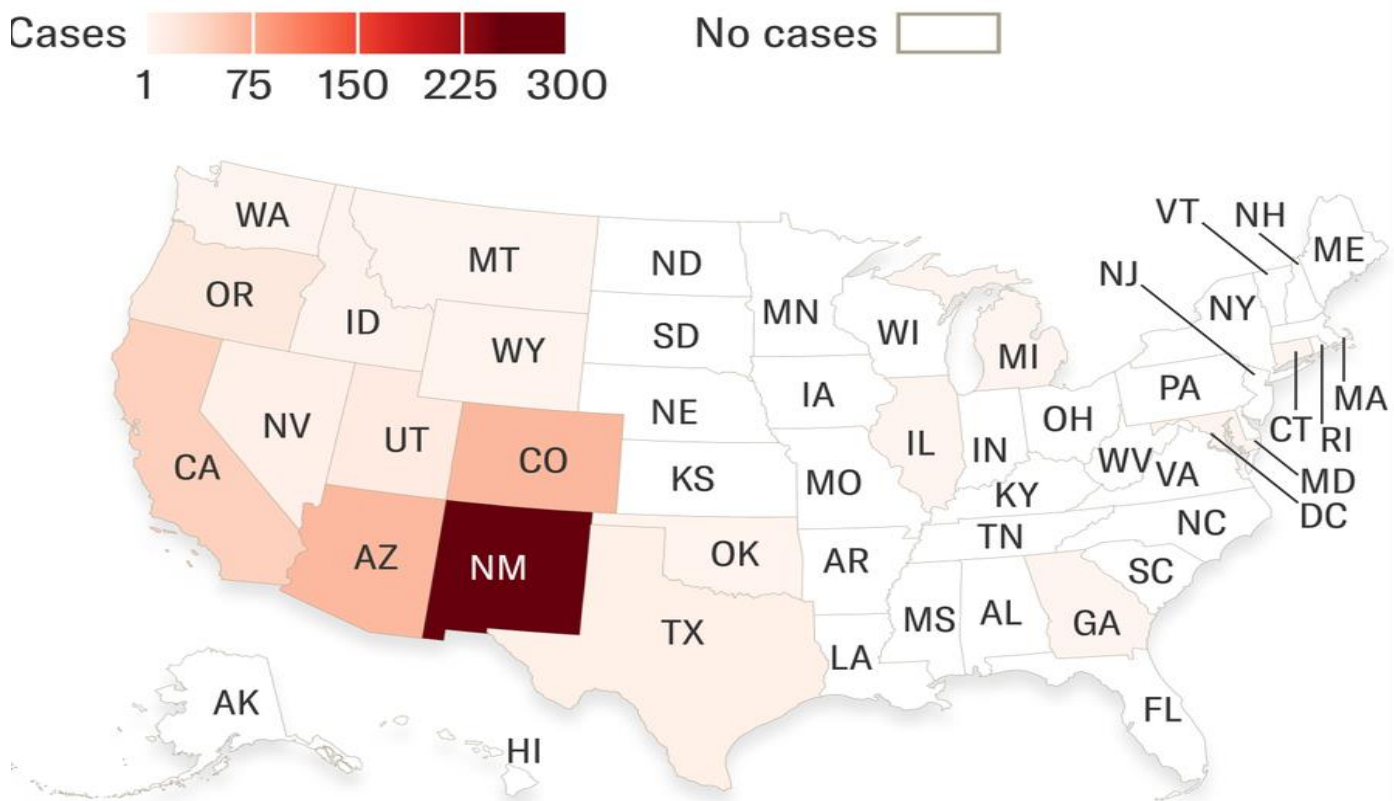
[Plague](#) is often thought of as a medieval disease, but it continues to affect people across the globe—most commonly in Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Peru. In the U.S. about 10 cases of plague are diagnosed per year. Most of these are reported on the West Coast and in Southwestern and Rocky Mountain states—particularly in New Mexico.



How Common Is Plague in the U.S.?

Since the mid-20th century plague cases in the U.S. have typically occurred in the rural West. The country's last urban plague epidemic took place in Los Angeles from 1924 through 1925, killing 37 people. Since 2000 an average of seven human plague cases have been reported in the U.S. each year.

Reported Human Cases of Plague, U.S., 1970–2020



Credit: Shuyao Xiao; Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(data\)](#)

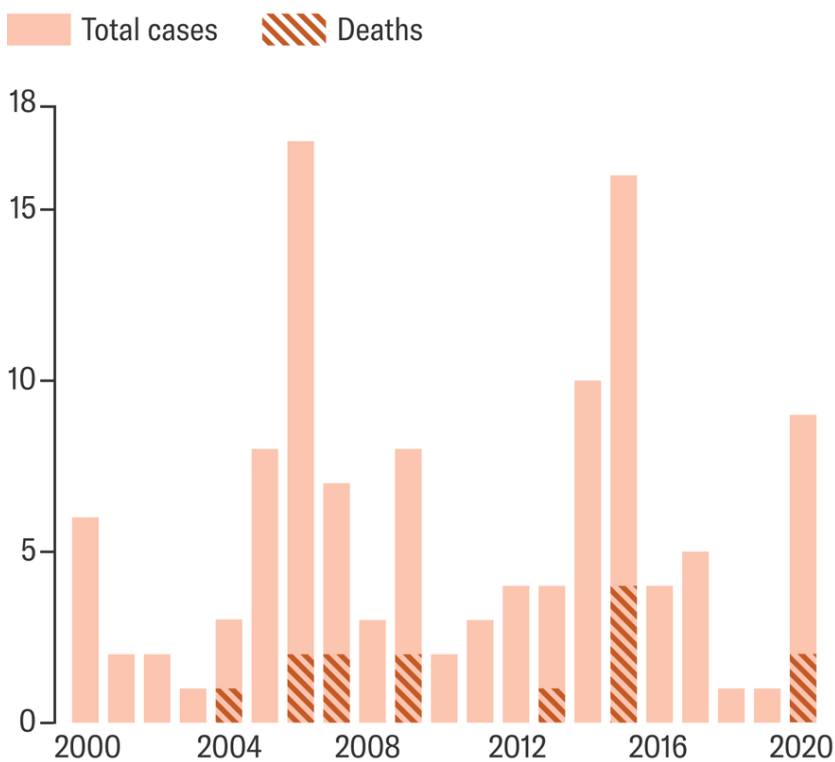
Plague is caused by a bacterium called *Yersinia pestis*. Most people know it as the microbe behind the “[Black Death](#),” which wiped out [at least a third of Europe’s population](#) in the 14th century. Humans and the animals that travel with them have spread it to every continent except Antarctica. It most likely arrived in the U.S. on ships docking in California sometime around the year [1900](#). *Y. pestis* can make humans extremely ill, but it doesn’t naturally thrive in human populations. Instead it lives in wild rodents. “It doesn’t make them particularly sick, and so that means it can just kind of quietly circulate in that population,” says Erin Phipps, state public health veterinarian of New Mexico. The particular rodent



species that carry plague can vary from region to region, but in the U.S., it can be found in rats, prairie dogs, marmots, squirrels and, occasionally, chipmunks.

From these “reservoir” species, plague can spread to other animals via fleas. If a flea bites an infected rodent and then leaps onto another animal, its bite may transmit some of the *Y. pestis* bacteria. This can happen in humans, but it can also happen to animals closely associated with us. “Cats are very susceptible to *Yersinia* infection” because they tend to hunt rodents specifically, says Susan Jones, a biomedical historian at the University of Minnesota who is working on a book tracing the history of plague in the former Soviet Union.

Human Plague Cases and Deaths, U.S., 2000–2020



Even today the disease can be deadly for both humans and pets who contract it if left untreated. Unlike medieval physicians, however, modern doctors are well equipped to deal with the illness, thanks to antibiotics.

“Antibiotics work very well against plague,” says Javier Pizarro-Cerdá, a systems biologist at the Pasteur Institute, a nonprofit research organization in France. “But we have to diagnose [it] early for them to be effective.”

Credit: Shuyao Xiao; Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(data\)](#)

By far the most common form of plague is bubonic plague. It’s characterized by painful swollen lymph nodes called “bubos” around the armpits, throat and groin. Bubonic plague is the easiest type of plague to diagnose and the most survivable. It is primarily [spread by flea bites](#).

Sometimes *Y. pestis* travels from the lymph nodes into the lungs to become “pneumonic” plague. “Once the bacteria arrive in the lungs, they are very, very happy there. They proliferate like crazy,” Pizarro-Cerdá says. This form of plague is transmitted directly through respiratory droplets, much like SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID. It also triggers a fairly generic—though severe—set of symptoms, including fever, body

aches, cough and shortness of breath. Pneumonic plague is more deadly and more difficult to diagnose than bubonic plague. Very rarely, a person might contract a third form of the disease known as septicemic plague. This occurs when *Y. pestis* bacteria enter and begin to multiply in the bloodstream. People can be exposed to this form of plague through flea bites but also from handling the corpses of infected animals. Left untreated, septicemic plague is nearly always fatal. There is not currently a vaccine against plague commercially available in the U.S. The plague vaccines that have been approved under certain circumstances in other countries aren’t very effective, but groups such as Pizarro-Cerdá’s are working to develop a better shot. Luckily, for most people in the U.S., avoiding plague isn’t difficult. The first step is to be aware of your surroundings when hiking or exploring wilderness areas in the western part of the country. If you are in an area where plague is endemic, make sure to wear long sleeves and pants, carry insect repellent and avoid dead animals, Phipps says. In addition, people who live in states where plague is endemic should take measures to avoid attracting rats or other rodents to their home, such as keeping outdoor animal feed in sealed containers and not letting wood or garbage pile up in the yard. Keeping cats indoors can also decrease the likelihood that they will become infected by a plague-infected rodent. If you think you may have been exposed to a plague-carrying animal, you should let a doctor or health official know right away so that they can treat you. At the end of the day, “humans cannot completely separate ourselves from the natural environment,” Jones says. Some risk of disease is unavoidable—but it doesn’t have to be deadly.

Joanna Thompson is an insect enthusiast and former *Scientific American* intern.



Giant Plague Grave Could Be Largest Mass Burial Site Ever Seen in Europe

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/giant-plague-grave-could-be-largest-mass-burial-site-ever-seen-in-europe>



Mar 11 – Archaeologists digging in the **German city of Nuremberg** ahead of the construction of a new retirement home have uncovered what may be the largest mass burial of plague victims ever uncovered in Europe.

Excavations are ongoing, but the centuries-old remains of more than 500 individuals have been unearthed so far, and the team believes there could have been as many as 1,500 people interred therein.

Precise dating is also yet to be performed, but tentative estimates suggest the eight plague pits were created around the first half of the 17th century. Some of the bones appear tinted green because for some time the site was used to dispose of waste from a nearby

copper mill, [Spiegel reports](#).

"We will secure and archive all human remains that are found in the future construction areas," [says](#) Nuremberg Department of Heritage Conservation archaeologist Melanie Langbein and chief anthropologist Florian Melzer.

"We currently assume that once the work is completed in the spring, this will be the largest emergency cemetery for plague victims excavated in Europe."

[An unearthed section of one of the pits. \(In Terra Veritas\)](#)

[Bubonic plague](#) has been associated with many of history's most devastating pandemics, chiefly the [Black Death](#) of the



14th century and the [Justinian plague](#) that kicked off in the 6th century. Yet the highly contagious, flea-borne infection reemerged frequently in smaller outbreaks through the ages. Following the Black Death in Europe, local epidemics recurred [for around 400 years](#), ravaging cities. Nuremberg was no exception. The city even has a famous dedicated plague cemetery, [St. Rochus](#). But what archaeologists from In Terra Veritas found while performing what they assumed was a [routine diligence](#) check ahead of construction was no cemetery. The silent bones spoke of something far more desperate and devastating.

"Those people were not interred in a regular cemetery although we have designated plague cemeteries in Nuremberg," [Langbein told Jack Guy at CNN](#). "This means a large number of dead people who needed to be buried in a short time frame without regard to Christian burial practices."



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – March 2024

Plague leaves no visible traces on the bones of its victims, so more work will need to be done to confirm the diagnosis. A DNA analysis of the bones is expected to confirm the traces of the plague bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. But several lines of dating point to plague as the most likely explanation.



Copper waste tinted some of the bones green. (In Terra Veritas)



Radiocarbon dating on remains from one of the graves dates it to between the late 15th to early 17th centuries, and coins and pieces of pottery found therein point to the early 20th century. They also found a note dated 1634 describing a plague outbreak in 1632 and 1633 in Nuremberg that killed a reported 15,000 people.

Some 2,000 of those, the note said, were buried at the site of the current excavation.

But the implications of the discovery far exceed the manner in which the individuals died. All of the remains will need to be excavated, and carefully relocated so that scientists can study them, for a unique snapshot of the history of Nuremberg. "This discovery is of great significance far beyond the region," [said Nuremberg Lord Mayor Marcus König](#).

"The graves contain the mortal remains of children and old people, men and women; the plague did not stop at gender, age or social status. Now, for the first time, an empirically reliable analysis of a large population group from this period can be carried out for a city with the importance of Nuremberg. It goes without saying that this historically and archaeologically significant find must be handled sensitively and appropriately."



SARS CoV-2 Is a Very Weird Virus

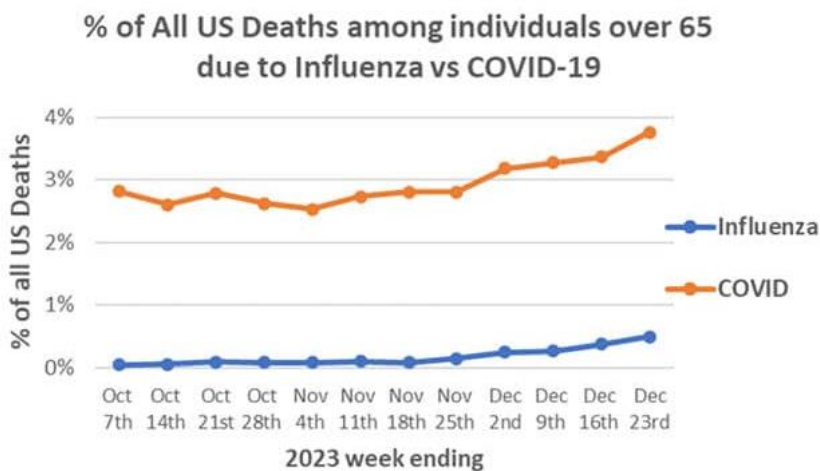
By F. Perry Wilson, MD, MSCE

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/1000302>

Mar 04 – In the early days of the pandemic, before we really understood what COVID was, two specialties in the hospital had a foreboding sense that something was very strange about this virus. The first was the pulmonologists, who noticed the striking levels of hypoxemia — low oxygen in the blood — and the rapidity with which patients who had previously been stable would crash in the intensive care unit.

The second, and I mark myself among this group, were the nephrologists. The dialysis machines stopped working right. I remember rounding on patients in the hospital who were on dialysis for kidney failure in the setting of severe COVID infection and seeing clots forming on the dialysis filters. Some patients could barely get in a full treatment because the filters would clog so quickly.

We knew it was worse than flu because of the mortality rates, but these oddities made us realize that it was *different* too — not just a particularly nasty respiratory virus but one that had effects on the body that we hadn't really seen before.



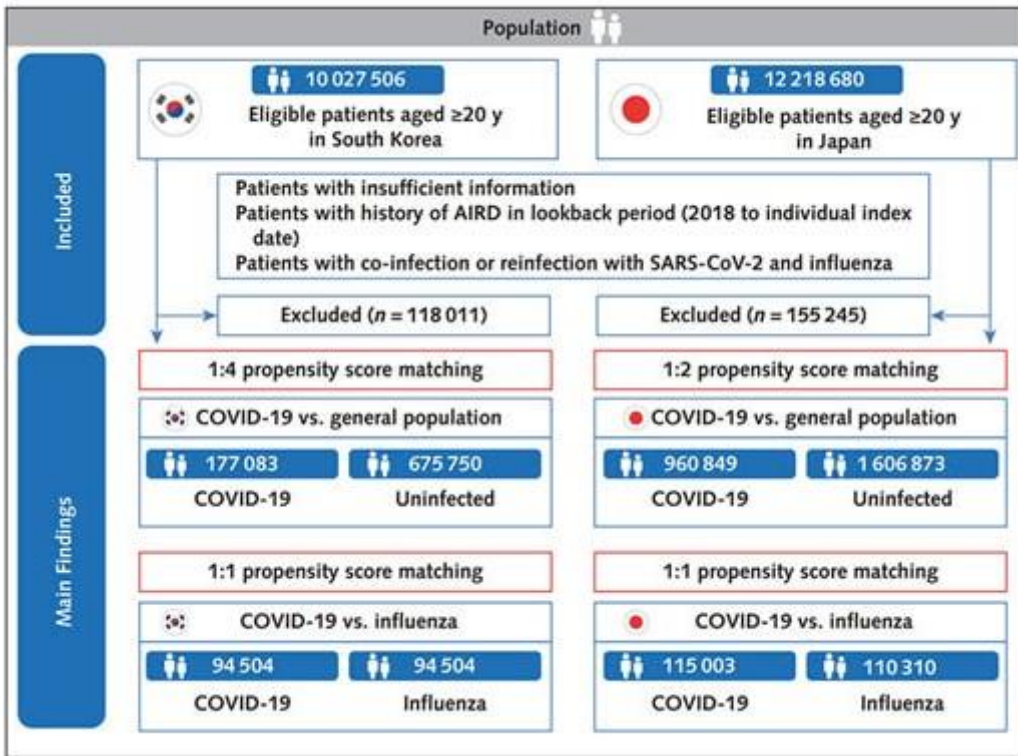
That's why I've always been interested in studies that compare what happens to patients after COVID infection vs what happens to patients after other [respiratory infections](#). This week, we'll look at an intriguing study that suggests that COVID may lead to autoimmune diseases like [rheumatoid arthritis](#), lupus, and [vasculitis](#). The [study](#) appears in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* and is made possible by the universal electronic health record systems of South Korea and Japan, who collaborated to create a truly staggering cohort of more than 20 million individuals living in those countries from 2020 to 2021.

The exposure of interest? COVID infection, experienced by just under 5% of that cohort over the study period. (Remember, there was a time when COVID infections were relatively controlled, particularly in some countries.)

The researchers wanted to compare the risk for autoimmune disease among COVID-infected individuals against two control groups. The first control group was the general population. This is interesting but a difficult analysis, because people who become infected with COVID might be very different from the general population. The second control group was people infected with [influenza](#). I like this a lot better; the risk factors for COVID and influenza are quite similar, and the fact that this group was diagnosed with flu means at least that they are getting medical care and are sort of "in the system," so to speak.

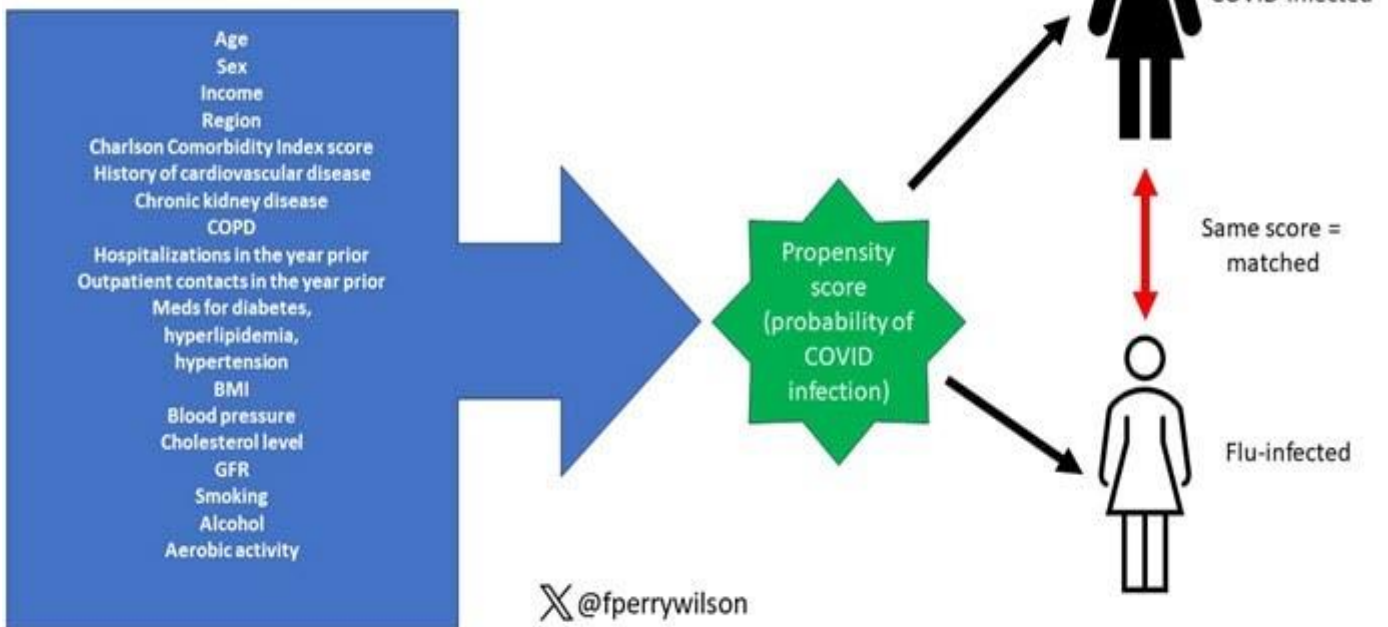
Total Coronavirus Cases in South Korea





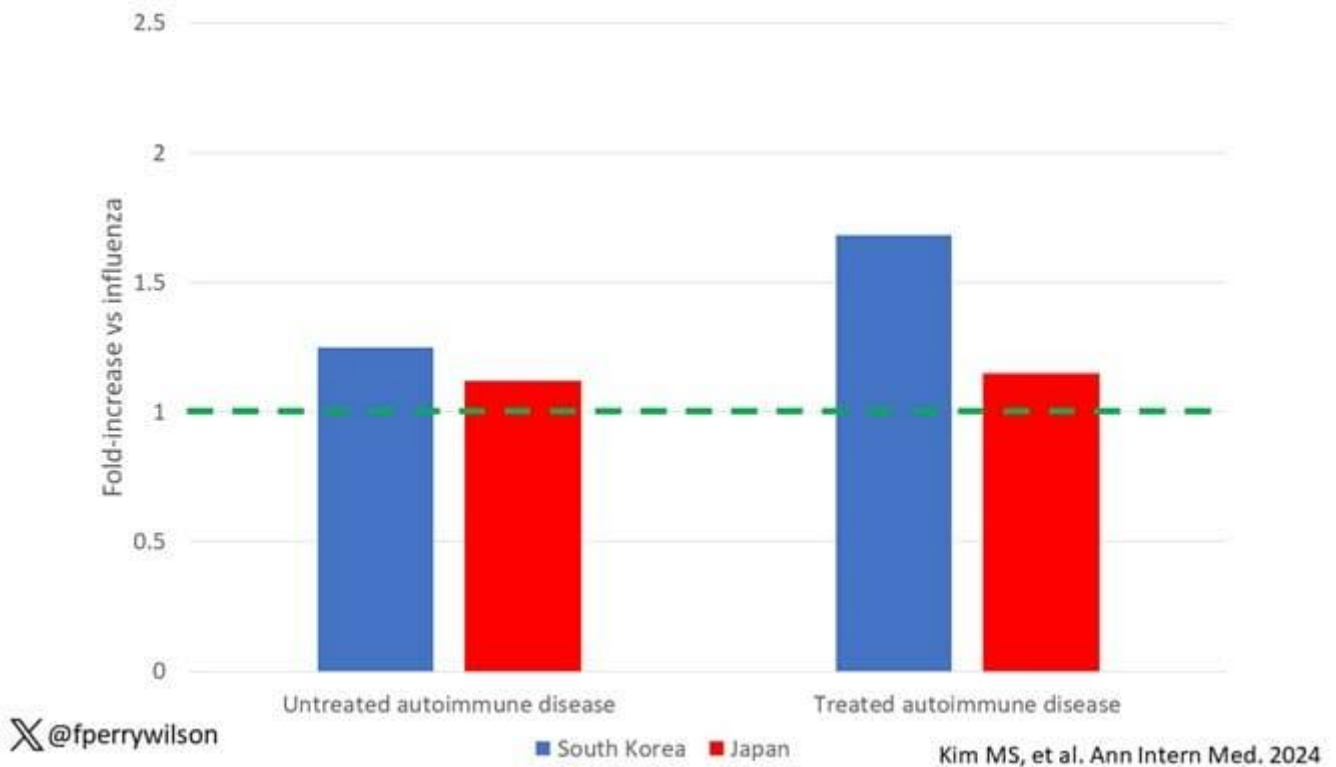
But it's not enough to simply identify these folks and see who ends up with more autoimmune disease. The authors used propensity score matching to pair individuals infected with COVID with individuals from the control groups who were very similar to them. [I've talked about this strategy before](#), but the basic idea is that you build a model predicting the likelihood of infection with COVID, based on a slew of factors — and the slew these authors used is pretty big, as shown below — and then stick people with similar risk for COVID together, with one member of the pair having had COVID and the other having eluded it (at least for the study period).

Propensity-Score Matching



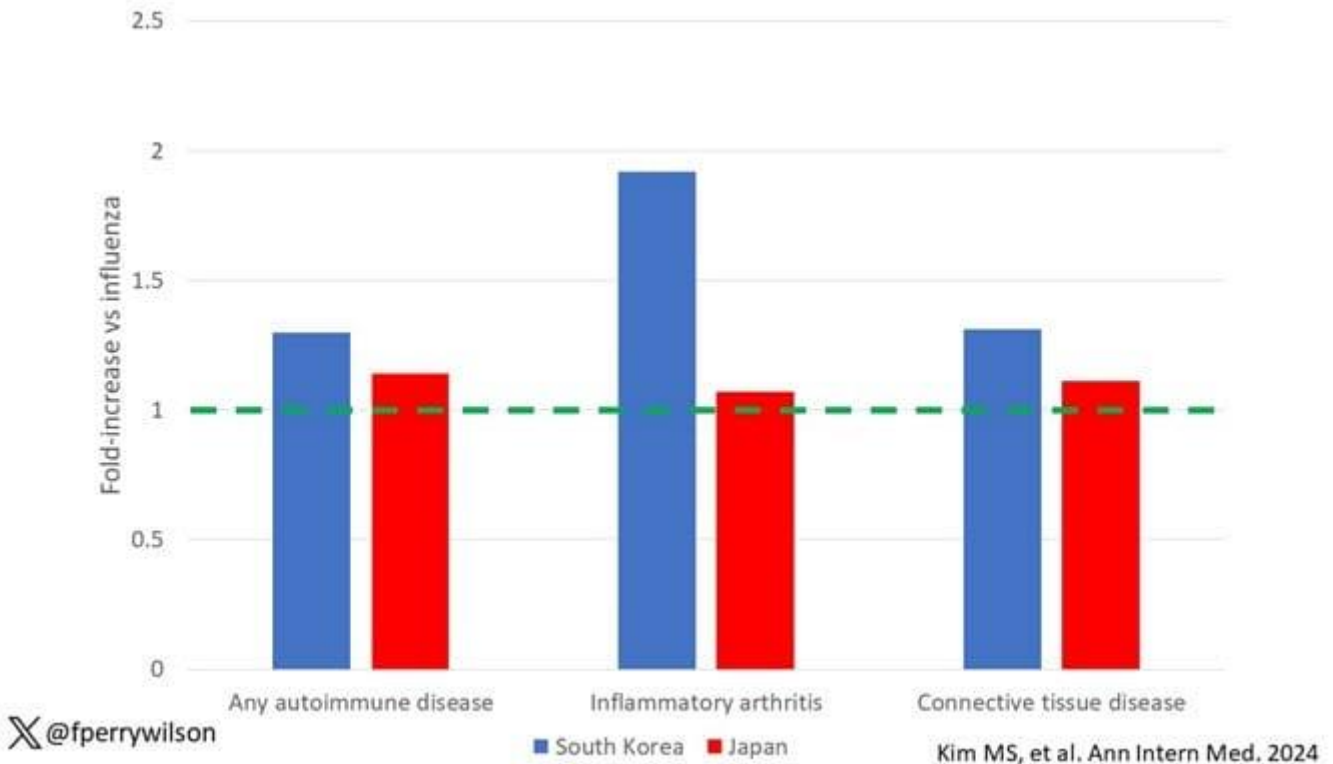
After this statistical balancing, the authors looked at the risk for a variety of autoimmune diseases. Compared with those infected with flu, those infected with COVID were more likely to be diagnosed with any autoimmune condition, connective tissue disease, and, in Japan at least, inflammatory arthritis.

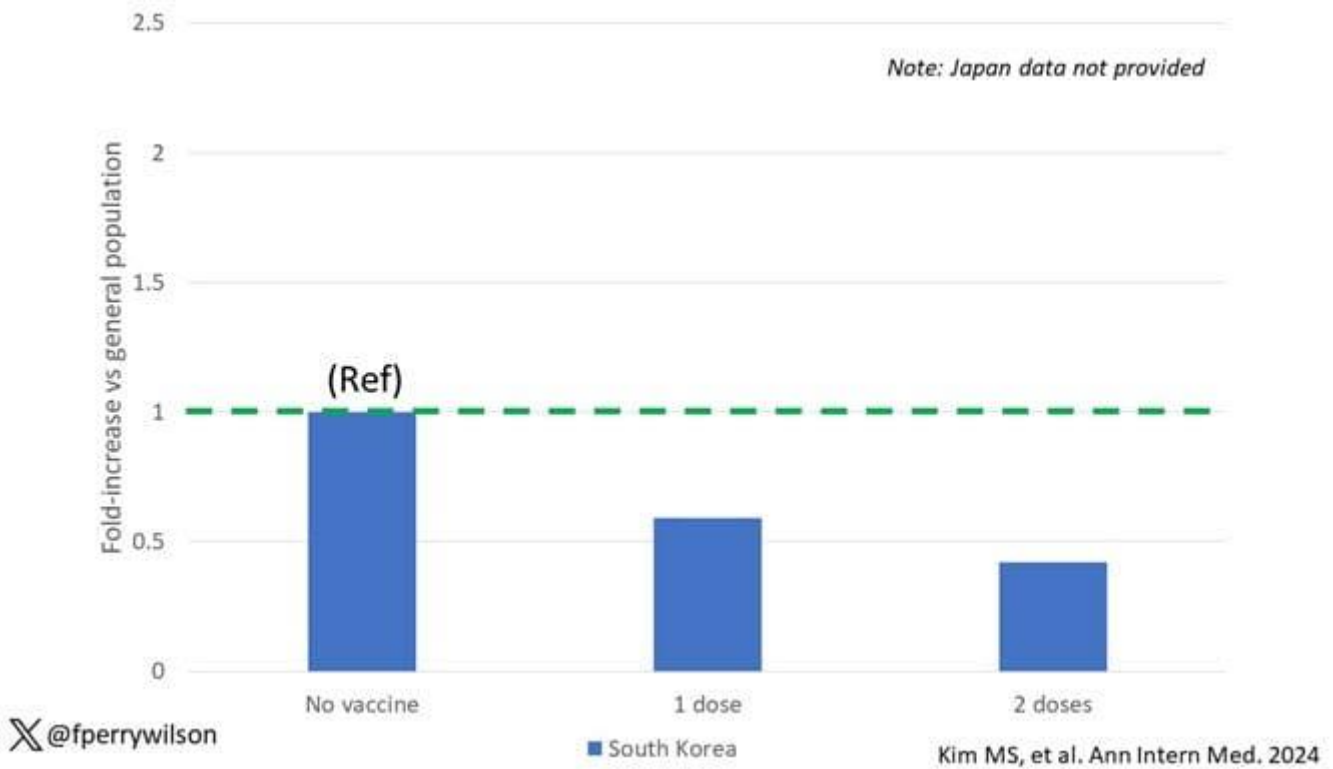




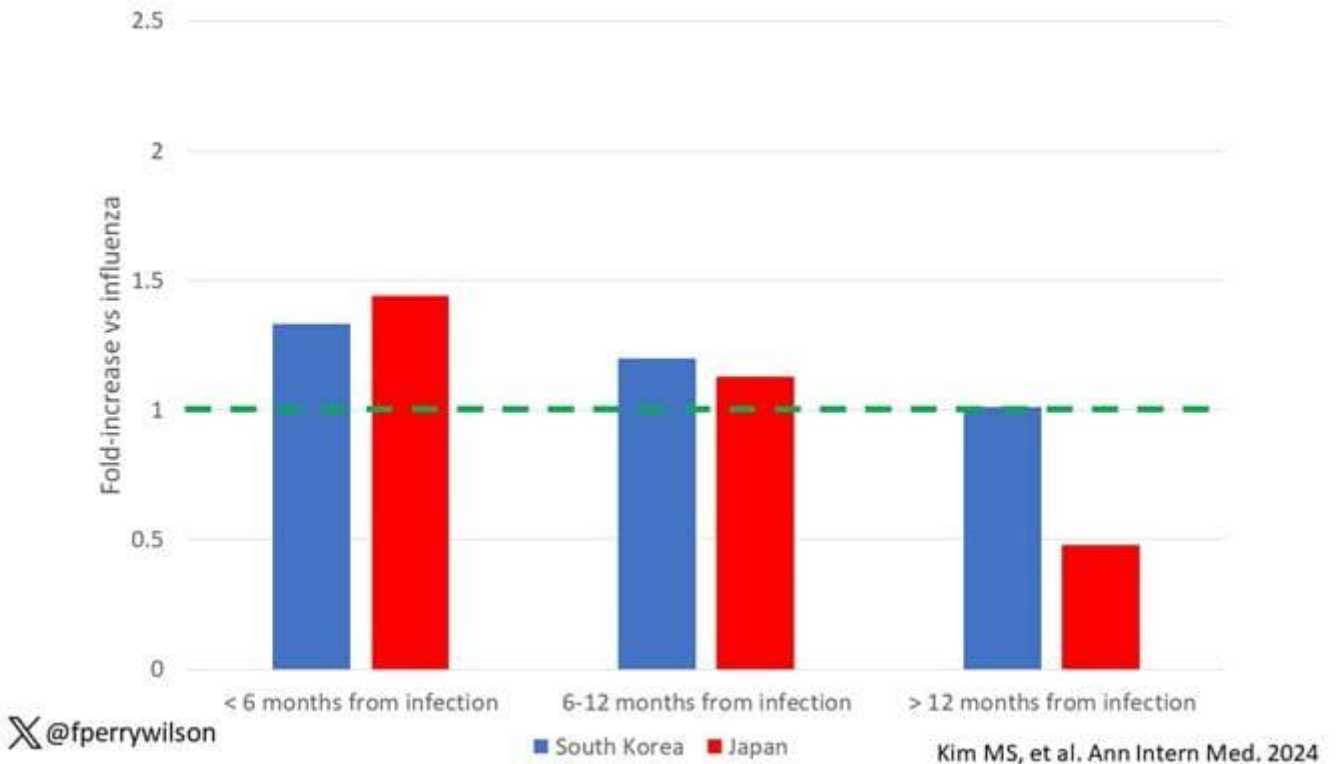
The authors acknowledge that being diagnosed with a disease might not be the same as actually having the disease, so in another analysis they looked only at people who received treatment for the autoimmune conditions, and the signals were even stronger in that group.

This risk seemed to be highest in the 6 months following the COVID infection, which makes sense biologically if we think that the infection is somehow screwing up the immune system.





And the risk was similar with both COVID variants circulating at the time of the study. The only factor that reduced the risk? You guessed it: vaccination. This is a particularly interesting finding because the exposure cohort was *defined* by having been infected with COVID. Therefore, the mechanism of protection is not prevention of infection; it's something else. Perhaps vaccination helps to get the immune system in a state to respond to COVID infection more... appropriately.



Yes, this study is observational. We can't draw causal conclusions here. But it does reinforce my long-held belief that COVID is a weird virus, one with effects that are different from the respiratory viruses we are used to. I can't say for certain whether COVID causes immune system dysfunction that puts someone at risk for autoimmunity — not from this study. But I can say it wouldn't surprise me.

[F. Perry Wilson, MD, MSCE](#), is an associate professor of medicine and public health and director of Yale's Clinical and Translational Research Accelerator.

Ready or Not 2024: Protecting the Public's Health from Diseases, Disasters, and Bioterrorism

Source: <https://www.tfah.org/report-details/ready-or-not-2024/>



Mar 14 – As the nation experiences an increasing number of infectious disease outbreaks and extreme weather events, TFAH's Ready or Not 2024: Protecting the Public's Health from Diseases, Disasters, and Bioterrorism report identifies key gaps in national and state preparedness to protect residents' health during emergencies and makes recommendations to strengthen the nation's public health system and improve emergency readiness.

The 2024 report, it's 21st annual edition, found that while emergency preparedness has improved in some areas, policymakers not heeding the lessons of past emergencies, funding cuts, and health misinformation are putting decades of progress in public health preparedness at risk.

The report measures states' preparedness to respond to a spectrum of health emergencies and to provide ongoing public health services based on nine key indicators and gives federal and state policymakers actionable data to improve emergency readiness. Based on the nine indicators, the report tiers states and the District of Columbia into three readiness levels: high, middle, and low. This year's report placed **21 states and DC in the high-performance tier, 13 states in the middle-performance tier, and 16 states in the low-performance tier.**

TABLE 2: State Public Health Emergency Preparedness
State performance, by scoring tier, 2023

Performance Tier	States	Number of States
High Tier	AL, AZ, CO, CT, DC, FL, GA, KS, MA, ME, MS, NC, NE, NJ, OH, PA, RI, SC, TN, VA, VT, WA	21 states and DC
Middle Tier	AR, DE, IA, ID, IL, MD, MO, MT, NH, NM, OK, UT, WI	13 states
Low Tier	AK, CA, HI, IN, KY, LA, MI, MN, ND, NV, NY, OR, SD, TX, WV, WY	16 states

Note: See "Appendix B: Methodology" for scoring details. Complete data were not available for U.S. territories.

The report's findings showed both areas of strength in the nation's health emergency preparedness and areas that need attention.

Areas of strong performance include:

- A majority of states have made preparations to expand healthcare and public health laboratory capacity in an emergency. As of the end of 2023, 39 states participate in the Nurse Licensure Compact, which helps facilitate emergency response efforts by allowing nurses to work in multiple member states, both in person and via telehealth, without the need for additional state licenses.
- The District of Columbia and 46 states have written plans for the expansion of public health laboratory services during health emergencies.
- Most states (43) and the District of Columbia are accredited in the areas of public health or emergency management, or both.
- A majority of states (at least 37) and the District of Columbia either maintained or increased their public health funding during FY 2023. Such funding is particularly important because most federal funding in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was one-time funding.



Areas that need attention include:

- Too few people are vaccinated against seasonal flu. During the 2022-2023 flu season, only 49 percent of the population (ages 6 months and older) was vaccinated against the flu, well short of the 70 percent goal established by *Healthy People 2030*.
- On average, only 25 percent of acute care hospitals in states earned a top-quality patient safety grade in a fall 2023 assessment. Hospital safety scores measure performance on issues such as healthcare-associated infection rates, intensive-care capacity, and an overall culture of error prevention – all critical for performing at their best during health emergencies.
- On average, only 55 percent of U.S. workers used paid time off during the period from March 2018 to March 2023. Access to paid time off is an important readiness measure because workers who go to work sick risk spreading infections in the workforce and throughout the community.

In addition, the report's special feature discusses the increasing health risks from extreme heat, including for some population groups: people who live in under-resourced communities, people living in urban heat islands or without air conditioning, people who work outdoors, people with chronic diseases, pregnant individuals, infants, children, and older adults. In 2022, more people died in the U.S. due to extreme heat than from any other single type of weather event.

Policy action is needed.

The report includes policy recommendations for action by the administration, Congress, and states including:

- Increase funding in order to modernize public health data collection and to grow the size and diversity of the public health workforce. The report recommends that Congress allocate \$4.5 billion annually to foundational public health capacities.
- Build healthy, disaster resilient communities by investing in comprehensive public health, prevention, and health equity programs.
- Strengthen public health communications and efforts to counter misinformation.
- Ensure paid leave for all employees.
- Support healthcare system readiness and the medical countermeasures pipeline.
- Prepare for extreme weather and environmental hazards.

●► [Read the report](#)

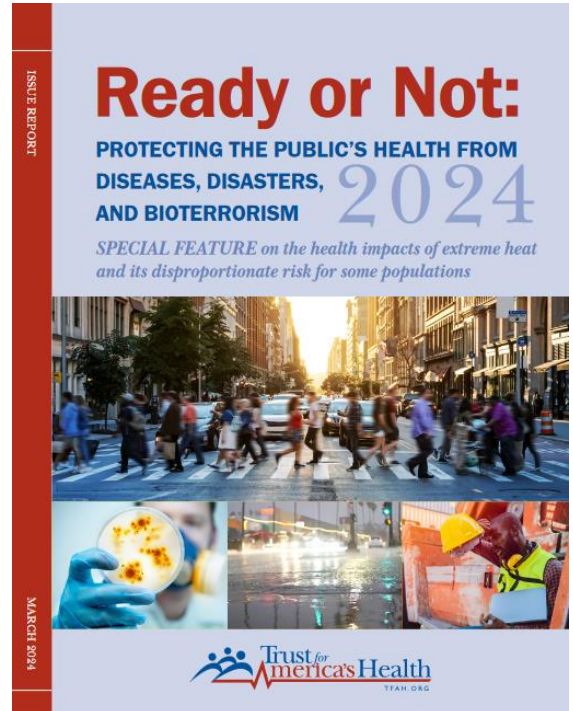
Leprosy Cases Are Rising in the U.S. – What Is the Ancient Disease and Why Is It Spreading Now?

By Robert A. Schwartz

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240314-leprosy-cases-are-rising-in-the-u-s-what-is-the-ancient-disease-and-why-is-it-spreading-now>

Mar 14 - The word "leprosy" conjures images of biblical plagues, but the disease is still with us today. Caused by infectious bacteria, [some 200,000 new cases are reported each year](#), according to the World Health Organization. In the United States, leprosy has been entrenched for more than a century in parts of the South where people came into contact with armadillos, the principle proven linkage from animal to humans. However, the more recent outbreaks in the Southeast, [especially Florida](#), have not been associated with animal exposure.

[The Conversation](#) talked with [Robert A. Schwartz](#), professor and head of dermatology at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, to explain what researchers know about the disease.



What is leprosy and why is it resurfacing in the US?

Leprosy is caused by two different but similar bacteria — *Mycobacterium leprae* and *Mycobacterium lepromatosis* — the latter [having just been identified in 2008](#). Leprosy, [also known as Hansen's disease](#), is avoidable. Transmission among the most vulnerable in society, including migrant and impoverished populations, remains a pressing issue.

This [age-old neglected tropical disease](#), which is still [present in more than 120 countries](#), is now a growing challenge in parts of North America.

Leprosy is beginning to occur regularly within parts of the southeastern United States. Most recently, Florida has seen a heightened incidence of leprosy, accounting for [many of the newly diagnosed cases](#) in the U.S.

The [surge in new cases](#) in central Florida highlights the urgent need for health care providers to [report them](#) immediately. Contact tracing is critical to [identifying sources and reducing transmission](#).

Traditional risk factors include zoonotic exposure and having recently lived in leprosy-endemic countries. Brazil, India and Indonesia have each [noted more than 10,000 new cases](#) since 2019, according to the World Health Organization data, and more than a dozen countries have reported between 1,000 to 10,000 new cases over the same time period.

Why was leprosy stigmatized in biblical times?

Evidence suggests that [leprosy has plagued civilization](#) since at least the second millennium B.C.

From that time until the mid-20th century, [limited treatments were available](#), so the bacteria could infiltrate the body and cause prominent physical deformities such as disfigured hands and feet. Advanced cases of leprosy cause facial features resembling that of a lion in humans.

Many mutilating and distressing skin disorders such as skin cancers and deep fungal infections were also confused with leprosy by the general public.

Fear of contagion has led to [tremendous stigmatization and social exclusion](#). It was such a serious concern that the Kingdom of Jerusalem had a specialized hospital to care for those suffering from leprosy.

How infectious is leprosy?

Research shows that prolonged in-person contact via respiratory droplets is [the primary mode of transmission](#), rather than through normal, everyday contact such as embracing, shaking hands or sitting near a person with leprosy. People with leprosy generally do not transmit the disease once they begin treatment.

Armadillos represent the only known [zoonotic reservoir](#) of leprosy-causing bacteria that threaten humans. These small mammals are common in Central and South America and in parts of Texas, Louisiana, Missouri and other states, where they are sometimes kept as pets or farmed as meat. Eating armadillo meat is not a clear cause of leprosy, but capturing and raising armadillos, along with preparing its meat, are risk factors.

The transmission mechanism between zoonotic reservoirs and susceptible individuals is unknown, but it is strongly suspected that direct contact with an infected armadillo poses a significant risk of developing leprosy. However, many cases reported in the U.S. have demonstrated an [absence of either zoonotic exposure or person-to-person transmission](#) outside of North America, suggesting that transmission may be happening where the infected person lives. But in many cases, the source remains an enigma.

Some people's genetics might make them [more susceptible to leprosy infections](#), or their immune systems are less capable of resisting the disease.

Stigma and discrimination have [prevented people from seeking treatment](#), and as a result, "concealed" cases contribute to transmission.

How do you recognize it?

Leprosy primarily affects the skin and peripheral nervous system, causing physical deformity and desensitizing one's ability to feel pain on affected skin.

It may begin with loss of sensation on whitish patches of skin or reddened skin. As the bacteria spread in the skin, they can cause the skin to thicken with or without nodules. If this occurs on a person's face, it may rarely produce a smooth, attractive-appearing facial contour known as lepra bonita, or "pretty leprosy." The disease can progress to causing eyebrow loss, enlarged nerves in the neck, nasal deformities and nerve damage.

The onset of symptoms can sometimes take [as long as 20 years](#) because the infectious bacteria have a lengthy incubation period and proliferate slowly in the human body. So presumably many people are infected long before they know that they are. Fortunately, worldwide efforts to screen for leprosy are being enhanced thanks to organizations like the [Order of Saint Lazarus](#), which was originally founded in the 11th



century to combat leprosy, and the [Armauer Hansen Research Institute](#), which conducts immunologic, epidemiological and translational research in Ethiopia. The nongovernmental organization [Bombay Leprosy Project](#) in India does the same.

How treatable is it?

Leprosy is not only preventable but treatable. Defying stigma and advancing early diagnosis via proactive measures are critical to the mission of controlling and eradicating it worldwide.

Notably, the World Health Organization and other agencies provide [multi-drug therapy](#) at no cost to patients.

In addition, vaccine technology to combat leprosy is [in the clinical trials stage](#) and [could become available](#) in coming years. In studies involving nine-banded armadillos, this protein-based vaccine delayed or diminished leprosy nerve damage and [kept bacteria at bay](#). Researchers believe that the vaccine can be produced in a low-cost, highly efficient manner, with the long-term prospect of eradicating leprosy.

If health care professionals, biomedical researchers and lawmakers do not markedly enhance their efforts to eliminate leprosy worldwide, the disease will continue to spread and could become a far more serious problem in areas that have been largely free of leprosy for decades. The World Health Organization launched a plan in 2021 for achieving [zero leprosy](#).

[Robert A. Schwartz](#) is Professor and Head of Dermatology, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Rutgers University.

How to better research the possible threats posed by AI-driven misuse of biology

By Matthew E. Walsh

Source: <https://thebulletin.org/2024/03/how-to-better-research-the-possible-threats-posed-by-ai-driven-misuse-of-biology/>

Mar 18 – Over the last few months, experts and lawmakers have become increasingly concerned that advances in artificial intelligence could help bad actors develop biological threats. But so far there have been no reported biological misuse examples involving AI or the AI-driven chatbots that have recently filled news headlines. This lack of real-world wrongdoing prevents direct evaluation of the changing threat landscape at the intersection of AI and biology.

Nonetheless, researchers have conducted experiments that aim to evaluate sub-components of biological threats—such as the ability to develop a plan for or obtain information that could enable misuse. Two recent efforts—by RAND Corporation and OpenAI—to understand how artificial intelligence could lower barriers to the development of biological weapons concluded that access to a large language model chatbot did not give users an edge in developing plans to misuse biology. But those findings are just one part of the story and should not be considered conclusive.

In any experimental research, study design influences results. Even if technically executed to perfection, all studies have limitations, and both reports dutifully acknowledge theirs. But given the extent of the limitations in the two recent experiments, the reports on them should be seen less as definitive insights and more as opportunities to shape future research, so policymakers and regulators can apply it to help identify and reduce potential risks of AI-driven misuse of biology.

The limitations of recent studies

In the [RAND Corporation](#) report, researchers detailed the use of red teaming to understand the impact of chatbots on the ability to develop a plan of biological misuse. The RAND researchers recruited 15 groups of three people to act as red team “bad guys.” Each of these groups was asked to come up with a plan to achieve one of four nefarious outcomes (“vignettes”) using biology. All groups were allowed to access the internet. For each of the four vignettes, one red team was given access to an unspecified chatbot and another red team was given access to a different, also unspecified chatbot. When the authors published their [final report](#) and accompanying [press release](#) in January, they concluded that “large language models do not increase the risk of a biological weapons attack by a non-state actor.”

This conclusion may be an overstatement of their results, as their focus was specifically on the ability to generate a plan for biological misuse.

The other [report](#) was posted by the developers of ChatGPT, [OpenAI](#). Instead of using small groups, OpenAI researchers had participants work individually to identify key pieces of information needed to carry out a specific defined scenario of biological misuse. The OpenAI team reached a conclusion similar to the RAND team’s: “GPT-4 provides at most a mild uplift in biological threat creation accuracy.” Like RAND, this also may be an overstatement of results as the experiment evaluated the ability to access information, not actually create a biological threat.



The OpenAI report was met with [mixed reactions](#), including skepticism and public critique regarding the [statistical analysis](#) performed. The core objection was the appropriateness of the use of a [correction](#) during analysis that re-defined what constituted a statistically significant result. Without the correction, the results would have been statistically significant—that's to say, the use of the chatbot would have been judged to be a potential aid to those interested in creating biological threats.

Regardless of their limitations, the OpenAI and RAND experiments highlight larger questions which, if addressed head-on, would enable future experiments to provide more valuable and actionable results about AI-related biological threats.

Is there more than statistical significance?

In both experiments, third-party evaluators assigned numeric scores to the text-based participant responses. The researchers then evaluated if there was a statistically significant difference between those who had access to chatbots and those who did not. Neither research team found one. But typically, the ability to determine if a statistically significant difference exists largely depends on the number of data points; more data points allow for a smaller difference to be considered statistically significant. Therefore, if the researchers had many more participants, the same differences in score could have been statistically significant.

Reducing text to numbers can bring other challenges as well. In the RAND study, the teams, regardless of access to chatbots, did not generate any plans that were deemed likely to succeed. However, there may have been meaningful differences in why the plans were not likely to succeed, and systematically comparing the content of the responses could prove valuable in identifying mitigation measures.

In the OpenAI work, the goal of the participants was to identify a specific series of steps in a plan. However, if a participant were to miss an early step in the plan, all the remaining steps, even if correct, would not count towards their score. This meant that if someone made an error early on, but identified all the remaining information correctly, they would score similarly to someone who did not identify any correct information. Again, researchers may gain insight from identifying patterns in which steps and why participants failed.

Are the results generalizable?

To inform an understanding of the threat landscape, conclusions must be generalizable across scenarios and chatbots. Future evaluators should be clear on which large language models are used (the RAND researchers were not). It would be helpful to understand if researchers achieve a similar answer with different models or different answers with the same model. Knowing the specifics would also enable comparisons of results based on the characteristics of the chatbot used, enabling policymakers to understand if models with certain characteristics have unique capabilities and impact.

The OpenAI experiment used just one threat scenario. There is not much reason to believe that this one scenario is representative of all threat scenarios; the results may or may not generalize. There is a tradeoff in using one specific scenario; it becomes tenable for one or two people to evaluate 100 responses. On the other hand, the RAND work was much more open-ended as participant teams were given flexibility in how they decided to achieve their intended goal. This makes the results more generalizable, but required a more extensive evaluation procedure that involved many experts to sufficiently examine 15 diverse scenarios.

Are the results impacted by something else?

Part way through their experiment, the RAND researchers enrolled a “black cell,” a group with significant experience with large language models. The RAND researchers made this decision because they noticed that some of their study's red teams were struggling to bypass safety features of the chatbots. In the end, the black cell received an average score almost double that of the corresponding red teams. The black cell participants didn't need to rely only on their expertise with large language models; they were also “adept” at interpreting the academic literature about those models. This provided a valuable insight to the RAND researchers, which is “[t]he...relative outperformance of the black cell illustrates that a greater source of variability appears to be red team composition, as opposed to LLM access.” Simply put, it probably matters more who is on the team than if the team has access to a large language model or not.

Moving forward

Despite their limitations, red teaming and benchmarking efforts remain valuable tools for understanding the impact of artificial intelligence on the deliberate biological threat landscape. Indeed, the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute Consortium—a part of the US Department of Commerce—currently has [working groups](#) focused on developing standards and guidelines for this type of research.

Outside of technical design and execution of the experiments, challenges remain. The work comes with meaningful financial costs including the compensation of participants for their time (OpenAI pays \$100 per



hour to “experts”); for individuals to recruit participants, design experiments, administer the experiments, and analyze data; and of biosecurity experts to evaluate the responses. Therefore, it is important to consider who will fund this type of work in the future. Should artificial intelligence companies fund their own studies, a perceived conflict of interest will linger if the results are intended to be used to inform governance or public perception of their model’s risks. But at the same time, funding that is directed to nonprofits like RAND Corporation or to academia does not inherently enable researchers access to unreleased or modified models, like the version used in the OpenAI experiment. Future work should learn from these two reports, and could benefit from considering the following:

- While artificial intelligence companies will want to understand risks associated with their own products specifically, future evaluations by non-profits, academia or government could allow participants to access any large language models. This could enable conclusions about the impact of access to large language models more generally.
- A [crossover trial design](#), in which each participant or team would perform the exercise twice and with two different scenarios, could be used to account for the different inherent abilities of participants. In one scenario access to large language models would be given, in the other scenario it would not. The order and which scenario is paired with large language model access would be determined at random. The result would then be the difference between the scenario in which participants had access to large language models to when they did not.
- Regardless of where the work happens, rigorous, compensated, and public peer-review should accompany this type of work. Decision makers looking to use the outcome of these studies are unlikely to be expert in these evaluation methodologies and biological misuse. A thorough peer-review process would ensure that results are interpreted and used appropriately.

The path toward more useful research on AI and biological threats is hardly free of obstacles. Employees at the National Institute of Standards and Technology have [reportedly expressed outrage](#) regarding the recent appointment of Paul Christiano—a former OpenAI researcher who has [expressed concerns](#) that AI could pose an existential threat to humanity—to a leadership role at the Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute. Employees are concerned that Christiano’s personal beliefs about catastrophic and existential risk posed by AI broadly will affect his ability to maintain the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s commitment to objectivity.

This internal unrest comes on the heels of [reporting](#) that the physical buildings that house the institute are falling apart. As Christiano looks to expand his staff, he will also need to compete against the salaries paid by tech companies. OpenAI, for example, is hiring for safety-related roles with the low end of the base salary exceeding the high end of the general service payscale (federal salaries). It is unlikely that any relief will come from the 2024 federal budget, as lawmakers are [expected to decrease](#) the institute’s budget from 2023 levels. But if the United States wants to remain a global leader in the development of artificial intelligence, it will need to make financial commitments to ensure that the work required to evaluate artificial intelligence is done right.

Matthew E. Walsh is a doctoral student in the department of Environmental Health and Engineering (health security track) at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a member of the 2018 cohort of the Emerging Leaders in Biosecurity Initiative (ELBI). His dissertation work focuses on the impacts of artificial intelligence and biotechnology on the biological threat landscape. He currently serves as a graduate student representative to the Association for Politics and the Life Sciences. Previously, he was Associate Staff in the Biological and Chemical Technologies group at MIT Lincoln Laboratory (MIT LL), a Department of Defense research and development laboratory. He established a technical program at MIT LL to develop and apply machine learning methods to engineering biology with a focus on rapid medical countermeasures and antibody-based therapeutics. Mr. Walsh also has supported work in biosensor development, threat attribution, warfighter health, and biological data assurance. Prior to MIT LL, he worked at MassBiologics of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, developing assays for the characterization of therapeutic monoclonal antibody production. Mr. Walsh received a BA in chemistry from Skidmore College.

Developing Safety Tools for Synthetic Biology to Defend Against Potential Misuse of AI

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240319-developing-safety-tools-for-synthetic-biology-to-defend-against-potential-misuse-of-ai>

Mar 19 – The U.S. Department of Commerce’s [National Institute of Standards and Technology](#) (NIST) has entered a two-year cooperative research agreement with the nonprofit [Engineering Biology Research Consortium](#) (EBRC) to develop screening and safety tools to defend against the potential misuse of



artificial intelligence (AI) related to nucleic acid synthesis, a growing field of synthetic biology with great promise but also serious risks.

NIST initiated this collaboration to fulfill a task within the recent [Executive Order on Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence](#) that charges multiple agencies — including NIST — with developing standards, best practices and implementation guides for nucleic acid synthesis, in light of advances in AI. The Executive Order on AI calls on NIST to initiate an effort to engage with industry and other stakeholders to develop safeguards to defend against potential misuse of AI related to the synthesis of genetic material. NIST will work with EBRC to identify best practices and policies to ensure public safety.

“This agreement is the first step toward promoting safe research in engineering biology as tasked to NIST under the recent AI executive order,” said Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and NIST Director Laurie E. Locascio. “The promise of this technology is immense, but clearly safeguards are needed to protect the public, and this is an important first step toward creating them.”

Researchers have used synthetic nucleic acids to achieve groundbreaking biotechnology innovations, such as new drugs and therapies, but the growing availability and ease of synthesizing nucleic acids has raised safety concerns — particularly in light of advances in artificial intelligence — that could pose risks to the public, environment and national security.

The partnership between NIST and EBRC aims to identify and describe the necessary infrastructure for ensuring safety and security in the synthesis of nucleic acids. As part of the cooperative agreement, the organizations will solicit input from industry, universities, government agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

Based in Emeryville, California, EBRC is a nonprofit public-private partnership dedicated to bringing together an inclusive community committed to advancing engineering biology to address national and global needs.

New International Biosecurity Organization Launched to Safeguard Bioscience

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240319-new-international-biosecurity-organization-launched-to-safeguard-bioscience>



Mar 19 – Amid rapid advances in bioscience and biotechnology that could pose significant global security risks without effective guardrails, the [Nuclear Threat Initiative](#) (NTI) last month launched the [International Biosecurity and Biosafety Initiative for Science](#) (IBBIS), a first-of-its-kind organization to strengthen international biosecurity governance. IBBIS, an independent organization to be headquartered in Geneva, provides tools that will allow technological innovation to flourish, safely and responsibly. Advances in bioscience offer important societal benefits, but fast-moving innovations have lowered barriers for manipulating biological agents, increasing the risk of potentially catastrophic accidents or deliberate misuse. These risks are exacerbated by the increasing application of artificial intelligence and machine learning to biotechnology.

“Biological threats present a significant global security risk, and the stakes couldn’t be higher,” NTI Co-Chair and CEO [Ernest J. Moniz](#) said. “IBBIS was established to create a safer future through collaborative work with governments and international partners to reduce emerging biological risks associated with rapid technology advances.”

Until now, there has been no organization solely dedicated to safeguarding the tools of modern bioscience and biotechnology from deliberate or accidental misuse. NTI identified this gap and worked with international partners to establish IBBIS and launch it today during an event on the margins of the Munich Security Conference. [Piers Millett, Ph.D.](#), serves as the inaugural executive director, and IBBIS has an international advisory group, which includes [Nisreen AL-Hmoud](#) from Jordan, [Lela Bakanidze](#) from Georgia, [Rik Bleijs](#) from the Netherlands, [Luis Carrera](#) from the United States, [Genya Dana](#) from the United States, [O’Neil Hamilton](#) from Jamaica, [Aamer Ikram](#) from Pakistan, [Angela](#)



[Kane](#) from Germany, [Irma Makalinao](#) from the Philippines, [Talkmore Maruta](#) from Zambia, [Suryesh Namdeo](#) from India, [Harawati Sudoyo](#) from Indonesia, and [Weiwen Zhang](#) from China.

IBBIS will collaborate with governments, international organizations, industry and academia to develop and promote practical, innovative tools that stakeholders can use to reduce risks throughout the bioscience and biotechnology research and development lifecycle. The first of such tools is now available—a new [Common Mechanism](#) software tool for DNA synthesis providers that enables them to cost effectively screen DNA orders and customers to ensure that the building blocks of dangerous pathogens do not fall into the hands of malicious actors.

“The international Common Mechanism will be available to all DNA providers globally and will help prevent the misuse or abuse of this vital technology,” said Millett.

“IBBIS will be able to bring all of the right stakeholders from various sectors—whether it’s public sector, international organizations, civil societies—and get them to agree to a common goal,” said Shyam Bishen, head of the Centre for Health and Healthcare at the World Economic Forum.

NTI secured funding from philanthropic donors for IBBIS’ initial operating costs, which allows IBBIS to broaden its activities beyond DNA synthesis screening safeguards within the next three years. Future work streams could include working with funders and publishers to processes for reviewing and managing risks from dual-use science, as well as supporting governments in strengthening biosecurity practices.

“The vision driving IBBIS is to create a future where bioscience and biotechnology can fulfill their immense promise,” explained [Jaime M. Yassif, Ph.D.](#), NTI’s vice president of Global Biological Policy and Programs. “I am pleased that national governments, industry, and the scientific community are embracing IBBIS and its ambitious agenda for developing innovative, practical tools for safeguarding the 21st-century biotechnology revolution.”

Mystery in Japan as dangerous streptococcal infections soar to record levels

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/15/japan-streptococcal-infections-rise-details>

Mar 15 – Experts warn that a rare but dangerous bacterial infection is spreading at a record rate in [Japan](#), with officials struggling to identify the cause.

The number of cases in 2024 is expected to exceed last year’s record numbers, while concern is growing that the harshest and potentially deadly form of group A streptococcal disease – streptococcal toxic shock syndrome (STSS) – will continue to spread, after the presence of highly virulent and infectious strains were confirmed in Japan.

The National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID) said: “There are still many unknown factors regarding the mechanisms behind fulminant (severe and sudden) forms of streptococcus, and we are not at the stage where we can explain them.”

Provisional figures released by the NIID recorded 941 cases of STSS were reported last year. In the first two months of 2024, 378 cases have already been recorded, with infections identified in all but two of Japan’s 47 prefectures.

While older people are considered at greater risk, the group A strain is leading to more deaths among patients under 50, according to NIID. Of the 65 people under 50 who were diagnosed with STSS between July and December in 2023, about a third, or 21, died, the Asahi Shimbun newspaper reported.

Most cases of STSS are caused by a bacterium called streptococcus pyogenes. More commonly known as [strep A](#) – it can cause sore throats, mainly in children, and lots of people have it without knowing it and do not become ill.

But the highly contagious bacteria that cause the infection can, in some cases, cause serious illnesses, health complications and death, particularly in adults over 30. About 30% of STSS cases are fatal.

Older people can experience cold-like symptoms but in rare cases, the symptoms can worsen to include strep throat, tonsillitis, pneumonia and meningitis. In the most serious cases it can lead to organ failure and necrosis.

Some experts believe the rapid rise in cases last year were connected to the lifting of restrictions imposed during the coronavirus pandemic.

In May 2023, the government downgraded Covid-19’s status from class two – which includes tuberculosis and [Sars](#) – to class five, [placing it on a legal par](#) with seasonal flu. The change meant local authorities were no longer able to order infected people to stay away from work or to recommend hospitalisation.

The move also prompted people to lower their guard, in a country where widespread mask wearing, hand sanitising and [avoiding the “three Cs”](#) were credited with keeping [Covid-19 deaths](#) comparatively low. About 73,000 Covid-19 deaths were recorded compared with more than 220,000 in Britain, which has a population just over half that of Japan.



Ken Kikuchi, a professor of infectious diseases at Tokyo Women's Medical University, says he is "very concerned" about the dramatic rise this year in the number of patients with severe invasive streptococcal infections.

He believes the reclassification of Covid-19 was the most important factor behind the increase in streptococcus pyogenes infections. This, he added, had led more people to abandon basic measures to prevent infections, such as regular hand disinfection.

"In my opinion, over 50% Japanese people have been infected by Sars-CoV-2 [the virus that causes Covid-19]," Kikuchi tells the Guardian. "People's immunological status after recovering from Covid-19 might alter their susceptibility to some microorganisms. We need to clarify the infection cycle of severe invasive streptococcal pyogenes diseases and get them under control immediately."

Streptococcal infections, like those of Covid-19, are spread through droplets and physical contact. The bacterium can also infect patients through wounds on the hands and feet.

Strep A infections are treated with antibiotics, but patients with the more severe invasive group A streptococcal disease are likely to need a combination of antibiotics and other drugs, along with intensive medical attention.

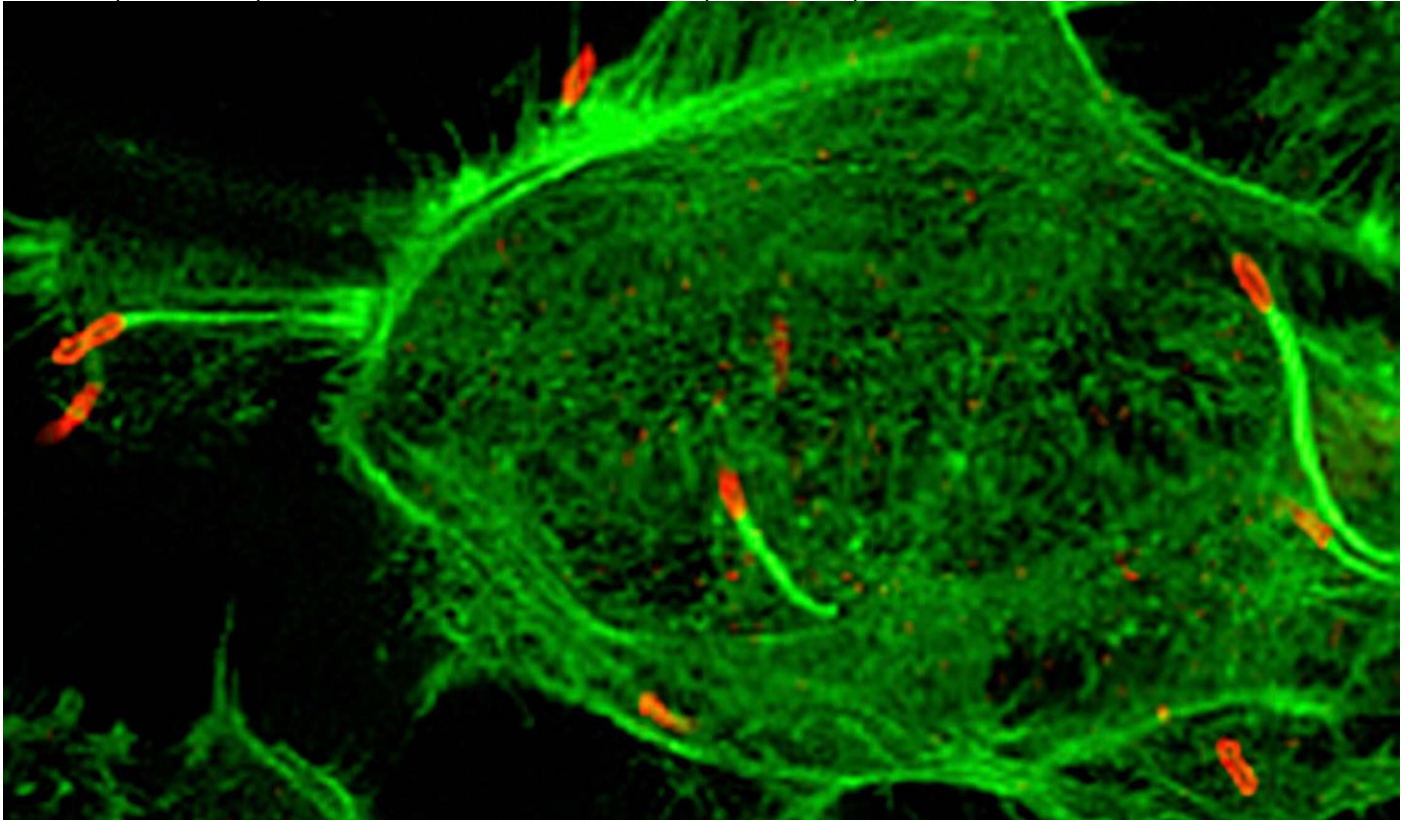
Japan's health ministry recommends that people take the same basic hygiene precautions against strep A that became a part of everyday life during the coronavirus pandemic.

"We want people to take preventive steps such as keeping your fingers and hands clean, and exercising cough etiquette," the health minister, Keizo Takemi, told reporters earlier this year, according to the Japan Times.

New vaccine against fatal tropical disease and potential bioterror weapon demonstrates efficacy in animal studies

By Marcus Horwitz | University of California, Los Angeles

Source: <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-03-vaccine-fatal-tropical-disease-potential.html>



Burkholderia pseudomallei infecting a human cell. The bacteria (red) are polymerizing actin (green). Credit: Christopher T. French

Mar 21 – In a mouse study, UCLA researchers tested a vaccine against the bacterium that causes melioidosis and found it was highly protective against the disease, which is endemic in many tropical areas, causing approximately 165,000 cases with 89,000 fatalities around the world each year. The bacterium, called **Burkholderia pseudomallei**, is spread through contact with contaminated soil and water through inhalation, ingestion



or broken skin. It is so dangerous that it is categorized as a Tier 1 Select Agent of bioterrorism, and it can cause rapidly fatal pneumonia when inhaled in low doses. If aerosolized and unleashed in a terror attack, it could lead to widespread death.

To date there are no licensed vaccines against the bacterium, said senior author Dr. Marcus Horwitz, Distinguished Professor of Medicine, in the division of infectious diseases, and of Microbiology, Immunology and Molecular Genetics at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. "A safe and effective [vaccine](#) is needed to prevent this disease as melioidosis is often difficult to diagnose, requires very lengthy treatment lasting three to six months, and has a high fatality rate even in high resource settings," Horwitz said. "Such a vaccine would be of great benefit to people living in endemic regions, travelers, and [military personnel](#) stationed in these areas, and it would also reduce the risk from an intentional release of *B. pseudomallei* in a bioterrorist attack."

The researchers developed the vaccine using a bacterial vector called LVS Δ capB as a platform to express highly immunogenic proteins from *B. pseudomallei* that are able to induce an immune response that later protects the host from illness and death when infected with the pathogen. LVS Δ capB, derived from a weakened form of a vaccine against tularemia, or "rabbit fever," had been developed in Horwitz's lab as a vector platform for creation of vaccines against other diseases caused by Tier 1 Select Agents such as anthrax and plague as well as tularemia. They administered the new vaccine through both skin injection and intranasal delivery in a strain of mice that is particularly sensitive to *B. pseudomallei* lung infection. The researchers found that the vaccine was not only safe and non-toxic, but effective even against a highly lethal strain of the melioidosis bacteria. Intranasal administration provided better protection than skin injection, with just a single dose proving effective with long-lasting protection.

The next steps are to test the vaccine for protection against pneumonic melioidosis in a second animal model, which the Food and Drug Administration requires in the case of vaccines for which human efficacy studies cannot be conducted. If it passes that test, the vaccine would then become eligible for testing in humans for safety and immunogenicity. The researchers will also evaluate the vaccine's effectiveness against subcutaneous infection with *B. pseudomallei*, which is the way most cases of melioidosis are thought to be acquired naturally, and test it for efficacy against the closely-related Tier 1 Select Agent pathogen *Burkholderia mallei*, which causes the zoonotic disease known as glanders in humans and animals. Study co-authors are Michael Tullius, Peter Back, Saša Masleša-Galić, and Susana Nava of UCLA, and Richard Bowen of Colorado State University.

► The study [is published](#) in the journal *mBio*.

Havana Syndrome Mystery Deepens Further After Brain Scan Analysis

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/havana-syndrome-mystery-deepens-further-after-brain-scan-analysis>



Mar 23 – Two new studies on the mysterious 'Havana syndrome' found no physical cause, but they did suggest a possible link to mental health. Since 2016, more than 1,000 US government personnel stationed internationally have reported hearing intrusive sounds and feeling pressure on their heads, followed by symptoms like intense headaches, dizziness, and cognitive dysfunction. Ever since federal employees stationed in Havana, Cuba, first reported these anomalous health incidents (AHIs), [Havana syndrome](#) has been the media's go-to term for the condition. US researchers led by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) now report they have found no significant differences in brain scans or other biological tests between people with Havana syndrome and healthy controls. Though the results provide little insight into a possible biological explanation for the symptoms, the authors emphasize there are multiple factors to consider when interpreting these findings. "A lack of evidence for an MRI-detectable difference between individuals with AHIs and controls does not exclude that an adverse event impacting the brain occurred at the time of the AHI," [says](#) NIH neuroscientist Carlo Pierpaoli, first author of one of the studies. "It is possible that



individuals with an AHI may be experiencing the results of an event that led to their symptoms, but the injury did not produce the long-term neuroimaging changes that are typically observed after severe trauma or stroke.

"We hope these results will alleviate concerns about AHI being associated with severe neurodegenerative changes in the brain." Researchers [studied](#) different types of [MRI](#) scans to measure brain volume, structure, and function in 81 participants who experienced AHIs and compared them with 48 healthy controls, 29 of whom had similar job assignments though no reported AHIs.

In [a separate study](#), 86 participants with AHIs and 30 controls with similar job assignments underwent various tests including blood biomarker testing, and clinical, auditory, balance, visual, and neuropsychological assessments.

The researchers used multiple methods and models to examine the data. In analyzing a variety of observable traits that include a selection of biochemical characteristics, the team hoped to uncover significant clinical changes that might correlate with neuroimaging results. "Our goal was to conduct thorough, objective and reproducible evaluations to see if we could identify structural brain or biological differences in people who reported AHIs," [says](#) Leighton Chan, a public health scientist and acting chief scientific officer at the NIH. MRI scans were conducted approximately 80 days after symptom onset, with some participants scanned as early as 14 days post-reporting. Despite their thorough methods, the team didn't find consistent imaging abnormalities distinguishing those with AHIs from healthy controls. Research [published in 2019](#) comparing a smaller sample of people reporting AHIs with controls found significant differences in white matter volumes and reduced functional connectivity in auditory and visual brain regions.

While this latest research failed to support those findings, it did find that people with Havana syndrome self-reported more problems with balance and higher levels of fatigue, [depression](#), and post-traumatic stress disorder compared to the control group.

"The post-traumatic stress and mood symptoms reported are not surprising given the ongoing concerns of many of the participants," [says](#) neuropsychologist Louis French from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

"Often these individuals have had significant disruption to their lives and continue to have concerns about their health and their future. This level of stress can have significant negative impacts on the recovery process."

In terms of reported symptoms, 41 percent of AHI-affected participants met the criteria for [functional neurological disorders](#) (FNDs) – conditions of weakness and sensory impediments stemming from abnormal brain function, often linked to stress, depression, and anxiety. Many of these participants also experienced symptoms like dizziness, vertigo, and unsteadiness.

The researchers suggest that if the Havana syndrome symptoms were caused by an external factor, it's possible they are no longer detectable with current tests and sample sizes. "While we did not identify significant differences in participants with AHIs," Chan [says](#), "it's important to acknowledge that these symptoms are very real, cause significant disruption in the lives of those affected and can be quite prolonged, disabling and difficult to treat."

●► The studies have been published in *JAMA*, [here](#) and [here](#).



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE

**A common roof
for International
CBRNE
First Responders**



Rue de la Vacherie, 78
B5060 SAMBREVILLE
(Auvelais)
BELGIUM

info@ici-belgium.be | www.ici-belgium.be