

2 CBRNE



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE

*Dedicated to Global
First Responders*

DIARY

November 2023



WORLD WAR 3

*WAKE
UP*



PART A

C²BRNE DIARY- 2022[©]

November 2023

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

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

Editor-in-Chief
ICI C²BRNE Diary

ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



Dear Colleagues,

The global situation remains the same: two (proxy) wars (one old; one new) – (an ongoing) pandemic – distaste for peace and eternal political stupidity.

C²BRNE Diary: The Editor participated in the, by-invitation-only, joint workshop on “*Terrorist Use of New Technologies: Current Threat and Response*” organized by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and the Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia (ESIWA) project, that was held in Singapore (24-25 Oct). In the three thematic sessions (drones; 3-D printed weapons and CBRN) certain related issues were discussed but it was evident that subject matter experts were not following to the point the progress made in their respective fields. There was no reference, for example to, mini and ultra-mine drones, or insect-like mini drones that can enter buildings via ventilation hoses or windows and [navigate](#) the premises, or the infamous *Slaughterbots* that are just one step away from materialization, or the autonomous killer drone Kargu-2 operating (?) in Libya (2020). When comes to 3-D printing there was a reference to the confiscation of simplified FGC-9 MMII and RPG. Could these models help the defense industry construct simpler and lighter weapons? What about other weapons like the good old M18A1 Claymore land mine that is the preferred mine for side road IEDs or plastic 3-D printed knives with the hardness of metallic or ceramic equivalent? Of interest was the fact that 3-D printed weapons were good enough only for one shot and then exploded! This is strange since 3-D printing spare parts are available for war planes and air carriers. Hard to believe. Nevertheless, experts should have a vivid imagination and think-out-of-the-box in their fields of expertise and consider the sky as a limit.



Piracy: Can the war in Gaza ignite piracy in the Mediterranean Sea? A hostage situation of a cruiser might be used to free Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. Remember the Italian cruise ship *MS Achille Lauro* hijacking on Oct. 7, 1985, by four Palestinian militants associated with a faction of the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)? Or the 1973 Hellinikon International Airport (Athens) attack by two members of the Palestinian militant organization Black September. The militants used sub-machine guns and grenades against the passengers waiting in the passenger lounge. The attackers took hostages before they finally surrendered to the Greek police. It is believed that the gunmen wanted to hijack a plane, but they decided to attack when they were about to be searched by a Greek security inspector before boarding.



Gaza war: Hamas terrorists have released this footage showing AT4 & NLAW anti-tank missiles and rockets which they have obtained from Ukrainian Arms smugglers to use against Israel's Merkava III/IV/IVM main battle tanks in Gaza. It is known that many of the weapons donated by the US to Ukraine end up in the black market, but it is not known the exact way used by Palestinians to obtain these. Yemen declared war on Israel targeting with long range missiles (Toufan – based on Iranian Quds 3 | range 2.000 km) the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center in Dimona. Emiratis and Qataris should look more often on their skies now! Perhaps it is a good opportunity for LAF to join forces with IDF to get rid of Hezbollah! On conspiracy (?) level, US HAARP technology proposed to be used against Hamas' tunnels.

Hamas: "Israel should hit Hamas, not Palestinian civilians." The French Foreign Minister said so, but almost all the leaders of Western countries have similarly expressed themselves. Two questions though. How can Israel distinguish between "civilians" and combatants, and secondly, how civilians are civilians? Are Palestinian civilians more civilians than the German civilians who were exterminated by Allied air forces during World War II? Were German citizens to blame for the Hitler regime? Were all Italians fascists and all Germans nazis? Do all Lebanese support Hizballah? Philosophical questions one might ask. Perhaps, but trying to separate the Palestinians of Gaza from Hamas is rather impossible, for practical as well as substantive reasons.

Practically in the densely populated Gaza and with the tactic of human shields that the terrorist Hamas often uses, how could one avoid civilian casualties? Also, how culpable for Hamas are the "civilians" of Gaza who provide primary accounting support to Hamas, who follow it and allow it to turn their children into "martyrs"? Were Germans more responsible and should be exterminated because they voted for the criminal Hitler? Did the Palestinians not vote for Hamas? Do they not tolerate her? Also, did "Palestinian civilians" participate in the Hamas attack on Israel and the consequent "lovely" works in the eyes of Allah and the "prophet"? Murders and rapes, regardless of age and gender?

Why do the Palestinians in Gaza tolerate their "leaders" - who have not been judged for 15 years - to eat with golden spoons in the five-star hotels of Qatar and away from any danger of sending them with their "national liberation" plans to their deaths? Those who have a vested interest in torpedoing any prospect of peace, that is why they adopt supposedly patriotic, but extremely territorial positions, such as those about "replacing" the Jewish state with a Palestinian one.

Do they think that with such positions, plus terrorist practices, they are still victims? And since they are saying something about... "proportionality" (proportional) response to the response mentioned by international law, let them choose their civilians, of every age and sex, one by one, in absolute correspondence, and send them to Israel to kill them, rape them and everything that the Hamas "liberators" did.

Or are they not the same "civilians" who tolerate Hamas stealing the billions that flow annually into Gaza from the gullible UN and EU? Isn't Hamas robbing the fuel for the hospitals and not just disbursing for the Palestinian people of Gaza? Isn't it Hamas that rockets all kinds of pipes going to Gaza for the sewer system? Bad Jews are to blame for how they live. Isn't Hamas using them as human shields? If they accept it, they turn themselves into belligerents. If they don't accept it, their fire should be directed at Hamas and accept the Israeli argument.

Why do they tolerate their children not being educated to wake up and break this vicious cycle? If they choose to support the political goals of Hamas which seeks the annihilation of Israel - and not the creation of a Palestinian state as the "romantics" believe, who is to blame? And well, Hamas can do whatever it wants. But who will be able to convince Israel that it must be destroyed? Israel, which under Ehud Barak offered 95% of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, plus some 30 billion dollars in compensation for the "Nakba", the Catastrophe of 1948. Could they explain why Arafat rejected it? Is the situation better today than what was offered to them?

But let's go to France again. What the French Foreign Minister said, how do they "stick" with the fact that her own country suffers daily from Islamic terrorism? Were they not innocent civilians who in recent years were slaughtered by Islamic terrorists in the French streets as children? Were Israeli settlers dancing at the Bataclan? Was the murdered professor in Aras an Israeli from the West Bank?

It is probably the West that refuses to wake up and realize what it is facing. Like it or not, it is a war with cultural characteristics and unfortunately for some, Israel is the West's bridgehead in a very difficult area.

If Israel disappears, the turn of the West comes, with the two states of Hellenism first in line.

Unfortunately, War Through the Ages is a very dirty game. For those who don't believe, read History. And the Melians, as the father of Geopolitics Thucydides writes, wanted to remain



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

civilians. Instead, they were mercilessly slaughtered. It is also good for some to read the history of the Byzantine Empire and its struggles against Islamic fanaticism. For the most selective, there is always the Turkish Empire, which offers a lot.

Ukraine: With much of the world now focused on war in the Middle East, a new Gallup poll (conducted Oct. 4-16) shows that American support for that other war — in Ukraine — has declined. According to the poll, 41% of Americans say the United States is doing too much to help Ukraine, which is up from 24% who said this in Aug. 2022 and 29% who said this in June of 2023. That compares with 33% who believe the U.S. is doing the right amount (down from 43% who said this in June 2023), and another 25% who think the U.S. is not doing enough (essentially unchanged from June).

WW3: How many countries need to be involved for the infamous joke United Nations organization to declare the beginning of World War Three?

Afghanistan: Hundreds of Afghan women were buried alive in the rubble of their homes after a 6.3-magnitude earthquake because they were afraid to go outside without a hijab. Rescue efforts in the Oct. 7 earthquake, which struck western Afghanistan and killed more than 2,000 people, were also hampered by a Taliban directive barring women and men who do not know each other from having any contact. An unnamed female rescuer told the Telegraph that the unthinkable rules prevented male rescuers from helping trapped or injured women because they did not know them. The same Afghani men we are welcoming in Europe as “poor” refugees...



Paris: Stars of David stencils were painted on buildings in multiple spots across several building fronts in a southern district of the French capital. Similar tags appeared over the weekend in suburbs of the city, including Vanves, Fontenay-aux-Roses, and Aubervilliers. A bad legacy for the 2024 Olympic Games.

The Editor-in-Chief



Singapore – a country that must visit at least once in a lifetime



Experts Warn of Risk of Civil Unrest in U.K. Due to Food Shortages

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20231019-experts-warn-of-risk-of-civil-unrest-in-u-k-due-to-food-shortages>



Oct 19 – A shortage of popular carbohydrates such as wheat, bread, pasta, and cereal are most likely to trigger civil unrest, say the experts, who work across academia, policy, charities, and business.

The new analysis of frailties within the UK's food system has been led by researchers from the [University of York](#) and Anglia Ruskin University, and is [published in the journal Sustainability](#).

In the study, civil unrest is classified as over 30,000 people in the UK suffering violent injury in one year through events such as demonstrations and violent looting.

Next Decade

Just over 40% of the food experts surveyed believe that civil unrest in the UK in the next 10 years was either possible (38%) or more likely than not (3%). Over the next 50 years, this increased to nearly 80% of experts believing civil unrest was either possible (45%), more likely than not (24%), or very likely (10%).

The participants were then asked, if disruption to the food system was to cause the unrest, was it likely to be due to not enough food being available overall, or problems with food distribution, preventing it getting to the right places and creating isolated pockets of hunger. They were asked to consider both questions over the two time frames, 10 and 50 years.

The results show that 80% of experts believe logistical distribution issues leading to shortages are the most likely food-related cause of civil unrest in the next 10 years. But, considered over a 50-year horizon, they said catastrophic failure resulting in insufficient food to feed the UK population, rather than distribution problems, would be the most likely cause.

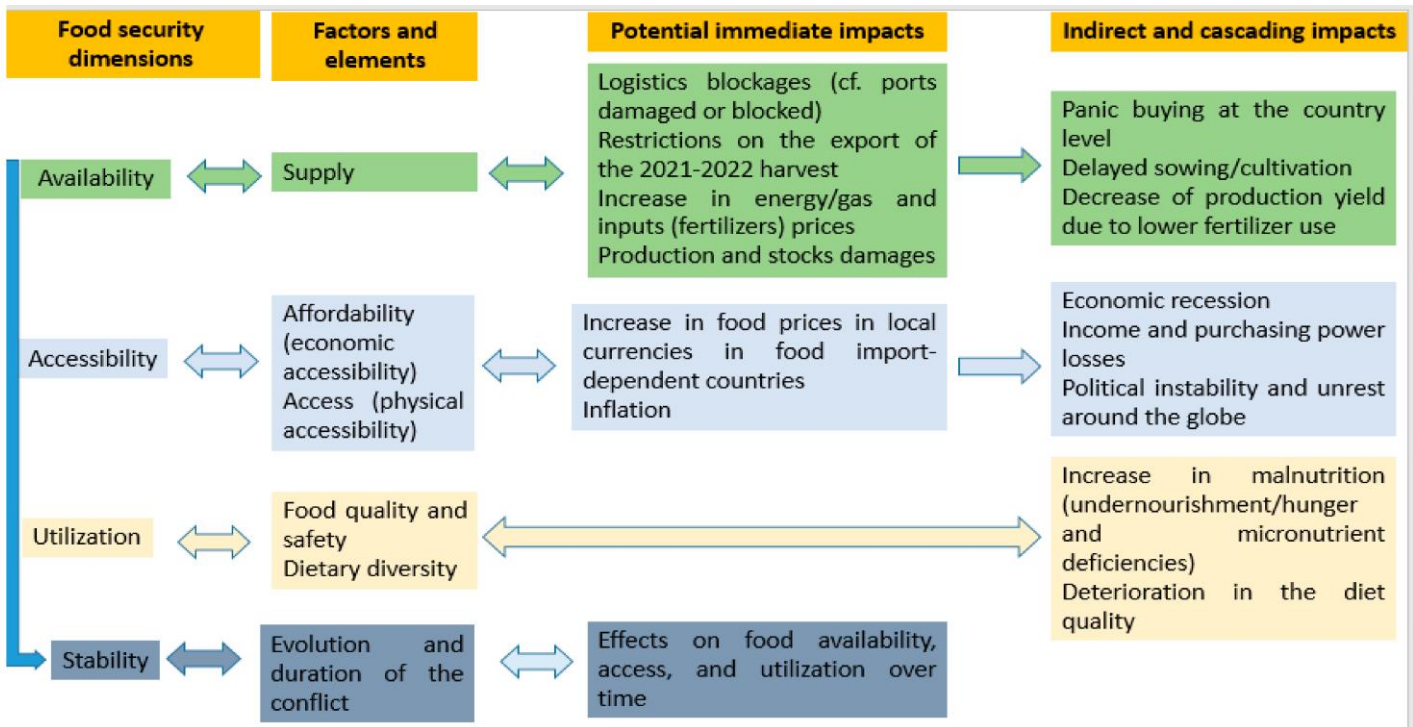
Wheat and Pasta

The 58 experts who took part in the research were then asked to rank the possible causes of food shortages, and the foods most likely to provoke civil unrest. Wheat, bread, pasta and cereal are thought to be the types of food most likely to lead to unrest, while extreme weather – including storm surges, flooding, snow and drought – was chosen as the most likely cause of food shortages and food distribution issues over both the 10-year and 50-year time frames.



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

However, rather than one single driver (extreme weather), the food experts felt that a combination of factors – including ecological collapse, trade restrictions, a financial crash, rogue AI, a new pandemic, and animal or plant pathogens – was most likely. Currently just under 50% of the UK's food is imported including 80% of fruit, 50% of vegetables, and 20% of beef and poultry, while the UK is almost completely self-sufficient for wheat, barley, lamb, and potatoes. Around 85% of food imports arrive via boat, and once in the UK, 98% of all food is transported by road.



Climate Change

The researchers' aim is to highlight the potential vulnerability of the food system and the importance of developing plans to prepare and respond to these risks. They say the food system has been optimised for efficiency rather than resilience and faces major challenges in the future – from not just climate change, but a combination of factors that increase the level of risk.

[Professor Sarah Bridle](#), Chair of Food, Climate and Society at the University of York, said: “Covid-19, Brexit and the cost of living crisis have shown the UK is already exposed to certain risks. The food system faces significant challenges. We are experiencing an increasing number of extreme weather events, many driven by climate change. It is entirely possible that in the coming decades extreme weather will cause major crop yield failures across multiple breadbaskets. We need a food system designed not just for optimal efficiency, but also for resilience.”

Pandemic

Professor Aled Jones, Director of the Global Sustainability Institute at Anglia Ruskin University, and also lead author, said: “By mapping out the potential risks, and their possible causes, we hope this report will assist with the preparations needed to avoid a UK food system catastrophe.”

“Government agencies as well as business, must explore and fund options to increase the resilience of the food system including ecosystem restoration and management, storage and distribution, working conditions, sustainable farming practices, consumer engagement, as well as tackling food poverty and mitigating climate change. The Covid pandemic saw major disruption to food distribution and consumption from which lessons need to be learnt.”

Sue Newton, GB Food & Beverage Leader at WTW said: “In an increasingly connected world it has never been more important for businesses to think beyond single risks and solutions. Governments and businesses need to be ready for multiple scenarios, reactive when the exact situation doesn't unfold as scripted, and aware of the art of the possible. This research supports organisations in understanding the various pathways that might unfold to



feed into their risk planning, and build resilience by identifying needs to support prevention, preparedness, response and recovery planning.”

Erdoğan's Daughter Vows Islamism Will Defeat the West and Christianity

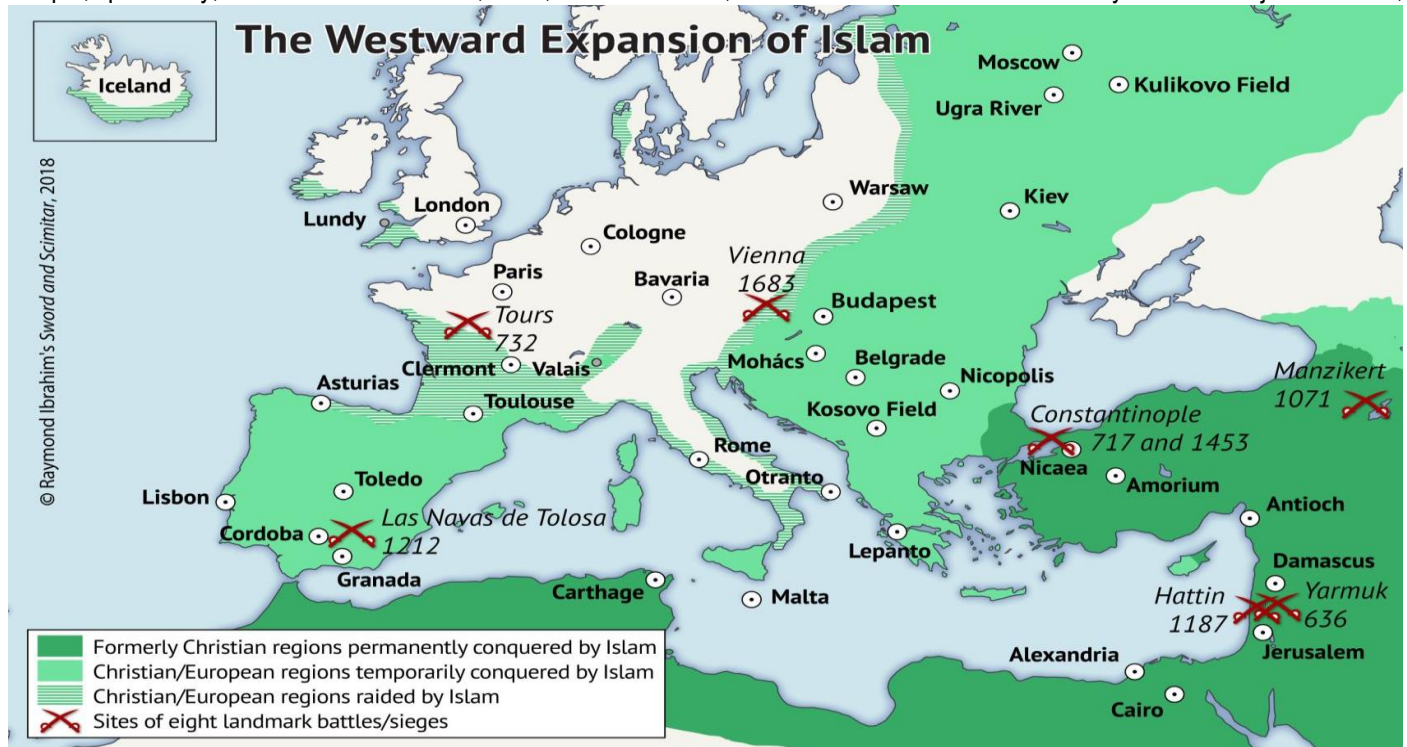
By Raymond Ibrahim

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/64482/erdogan-daughter-vows-islamism-will-defeat>

May 2023 – Resorting to jihadist rhetoric, Esra, the daughter of Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—who just [gained](#) another five years as president—recently attacked the West and Christianity.

In a tweet written, not in her native Turkish, but in Islam's tongue, Arabic, the "first daughter" [declared](#) that "There is little left for the Islamic crescent to break the Western cross." This phrase is as universally understood by Muslims, as it is universally misunderstood by Westerners, and is, therefore, emblematic of Muslim continuity and Western confusion. It has both a literal and figurative meaning.

Concerning the former, Muslims have been, quite literally, "breaking the cross" in keeping with their prophet's commandment. [Past](#) and [present](#), Muslims have destroyed and continue to destroy the crucifix—in cemeteries, on churches, on Christians—as a reflection of their animosity to the Gospel, specifically, that Christ was crucified, killed, and resurrected, three doctrines central to Christianity that Islam rejects. Indeed,



the June, 2015 cover of the Islamic State's magazine, *Dabiq*, featured a Muslim breaking a cross off a church steeple, with the words "Break the Cross" underneath.

More figuratively, "break the cross" has always meant "defeat Christianity"—another thing that Muslims, past and present, have been fervently striving for—including, apparently, the ostensibly "secularized" daughter of Turkey's president, a "sociologist" by profession. In the past, Muslims managed, through violent jihad, to swallow up [three-quarters of the original Christian world](#)—including the Middle East, North Africa, and "Turkey" (Anatolia). They also temporarily conquered several other Christian territories (Spain, the Mediterranean, the Balkans), and continuously harried the rest (eventually even reaching Iceland for slaves and provoking a newborn American into its [first war as a nation](#)).

Back then, when Islam was a formidable force, [Europeans fought tooth and nail](#) to repulse the Islamists and safeguard their homeland's faith and heritage. Today, however, when Islam is weak and easily



confined, the West finds itself bending over backwards to accommodate and take in more and more Muslim migrants—many of whom, rather than show gratitude, display Islam's traditional contempt for and [prey](#) on "infidels."

In short, whereas Muslims—including Turkey's president and offspring—know well and strive to achieve the meaning of "break the cross," Westerners, who for over a millennium had been on the receiving end of such animosity, until they managed to reverse the tide in the eighteenth century, are today, not only not doing anything about it, but facilitating it.

In this sense, the assertion that "There is little left for the Islamic crescent to break the Western cross" is more reflective of the state of Christianity in the West than of Islam.

Raymond Ibrahim is the Judith Friedman Rosen Fellow at the Middle East Forum.

South Florida couple's donation helps build the world's first underground anti-missile blood bank in Israel

Source: <https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/south-florida-couples-donation-helps-build-worlds-first-underground-anti-missile-blood-bank-in-israel/3132059/>



Oct 12 – An underground blood bank in Israel was constructed thanks to funds from mostly American donors, including one South Florida family. NBC6's Lorena Inclan reports One of the biggest needs in times of war is a healthy supply of blood. But up until last year, Israel's national blood bank was in an area that made it vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Miami philanthropists, Ann and Ari Deshe, traveled there and saw it first-hand.

"My wife and I looked at each other and we couldn't believe ourselves, this is where they store the blood? This location? It's like unbelievable," Ari said.

They decided to join a plan to relocate the blood bank to a more secure, underground, anti-missile facility. The Deshes were one of the South Florida families that made that plan a reality thanks to their generous donation. "I'm just really glad that it's there and we can keep the blood safe," Ann



said. It's everything, it's also a mother's milk bank it does many things for the country."

Two days after the massacre led by Hamas, the blood center became fully operational. Now it's needed more than ever. "We never dreamt that this would happen so quickly this was basically for the future," Ann said. The blood is stored and processed behind large blast doors. Three of the building's six floors are underground.

The \$135 million project was made possible primarily by American donors. The Blood Center was named the Marcus National Blood Services Center, after Bernie Marcus, the founder of Home Depot and his wife Billi, who donated \$35 million.

For Ari and Ann, theirs was a gift that will now save lives as the war rages on in their beloved Israel.

"I really hope that the Israelis are going to live in peace without threat and danger of attack," Ari said.

Robots and attack dogs: What Israel brings to tunnel combat

Source: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/palestine-israel/2023/10/31/robots-and-attack-dogs-what-israel-brings-to-tunnel-combat/>

Oct 31 – Israel's military has developed a range of specialist tunnel fighters including killer drones and attack dogs to take on Hamas's huge [underground](#) network.

Officials on Tuesday revealed its forces attacked Hamas gunmen inside the [vast tunnel network](#) beneath the Palestinian enclave, estimated by some to rival in length London's Tube network.

Specialist teams made up of the Oketz or "Sting" dog units and the Samur "Weasel" subterranean commandos have been training in a specially built tunnel complex in the [Negev Desert](#) to take on the 500 kilometres of the "Gaza metro" built [by Hamas](#).

Defence analysts have disclosed that Israel has used ground-penetrating radar and gravity detectors to map out the spiderweb system precisely.

With Israel's declared aim to destroy Hamas in retaliation for [the attacks on October 7](#) that killed 1,400 people, taking on the tunnel network will be key. A statement on Tuesday said the targets of the operation had expanded to "military compounds inside underground tunnels belonging to the Hamas terrorist organisation".

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has [vowed to eliminate Hamas](#) in all combat arenas. "All operatives must die, above ground, underground, inside [Gaza](#) and outside," he said in a broadcast earlier this month.



The dangers of tunnel fighting are extremely high and the Israelis will be determined to [keep their casualties to a minimum](#).

Hamas has been building the labyrinth for almost a decade, with some tunnels dug up to 70 metres below ground, for storing weapons, fuel and food, but their destruction is vital for any Israeli success.

[An Israeli army officer in a tunnel used by Palestinian militants for cross-border attacks. AP](#)

As a result, they have formed a force of combat engineers called the Yahalom "Diamond" that have trained to locate [tunnels](#) and either destroy them or allow for a "hard entry".

If entry is required, then the Samur and Oketz units will drop into the entrances that would likely have been blown open, and enter the tunnels that are made of reinforced concrete and are 1.8 metres high and one metre wide.

Robots will be used ahead of any tunnel assault, with the Tel Aviv company Roboteam spending the last decade developing specialist unmanned ground vehicles for the operation.

This will include the small IRIS robot that soldiers call a "throwbot", with its ability to drive down tunnels relaying pictures back to its operator, using specialist sensors to detect objects and people.



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

It is also understood that Israel has developed a robot similar to the US Marines' Gladiator tactical tracked drone that has sensors and carries a 7.62mm squad automatic weapon.

The robots will also be able to use their sensors and equipment to find and potentially detonate booby-traps planted by Hamas.



Israeli security personnel patrol with specially trained dogs in Jerusalem. Reuters

Behind them will come the “Weasel” commandos, who are specially selected troops able to tolerate the enclosed and claustrophobic conditions. Israeli defence sources said they were usually introverted characters with the ability to keep a “psychological distance from the situation”.

Tunnel combat is also described as akin to underwater fighting because kit used on the surface, such as thermal imaging, or surveillance or navigation systems, will not function underground. Defence analysts also believe the Israeli army could develop tactics used by Ukraine in its fight against Russia by deploying airborne drones inside the tunnels, some equipped with small bombs.



5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE K9 UNIT OKETZ

1 The dogs in the K9 unit have 3 designated missions: combat, explosives detection and search & rescue.

2 The majority of the unit's dogs are German, Belgian and Dutch Shepherds.

3 A canine cemetery is located on the Oketz base for dogs killed in action. Every year, they hold a memorial day for the fallen dogs.

4 On average, the dogs serve 7-8 years in the IDF, with a 16-month training program.

5 Upon retirement, most dogs are adopted by the last soldier who was responsible for them.

ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES

“Both sides will be attempting to surprise each other, and they will have surprises up their sleeve,” said Brigadier Ben Barry, an urban warfare specialist at the IISS think tank.



“The Israelis also have advantages with the biggest urban training facility of any armed forces in the world training people to fight in tunnels but also using drones and robots to take the first hit. The Israelis have all sorts of technological gadgets.”

They also have specially trained military dogs in the **Oketz canine unit**, most likely led by the highly intelligent and aggressive Belgium Malinois favoured by British special forces.

The dogs will be able to sniff out explosives, find entrances and attack armed personnel by biting their arms.

Hamas has used 900 full-time workers to build the system, according to the Rand Corporation, and is also reported to have sent engineers to Iran to learn about providing electricity, ventilation and water in deep command bunkers.

In the first instance Israel will most likely attempt to destroy tunnels using its powerful GBU-28 bunker-buster bomb that weighs 2,300kg and can penetrate up to 30 metres.

An Israeli soldier launches a remote-controlled drone, weapons that could soon be used in tunnel warfare. Reuters

However, Israeli bombing has caused more than 8,500 Palestinian civilian deaths, according to the Hamas-run Health

Ministry in Gaza. Israel will also use cement or blocking agents such as sponge-bombs that can rapidly seal a tunnel, in which two liquids come together and expand into an impenetrable foam.

Tunnel combat will be “physically and mentally challenging” because of the need to operate with very short lines of sight, said Brig Barry. “Identifying and tracking both adversaries and friendly forces is difficult and



troops are easily separated, movement is canalised and highly constrained,” he added. “But I’d be very surprised if the Israelis hadn’t a well-thought-out approach to the tunnels, some of which is not in the public domain.”

Israel’s likely siege tactic in Gaza could also force Hamas to the surface if they run out of fuel for generators that provide lighting and air underground. “I expect their doctrine is to just block up and move on or fully clear those that need to be cleared,” said Sam Cranny-Evans, of the Rusi think tank.

Israel: Beyond Deterrence

By Lawrence Freedman

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20231031-israel-beyond-deterrence>

Oct 31 – Israelis describe their strategy as being based on deterrence. To avoid fighting wars they must show how well they can fight if necessary. Potential adversaries must be persuaded not to take aggressive action by warning them of the consequences if they do. The conceptual framework surrounding deterrence developed around nuclear weapons. This is deterrence of a special kind, because of the absolute nature of the weapons and how hard it is to use them to win a war because of the threat of retaliation in kind. We can see the caution this induces at work in the Russo-Ukraine War. NATO has not engaged directly on Ukraine’s behalf; Russia has not attacked NATO countries.

Israel also practices nuclear deterrence. It has its own arsenal, which it prefers not to talk about. It is one geared to deterring Arab governments, and now Iran, from starting wars intended to destroy the Jewish state. As with all nuclear deterrence, it does not require demonstrations of what the weapons can do or a readiness to use them. All that is required is that potentially hostile governments are aware of what could happen if an inter-state war escalates too far.

For lesser contingencies, including the threats posed by Hamas, operating out of Gaza, and Hezbollah, operating out of Lebanon, deterrence looks quite different. It is not based on absolute weapons and nor does it offer constant relief from danger. There is no guarantee of success and so when it fails, if only slightly, it must be restored, more like a fence that easily breaks but can then be mended than a solid brick wall. So, unlike nuclear deterrence, there can be no sole reliance on threats but instead a readiness to respond forcefully to any challenge to bring home to adversaries the folly of attacking Israel.

It is this deterrence that failed on 7 October 2023 and which may now never be restored. An enemy so irredeemably hostile that it will always be looking for ways to attack, whatever the severity of the likely response, appears beyond deterrence. Instead of deterring Hamas, Israel now wants to eliminate it as a political and military force, but any relief achieved by this approach might also be only temporary.

Why Deterrence?

Prior to becoming so dependent on deterrence Israel sought to control the threats directly by maintaining a substantial presence in the territories, which it did in both Gaza and Lebanon. The costs of maintaining that presence was too high.

In the case of Lebanon, Israel became fully engaged in the 1970s after the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) took up residence there, after being kicked out of Jordan in 1970. Because Lebanon was being used to mount raids, Israel occasionally went into Lebanon in response to push the guerrilla bases further away from its northern border. Then, in 1982, it entered in force, moving up the country, until it laid siege to Beirut. The aim was to push the PLO out (where they had some success) and also to install a government willing to make peace with Israel (where they failed completely). Hezbollah in its current form is a lasting consequence of those events.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) eventually withdrew until they reached a strip of southern Lebanon, which they policed with a Christian militia. In 2000, after Prime Minister Ehud Barak decided that the Israeli presence there was doing more harm than good, they withdrew unilaterally. Hezbollah concluded that this was a great victory because this was the result of their constant harassment. Five years later Israel left Gaza, again unilaterally. Ariel Sharon, a hardliner who had made his career by being tough on Arabs and was most responsible for the debacle in Lebanon, now as Prime Minister decided that the effort to hold on to Gaza was futile because Israel’s position could only be sustained at an inordinate cost. He ordered withdrawal. The IDF closed down the settlements, in the face of protests from their residents. (Sharon went into a coma before he could reveal what he had in mind for the West Bank).

The withdrawal was not negotiated with the Palestinians. No plans were made for what could follow. There were hopes that Gaza might turn a corner, replacing its seething resentment at occupation with economic development, but such hopes did not last long. Within two years Hamas was in control, first as a result of an election victory and then having won a short civil war with the Palestinian Authority.



With only rejectionist parties active in the territory, and no interest in coexistence with Israel, Hamas turned Gaza into its base for continuing its struggle, using all available resources, including those obtained from Iran, to manufacture rockets and build tunnels for smuggling and getting fighters into Israel.

Deterrence by Denial or Punishment

With two implacably hostile neighbors in positions to attack Israel at any time, and having abandoned the idea that they could be occupied, deterrence became the centerpiece of Israeli strategy.

Conceptually deterrence is usually described as taking one of two forms. The first is *deterrence by denial*, which basically means that, whatever the target's aggressive intent, it is unable to act upon it because it will be thwarted if it tries. The other is *deterrence by punishment*. In this case the target can act on hostile intent and even do some real harm, but the punishment will be severe, and whatever the gains the costs suffered will be far higher. When an adversary is not deterred, and decides to attack, the costs must be sufficient to ensure that it does not try again. In this way deterrence can be restored.

Israel follows both forms of deterrence. For denial it constructs large fences to prevent incursions into its territory. Against the rockets of both Hamas and Hezbollah the fences were useless. So Israel also developed an elaborate and advanced air defense system – the Iron Dome – to prevent rocket attacks doing too much damage. The population can also access air raid shelters to protect them from those rockets that are not intercepted. The success rate of this system is impressive but not complete, and the attacks are cheaper to mount than to stop. So Israel normally seeks to add to the price for the perpetrators with air raids against the places from where they have been launched. There is always an element of punishment.

The punishment comes in three forms. First, it attempts to assassinate those responsible, whether political or military. Israel has conducted many 'targeted killings' over the years. These may have had short-term effects in disrupting the enemy's command structures and operations, but their long-term effects are at most marginal. Others step up to take the place of those killed, and there is no guarantee that these replacements will be less capable or effective.

Second, it targets the military assets that make this possible. Again, in the short-term this can make a difference but in the long-term more rockets can be built, more tunnels dug, and more fighters recruited.

Third, because these assets are to be found in the middle of urban areas, often deliberately by schools and hospitals, civilians will suffer. Israel denies that it engages in collective punishment and the deliberate targeting of civilians. It is not a war crime to attack areas where civilians may be present if armed units are also there in the name of self-defense and military necessity. Hamas can be blamed for fighting out of such populated areas and Israel urges civilians to move away from areas where fighting is likely to be intense.

But intense strikes against military targets, especially when this includes tunnels believed to be below occupied buildings, or against individuals hiding in residential areas, are going to involve many civilian casualties and wider suffering. For onlookers the distinction between collateral and deliberate damage is often one without much difference.

Another feature of deterrence is that it appears as all stick and no carrot. There is no reason in principle why negative threats cannot be combined with positive inducements, but it is not a requirement of the strategy. And if the threats are working there is less reason to find incentives to encourage a potential adversary to coexist peacefully.

Does it Work?

(i) Hezbollah

In July 2006 Hezbollah conducted a raid into Israel, combining rockets being fired into border towns and an attack on an Israeli patrol which left three soldiers dead and two abducted and taken into Lebanon. A failed rescue attempt led to three more deaths. Israel refused Hezbollah's demand to swap Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails for the abducted soldiers. Instead it responded with air and artillery strikes, not only against Hezbollah military targets but also civilian targets including Beirut airport. It also launched a land attack into southern Lebanon, which turned out to be costly and difficult as Hezbollah had well prepared positions.

Eventually the UN arranged a cease-fire. Much later the remains of the two soldiers were returned as part of a prisoner exchange. The operation was widely considered a failure in Israel, having exposed the country's weaknesses to rocket attacks and a determined militia. Yet in an interview not long after the cease-fire, Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah, acknowledged that the Israelis had killed up to 12 of his commanders. He went on to make an interesting comment about the initial operation.

'If there was even a 1 percent chance that the July 11 capturing operation would have led to a war like the one that happened, would you have done it? I would say no, absolutely not, for humanitarian, moral, social, security, military, and political reasons.'



He then followed that up by saying that Israel was just waiting for an excuse for a planned attack, yet this admission, and the fact that there have been clashes since but nothing quite comparable, has been taken as evidence that perhaps deterrence can work. But while Hezbollah is undoubtedly antagonistic towards Israel, it is not to the same degree as with Hamas. One reason for this is that Hezbollah is part of the Lebanese political system. While the most substantial force in the country, it still has to be responsive to other factions and persuasions who are less interested in its feud with Israel, and present itself as serving Lebanese interests. With the country in an economic mess, aggravated by the massive blast at the Beirut port in 2020, and only a caretaker government, it is not in a position to cope well with a war with Israel. Nor is Israel angling for a war with Lebanon.

Hezbollah's agenda is as much set by Iranian considerations as Lebanese. For example it sent its fighters into Syria during the civil war there, where they worked with Iranian and Russian forces to prop up the Assad regime, although they were not assessed to have performed particularly effectively. (It is perhaps worth noting that the Sunni Hamas did not support Assad). It depends on Iran for its military assets, including its large number of missiles, which are much more capable than those of Hamas. This is therefore not straightforward Israeli deterrence. Hezbollah has no particular incentive to go to war with Israel other than as part of a larger Iranian project.

(ii) Gaza

The Gaza experience has been different. Ever since Hamas took over the territory there have been few periods of calm on the border. The clashes have varied in intensity and frequency, with big ones every few years. In all cases there was rocket fire from Hamas (and its junior partner Islamic Jihad) and air and artillery strikes from the Israelis; in all the casualties were starkly asymmetric with those on the Palestinian side far greater than those on the Israeli, especially civilians; in all the suffering of Palestinians led to Israel being denounced by international organizations, governments, as well as campaigning groups, for acting disproportionality. Other than in 2021, when unrest spread even to Arab communities in Israel, there were always supporting protests elsewhere in the West Bank and elsewhere, but not much more. In all, after weeks of fighting there was a cease-fire of some sort and nothing much changed once the fighting subsided.

Given the regularity of the clashes, deterrence has worked poorly. From the Israeli perspective the priority was mainly to show that it was not rattled by any provocations and would respond forcefully each time. These responses were described as 'mowing the lawn' – which captured the idea of an indefinite conflict but one which could be contained through occasional forceful action.

Part of the shock of 7 October was that the Israeli government had convinced itself that this was working, to the extent that they were starting to ease the restrictions on Gaza. There was a problem with Islamic Jihad but Hamas did not seem too interested in any more violence. What happened then, in Israeli eyes, was not only a failure of intelligence but also of deterrence, and the extent of the failure meant that restoring deterrence no longer seemed an option.

The response followed the same pattern as before, except with more intensity - many individuals connected with the organization and in particular the attacks of 7 October have been targeted and killed. Military infrastructure has been hit mercilessly, and the consequences of Hamas's actions have been brought home to the suffering population, far more ferociously than in past episodes and with far more civilian casualties and general distress. This has led to international anger and demands for a cease-fire, despite the original provocation from Hamas.

So we can question whether deterrence was ever very much in operation with Hamas but it certainly is not now. Israel has no interest in persuading Hamas not to attack again. It wants to make sure that it can never do so again.

But it does need to deter Hezbollah, and in practice Iran. And a lot of effort has gone into that, including by the US, which has sent warships to the region. All of Iran's network has been busy, including the Houthis in Yemen. Much of this so far has been largely posturing with the aim of demonstrating what might happen if the war continues at its current pace. In this respect it might be argued that from the Iran/Hezbollah perspective, deterrence has failed, because Israel has pressed on regardless with its ground war. They might still claim that they are tying down Israeli forces that might otherwise be used against Hamas.

If Hezbollah wanted to get involved it would have had more effect if it had done so early on. Israel is now geared up for a two-front war, including evacuating people from the border with Lebanon and restocking the Iron Dome. This does not mean that it won't get involved, especially if the accusations of letting Hamas down start to get to the leadership. The key decisions will be taken in Teheran, which will have to consider whether this is the issue on which to take on the US. A tweet from Iran's President, Ebrahim Raisi, suggests that no decision has yet been made: 'Zionist regime's crimes have crossed the red lines, which may force everyone to take action.'

The pressure will also grow on other Arab countries to do more than issue statements, especially those who have already are, or were preparing to, 'normalize' relations with Israel. It is hard to assess how they will act, but if they look ahead, for reasons I come to below, they should see a significant role for themselves in shaping the new order that might yet emerge.



Next Steps

Israel's land invasion of Gaza, that began on Friday evening, was undertaken despite US misgivings and in the face of strong Saudi objections, one a country upon which it relies and another which it has been courting. The Foreign Ministry has insulted the numerous countries supporting the cease-fire resolution in the General Assembly, and refused to talk to the UN Secretary-General because he saw equivalence between the unprovoked attacks on its people and its ruthless response undertaken in the name of self-defense. Israel can note that it is hardly the only state in the region that puts its security needs above humanitarian considerations. The past decade has seen extraordinary loss of life in the battles against ISIS, and in the civil wars in Syria and Yemen (the last two with hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths). But the pressure on it to stop is only to grow. Israel is used to treading a lonely path, and it may find its position gets lonelier. As with its previous wars it will be resisting pressure for a cease-fire until its objectives have been achieved.

Can its objectives be achieved? That is not yet a given. Information on what is going on in the battles in northern Gaza and towards Gaza City are sketchy so it is unwise to speculate. It is also unclear how much humanitarian assistance will be able to get into Gaza in these conditions, and whether countries like Qatar are still playing a role as potential mediators, including in their efforts to get hostages released. In all of this, the biggest uncertainty away from the battlefield and the potential widening of the war is the future governance of Gaza.

Israel now has been forced to look beyond deterrence. It has now concluded that it is dealing with an entity that has never truly been deterred and can't be deterred in the future. Wilder elements in Israel may fantasize about pushing all the Gazans out of the territory but that is not a serious option. This is where the other flaw in Israel's past deterrence strategy becomes painfully evident. It has not been accompanied by a more positive political strategy. The only long-term vision Israel offers is a Gaza without Hamas. The chaos and instability that would result if Gaza was turned into an ungovernable space without anyone in charge would serve nobody's interests. A way will have to be found to fill the space.

The way that Israel has defined its objectives, success for Hamas simply requires surviving in a commanding position in Gaza. Even if it is forced to evacuate its positions, Hamas will not disappear. It represents a strong political tradition in the Arab world and whatever happens to it over the coming weeks it will have the capacity to regenerate, and return to power if there is no alternative government in place.

There is no evidence of great love for Hamas among Gazans and at some point they will reflect on the missed opportunities to develop the territory and the wisdom of constantly provoking Israel into attacks which it is unable to mitigate. Nor is there much respect for the Palestinian Authority, which is generally considered to be inept and corrupt and unable to stand up at all to the Israelis. Though constitutionally the PA's return to Gaza would seem the best option, this would be greeted suspiciously in the best of circumstances and even more so if it arrived behind Israeli tanks. Any government installed by Israel would lack legitimacy and would be a natural target for assassins.

So if Israel can't find a government for Gaza someone else will have to. Here the main initiative will have to come from the Arab world, probably in concert with the US. This seems to be the conclusion of many of the analyses of those thinking about the aftermath of this war. It is possible, for example, to imagine at some point a multilateral conference including the main Arab and Western players, with Israel on the sidelines, tasked to come up with a viable government for Gaza, and manage the influx of aid necessary if the territory is to recover from the traumas of the past weeks as well as look to the possibilities for future development. It would also need to consider both Gaza's internal security and how to stop it causing trouble to its neighbors (Egypt as well as Israel) in the future.

In principle this could be confined to Gaza but Arab governments are unlikely to go along with this unless the future of the West Bank is also addressed. The trade Israel faces in return for insisting that Hamas plays no part in the territory's government is that the 'two-state solution' is put back on the agenda. Most western governments have already been quite explicit on this matter.

Netanyahu has been around long enough to know not to dismiss the two-state solution out of hand, even though he has built his career on subverting the idea, which is why up to now he was content to leave the rejectionist Hamas in charge in Gaza as he made life difficult for the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. The encroachment of settlements on the West Bank has made the prospect of a viable Palestinian state there seem even more remote. All one can say is that this war changes a lot. Up to now when the issue has come up, as it did for example in the pre-war talks with Saudi Arabia, Netanyahu has paid lip service to the idea while intending to do nothing to make it come about, pointing to the rivalry between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority as why progress is impossible.

But that excuse won't work if a way can be found to get Hamas to evacuate Gaza. Netanyahu is unlikely to be on the scene for much longer. After all this Israel's Western and Arab partners are not going to want to let the situation drift away into catastrophe again. In the end if there is to be any resolution of the current conflict the starting point will be taking the fate of Gaza away from both Hamas and Israel.



Lawrence Freedman is Emeritus Professor of War Studies at King's College London.

What the Israel Defense Forces Can Expect When It Enters the 'Gaza Metro' Tunnel System

By Christopher Morris

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20231101-what-the-israel-defense-forces-can-expect-when-it-enters-the-gaza-metro-tunnel-system>

Nov 01 – Amid fears of yet another long war in the region, Israel has now begun its ground campaign in Gaza. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has already claimed several successes in its three-week campaign, including the elimination of several terrorist leaders [including Ibrahim Biari](#), who it described as a “ringleader” of the October 7 attacks, and [liberating at least one hostage](#) held by Hamas.

But Israel's military commanders will know that this is unlikely to be a simple operation. Among the factors complicating their mission of eliminating Hamas is the “[Gaza Metro](#)”, a vast network of interconnected tunnels within the region. Having invested heavily in subterranean infrastructure over the years, Hamas is counting on this network to aid its survival in the coming weeks.

Underground engineering has a long history in warfare. From [antiquity to Vietnam](#), a range of groups have used tunnels to gain an advantage.

Not only can they provide [concealment and freedom of movement](#), but they also present a range of challenges for the attacking force – they can be hardened against any attacks from the surface. Storming underground networks can also be prohibitively difficult for an attacker, given the limited space available.

Sometimes they work. Sometimes they don't. For instance, the threat posed by western airpower caused Islamic State (IS) to construct a [large network of tunnels](#). These tunnels made [surveillance and airstrikes difficult](#) and were riddled with traps, making capture by ground forces dangerous and difficult.

These benefits only really work if the tunnels are defended, of course, which wasn't always the case. For instance, in the 2015 battle for Sinjar, [the majority of IS fighters were long gone](#) by the time Kurdish land forces arrived to liberate the city.

Established Network

Hamas's tunnel network presents a unique problem for the IDF. There have been tunnel networks in Gaza for years. Initially used [for smuggling](#), they were quickly turned towards offensive uses, playing a role in [kidnapping and weapons storage](#).

The Hamas subterranean networks really began to evolve after 2012, when restrictions were lifted on the importing of [building materials](#) to the region. The militant group was able to [redirect construction supplies](#) away from civilian infrastructure projects to expand its underground presence. While the tunnels [vary in quality](#), many are well equipped and hardened, and deep enough to evade detection by ground penetrating radar.

Unsurprisingly, key Hamas allies, [including Iran](#) are boasting about the Gaza Metro. The network provides the group with a haven and a means to move around the region unobserved.

It places leadership and organizational infrastructure out of reach from air attacks. The system is [laden with supplies](#) as well as weapons and fuel. Defended, booby-trapped and likely to be populated with [human shields and hostages](#) as well as fighters, they will be challenging for even a well-equipped and capable attacking force.

Yet, if not addressed, Hamas may continue to operate irrespective of what happens on the surface. Indeed, as many of the tunnels lead across the border, there is a risk of further incursions, rocket strikes and attacks on IDF forces. And, given the heavily urbanized nature of Gaza, much of the network is [beneath civilian infrastructure](#), which further complicates Israeli operations.

Hamas is a proficient and prolific user of tunnels. But in honing its expertise, the group has also provided Israeli forces with a decades-long crash course in how to deal with their underground operations.

In addition to their own experience with Hamas tunnels, the IDF can also draw upon lessons from the war on terror, where coalition forces had to contend with both [natural and purpose-built tunnels](#), and even US experiences with [drug cartels burrowing](#) on their southern border with Mexico.

Bitter Experience

While Hamas is counting on its tunnels to cause problems, Israel already has a range of solutions. It has already gained valuable experience in underground operations, having learned hard lessons from the past.



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

A range of innovative [purpose-built technologies](#) and strategies can be used to provide the IDF with a technological edge. Some are simple, such as [flooding tunnels with sewage](#), whereas others are more complex, involving specialized engineering. Some solutions, such as [ground-penetrating explosives](#), might be difficult to use, given the presence of civilians.

Israel has known about the tunnels for a long time and is taking them seriously. [Recent operations](#) suggest that the time spent training for [this exact scenario](#) is going to pay off, at least to a certain extent.

But dealing with a network of more than [300 miles](#) is still going to represent a massive challenge, and storming or blocking off every part of the system is probably impossible.

Bitter experience has taught Israel most of Hamas's tactics already – but this does not mean that the group doesn't have more tricks up its sleeve. Hamas's recent offensive success was rooted in the way it used a number of relatively low-level capabilities in concert. For instance, paragliders, ground assaults and rockets only have a limited impact when used individually, but together, were used to devastating effect [on October 7](#).

Now Hamas will be hoping for the same degree of success when acting on the defensive. Depending on how Israel chooses to deal with the issue, they may find their ground forces bogged down in slow-moving subterranean activity, or risk heavy civilian casualties if they simply choose to bomb or collapse the tunnels.

Almost any solution Israel chooses can be turned into a Hamas advantage: both in military and political terms.

Ultimately Israel has no perfect solution to the complex problem posed by the Hamas underground network. But years of dealing with the Hamas Metro means the IDF is not entirely unequipped to confront the challenge.

It seems inevitable that the next days and weeks will be a bitter and bloody struggle, both in the streets of Gaza and as deep as 70 meters below ground.

[Christopher Morris](#) is Teaching Fellow, School of Strategy, Marketing and Innovation, University of Portsmouth.





Why Is Pakistan Expelling 1.7 Million Afghans?

By Michael Kugelman (*Foreign Policy*)

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/01/pakistan-deports-million-afghans-undocumented-migrants/>



Afghan refugees arrive on trucks from Pakistan at the Afghanistan-Pakistan Torkham border on Nov. 1. Wakil Kohsar/AFP via Getty Images

On Wednesday, Pakistan [began](#) the process of expelling all undocumented foreigners, including [1.7 million](#) Afghans—one of the country's largest immigrant communities. Officials [say](#) the policy, which was first announced last month, will be implemented in phases, with migrants and refugees temporarily placed in holding centers before deportation. Afghans in Pakistan have faced forced repatriations in the past but never on this scale. Islamabad claims the mass expulsion will protect public welfare and make Pakistan safer. But it's likely that domestic politics and worsening relations with Taliban-led Afghanistan drove the government's decision. The potential repercussions of Pakistan's draconian decision are devastating. Taliban-led Afghanistan is not prepared to accommodate masses of returnees, who will be greeted by a vast humanitarian crisis—15 million Afghans are [acutely food insecure](#)—exacerbated by drought, floods, and earthquakes. Afghanistan also faces severe global aid cuts and fewer international relief groups operating in its borders due to Taliban policies. Most returning girls and women won't be able to attend school or work.

Israel-Hamas War Poses New Security Challenges for Europe

Source: <https://www.voanews.com/a/7343655.html>



Nov 06 – Security alerts ramped up following Islamist attacks in France and Belgium, following a pair of Islamist attacks. A spike in anti-Jewish acts and a string of bomb alerts.

Once again, some European countries are seeing the spillover of another conflict in the Middle East, a month into the Israel-Hamas war. But there are clear differences between the nature and potential ramifications of today's security threat and that of nearly a decade ago — when the Islamic State, which controlled large swathes of Iraq and Syria, spawned terrorist attacks that killed hundreds in Europe, officials and analysts say.

If the Israel-Hamas war is drawn out and spreads, some add, Europe could see a mix of potential fallouts going beyond extremist violence, potentially weakening Europe politically, placing new demands on it to support Ukraine in its war against Russia, and emboldening far right parties. "The similarity is rising awareness of [the] threat in European countries," said Gesine Weber, a Paris-based European security expert at the German Marshall



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

Fund, of the two Middle East conflicts. “But the attacks in 2015/16 were attacks against a Western liberal lifestyle and frustration against a system in place. Whereas the attacks we’re seeing now are more against a targeted group of individuals: Jews.”

France, home to Western Europe’s largest numbers of Jews and Muslims, has seen more than 850 anti-Semitic acts since the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas attacked Israel last month. Other European countries have similarly registered a surge in anti-Semitic incidents, with police ramping up security at Jewish schools and synagogues.

“We feel anti-Semitism in the air,” Gerard Hunger, vice president of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions, told French radio.

In October, France and Belgium raised their security alerts to the highest levels after a pair of Islamist attacks together killed three people. Bomb threats have prompted evacuations of European airports and tourist spots. Last week, French police fired on a veiled woman, after she allegedly threatened to blow herself up in a Parisian metro station.

A recent poll by French broadcaster BFMTV found eight in 10 French surveyed worried about a terrorist threat at home. And European Council President Charles Michel warned of “major security consequences” that could “exacerbate tensions between communities and feed extremism.”

“There is a lot of tension running across Europe, with acts of vandalism, or arson attacks on synagogues, threats formulated on and offline against specific targets — clearly in relation [to the war] between Hamas and Israel,” said Thomas Renard, director of the Netherlands-based International Center for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague, Netherlands.

“It is not yet terrorism,” he added. “But it’s clear we are seeing more of these tensions with violent incidents related to them,” including from European bans on pro-Palestinian protests over fears of violence.



Fears of a widening conflict

Unlike the string of Islamic State-authored terrorist attacks across Europe in 2015 and 2016, today’s threat comes from “isolated individuals” from within Europe, says Renard, rather than returnees from Iraq or Syria with intentions to strike.

France’s General Directorate for Internal Security, or DGSI intelligence agency, has come to the same conclusion, according to France-Info radio. Today’s radicals are increasingly young and “aren’t necessarily affiliated to a terrorist organization,” the news organization reported, citing an internal note from the agency. Of concern, it added, were people recently released from prison who had served sentences for terrorist acts.



According to Le Monde newspaper, however, French intelligence services have not registered any increased threat by radical Islamists because of the Israel-Hamas war. People joining pro-Palestinian protests in France in recent weeks, it said, bore the flags and slogans of the Palestinians — not the green banners of Hamas or the black ones of the Islamic state, although some were reportedly spotted in a London demonstration.

“The global jihadi groups have their own agendas which is not necessarily the same as that of Hamas,” Renard said. “Even if there’s some solidarity, at the end of the day, these groups are in disagreement over their fundamental objectives. Hamas is a nationalist group. Islamic State and al-Qaida are global groups with completely different agendas, strategies and approaches.”

But things could change if the conflict drags on and spreads.

“Images of dead Muslim children will further serve the propaganda of Islamic State and al-Qaida,” Renard said.

Other analysts see Europe weakened politically. The European Union has offered a fractured response to the Israel-Hamas war, spending hours at a summit last month before agreeing to calls for humanitarian “pauses” to allow aid into Gaza. Divisions among member states over support for Israel and sympathy for the Palestinians could carry consequences in the longer term, some believe.

“The threat of terrorism and other forms of violence will increase,” said Stefan Lehne, a senior fellow for Carnegie Europe, in a recent analysis by the think-tank, in which he also predicted the block will harden its stances toward migration. “Radical right parties will exploit the situation and their nationalist agenda will impede the finding of European solutions.”

German Marshall Fund security expert Weber offers a similar assessment — adding a protracted conflict in the Middle East could affect European security calculations in other ways.

“In a scenario where the U.S. decides to significantly decrease its support to Ukraine because it decides to prioritize competition with China and support Israel,” she says, “that means the Europeans will shoulder a significant burden of supporting Ukraine financially and militarily.”

EDITOR’S COMMENT: France might particularly face a problem organizing the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. Big Muslim, mostly not integrated, communities in the capital might generate problems especially if organizers continue to support the “not so security clever” idea of the opening ceremony on the banks of the River Seine.

The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States

Authored by: Thomas Henriksen

Source: <https://www.jsou.edu/Press/PublicationDashboard/193>

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) provides its publications to contribute toward expanding the body of knowledge about joint special operations. JSOU publications advance the insights and recommendations of national security professionals and the Special Operations Forces (SOF) students and leaders for consideration by the SOF community and defense leadership. JSOU is a subordinate organization of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

The JSOU mission is to educate SOF executive, senior, and intermediate leaders and selected other national and international security decision makers, both military and civilian, through teaching, out-reach, and research in the science and art of joint special operations.

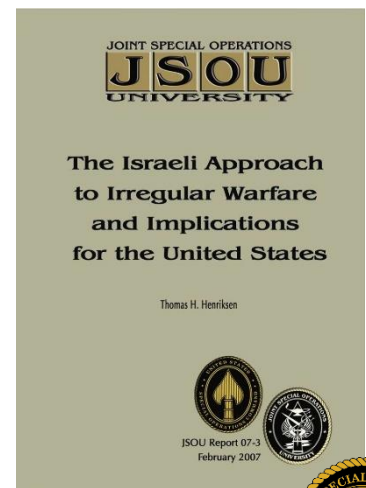
JSOU provides education to the men and women of SOF and to those who enable the SOF mission in a joint environment.

JSOU conducts research through its Strategic Studies Department where effort centers upon the USSOCOM mission and these operational priorities:

- Preempting global terrorist and CBRNE threats
- Enhancing homeland security
- Performing unconventional warfare and serving as a conventional force multiplier in conflict against state adversaries
- Conducting proactive stability operations
- Executing small-scale contingencies.

The Strategic Studies Department also provides teaching and curriculum support to Professional Military Education institutions—the staff colleges and war colleges. It advances SOF strategic influence by its interaction in academic, interagency, and United States military communities.

► The JSOU portal is <https://jsou.socom.mil>.



Civilian Deaths and Proportionality in the Israel– Hamas War

By Rodger Shanahan

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20231107-civilian-deaths-and-proportionality-in-the-israel-hamas-war>

Nov 07 – Since the Israeli response to the 7 October terrorist attack by Hamas began, the world's focus has shifted onto Israel's prosecution of its military campaign. But in an era where information (and misinformation) can be transmitted instantaneously, and when emotions are raw, context is largely absent or ignored. Terms such as 'war crimes' and 'international law' are thrown about by people who have little or no understanding what the terms actually mean. Accusations that a religious building, school, medical facility or ambulance has been bombed in most cases are made without knowledge of exactly what the building or vehicle was being used for. Protected civilian objects, for example, lose that protection when they are [deemed](#) to be legitimate military targets.

Hamas has spent years building tunnels underneath Gaza to house its weapons, supplies and command-and-control nodes. It is effectively using Gazans as human shields in contravention of international law. It wants to raise the risk threshold (that is, the civilian casualty count) that Israel faces in targeting its facilities. Israel, for its part, claims that it tried to separate combatants from non-combatants by dropping leaflets to people in north Gaza ordering them to head south. It was at best a perfunctory effort at minimizing the number of civilians in the target area.

Exactly how many civilians and combatants in Gaza have been killed isn't known. To date the Hamas-run Health Ministry has provided detailed figures of Palestinian civilians killed, yet there's no mention of any Hamas deaths. The accuracy of the casualty figures have been called into question, and the Health Ministry was certainly caught out fabricating claims of an Israeli strike at al-Ahli Hospital, but without knowing how many Hamas militants were killed or injured in a strike, or the number of civilians, then determining whether the attacks, individually or collectively, breach international law is virtually impossible.

Given the increasingly strident calls for Israel to stop its aerial bombing campaign in Gaza and to reduce civilian casualties, it is perhaps worth examining the two main considerations that drive whether a military response, or aspects of a military response, can be considered to breach international law. I am not a lawyer, and nor are those that authorize the engagement of a target. Lawyers give advice, but it will be a uniformed non-lawyer military officer, or in some cases a senior politician, who will ultimately approve a strike.

The two guiding principles that inform a person's decision boil down to ultimately subjective concepts: military necessity and proportionality. Both are concepts that can be argued ad infinitum, but the reality is that those charged with observing them often have to make such life-or-death decisions quickly and repeatedly.

Proportionality is perhaps the more contested of the two, and there are any number of well-informed backgrounders on social media explaining the [formula that US forces came up](#) with in trying to systematize the concept in the theatres they fought in over the past 20 years. It is an inexact science—indeed, it's not a science at all, because the measure of proportionality relates not to the number of people being killed but to the military advantage being obtained.

The military effect is relatively easy to determine in a sparsely inhabited, billiard-table-type operating environment. The risk of civilian casualties is low and the nature of the military target is easy to discern. In dense urban terrain such as exists in parts of Gaza, and with an enemy that operates among, and underneath, the civilian population, the decision-making process is much harder and determining proportionality more difficult.

Risk tolerance is also a key practical factor in determining proportionality. In Israel's case, it's clear that the level of risk tolerance for civilian casualties and hence the calculation of proportionality are different to what would have been accepted before 7 October. But revenge is not sufficient a reason to make risk tolerance more elastic.

What is likely driving the increased risk tolerance for civilian casualties on the part of Israeli targeters, even more than simple revenge, is the mission. Politically it is to destroy Hamas; militarily it is to degrade the group sufficiently that it is unable to reconstitute for years, if ever. On this, the Israeli government has the [backing of US President Joe Biden](#), who is acutely aware that more than 30 US citizens were killed in Hamas's initial attack on 7 October and that nearly two dozen were taken as hostages.

The tempo of the operation, with Israel claiming that thousands of targets in Gaza have been hit, makes it difficult to accurately determine the likely impact on civilians of every strike. But before we can decide whether an airstrike was proportional or not, we would need much more information than we are actually privy to. To begin with, there's the information on which the Israeli targeters who planned the strike based their decisions, relating to not only the risk of civilian casualties (which in many cases are more or less guaranteed) but also the steps they took to minimize them (such as selection of munitions type, attack timing and approach). The newly appointed UN special representative for human rights and counterterrorism, Australia's own Ben Saul [noted this challenge](#) in categorizing an airstrike as breaching international law in a recent interview.



The recent attacks on targets in the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza provide a case in point. The first strike was alleged to have killed 50 Palestinians and wounded 150 more. The Israelis [claim](#) that the first strike killed Ibrahim Biari, a key planner of the 7 October attacks and allegedly commander of the northern Gaza sector, while the second strike killed the commander of Hamas's anti-armored forces. It also claimed that other Hamas fighters were killed in the strike because it [destroyed](#) a Hamas command post built underneath the refugee camp. This reflects the nature of decisions that need to be made in conflicts such as this.

Assuming that both parties' claims about casualties in Jabalia are true, Hamas clearly breached international law by deliberately building a militarily key target among the civilian population. The military necessity of the target—the headquarters of Hamas's northern Gaza defense—is readily apparent. But was the loss of 50 Palestinian lives proportional to the military advantage Israel gained in conducting the strike? Were there other ways of disabling Biari's ability to coordinate Hamas's defense without killing him, other Hamas fighters and 50 Palestinians? Or was the opportunity to kill Biari a fleeting one, where firm intelligence placed him at that precise point but for only a limited time, precluding other methods of disabling his command? That is the type of information needed to make an informed judgement on the legality of strikes.

This may seem a sanitized way of looking at issues of proportionality when the pictures beamed nightly into people's living rooms and uploaded every minute on various social media platforms show that there's a real cost to the Gaza campaign and real children and civilians are being killed daily. Western governments have understood this and are beginning to change their tone on Israel by degrees. Unfortunately, the levels of the main players' risk tolerances virtually guarantee more civilian casualties.

Seeking to make up for his government's spectacular security failure on 7 October, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu willingly accepts civilian casualties among the Palestinian population as long as he destroys Hamas. Hamas invites civilian casualties by its positioning of military assets, and now that it knows that Israel's risk tolerance is well beyond anything it has seen before, it likely sees outcries over more civilian casualties leading to a ceasefire as its only chance of survival. And Washington hopes that by supporting Netanyahu's military campaign and calling for adherence to international norms it can buy Israel time to inflict grievous damage on Hamas before the White House will have to acquiesce to public opinion and back some kind of ceasefire. Israel, Hamas and Washington are all accepting of civilian casualties in Gaza—they only differ in how many and why.

[Rodger Shanahan](#) is a former Australian Army officer and Middle East analyst.

Germany Set to Tackle Refugee Issues

By Sabine Kinkartz

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20231107-germany-set-to-tackle-refugee-issues>

Nov 07 – Roughly 200 [refugees](#) arrive in Berlin every day. They are supposed to stay in an initial reception facility such as the one at the former Tegel airport only for a short time, before being relocated to accommodation elsewhere in the city. But available apartments are hard to come by, and some refugees have been stuck at Tegel for more than a year. Currently, some 4,000 people live there and a further expansion is underway to provide up to 8,000 places.

[The refugee situation in the German capital](#) is echoed in cities and municipalities all over the country. So far in 2023, 220,000 migrants have made their initial applications for asylum. And of the 1 million Ukrainian refugees from the war, more and more are now registering with the authorities to be housed by the state.

Many Municipalities Operating 'in Emergency Mode'

Across Germany, mayors and district councils are saying they no longer know where to accommodate the refugees who are allocated to them according to a fixed distribution formula.

In October, 600 of Germany's 11,000 municipalities took part in a survey conducted by Mediendienst Integration together with migration researchers from the University of Hildesheim. Almost 60% of them described the situation as "challenging, but [still] feasible." But 40% percent report being "overloaded" or even said they were "in emergency mode."

The lack of accommodation is just one factor. There's also a shortage of administrative staff, and not enough spots in nurseries and schools, language courses and counseling services for traumatized refugees.

Mayors and district councilors tend to take a negative view of the situation: 53% said they consider their own municipality to be "overburdened."

Miriam Marnich, the spokesperson for the German Association of Towns and Municipalities, attributes this view to growing dissatisfaction with migration policy in the population at large.



“Integration is effectively no longer possible in many municipalities at the moment because resources are exhausted. In terms of personnel, but also in terms of reception capacities,” she said. The solutions proposed by respondents to the survey include limiting immigration to ensure there are fewer people sent to their own municipality — or none at all. They have also called for more money from the federal government, and assurances for reliable long-term funding. Additionally, they are asking for support with accommodation, ranging from a simplification of legal procedures to an increase in social housing programs.

‘Not Much to Be Gained’ from Tougher Deportation rules

Only one-fifth of the respondents said they would like to see more deportations. In view of “how prominent that topic is currently in federal and state politics, that isn’t much,” said Boris Kühn, a migration researcher at the University of Hildesheim.

At the moment, there are around 250,000 people in Germany who have had their asylum applications rejected. Some people simply cannot be tracked down by authorities. But 200,000 of them can’t be repatriated as there is either no country willing to take them in, or their country of origin is a war zone or they themselves have serious health issues that cannot be treated in their countries of origin. In late October, [the government drafted a bill to increase the number of deportations](#). However, the high number of refugees in most cities and municipalities currently consists of new arrivals.

“So there is actually not much to be gained in terms of numbers through tougher deportation rules,” said Kühn.

Social Benefits to Be Reconsidered?

Politicians are also discussing limiting social benefits for refugees, which are more generous in Germany [than in many other EU countries](#). Conservative politicians have described this as a “pull factor” attracting refugees to Germany, and have suggested paying out less or no more cash to new arrivals. Migration researchers, however, have criticized these demands. “The principle of benefits in kind was already tried in the 1990s, and then again in 2015 and it turned out not to be practical,” said Niklas Hader from the German Center for Integration and Migration Research in Berlin. It has long been legally possible to provide refugees primarily with benefits in kind, but the states and local authorities prefer not to because it requires more resources and turns out to be much more expensive than simply paying out cash. Adults living in initial reception facilities receive food in their accommodation, and an additional maximum of €150 (about \$160) per month in pocket money for personal needs such as phone cards, toiletries or travel tickets. This “pocket money” is enshrined in law and the constitutional court has ruled that it cannot be arbitrarily reduced.

“If we switch exclusively to benefits in kind, this does not mean that fewer people will set off for Germany,” said Marnich of the German Association of Towns and Municipalities. Instead, she suggested that benefits be leveled out across European countries.

Debit Card Instead of Cash

One change that is now being discussed is the switch to payment cards instead of cash payments.

Such debit cards are being used in other countries, such as France. Instead of being given cash, refugees would receive a card, to which social authorities would regularly transfer the allowances which can be used to pay in supermarkets. However, it’s not possible to withdraw cash from the card. But Hader remains skeptical. “We all know that you can of course turn the money on a cash card into cash if you really want to,” he said.

[Sabine Kinkartz is a DW reporter covering politics and economic affairs.](#)

EDITOR’S COMMENT: The problem is not with Ukrainian refugees that are kind of educated and of a similar religion that will enable them to incorporate into German society and most probably return to their country when the war will be over. The problem is with the Muslim populations that are not willing to integrate; are reluctant to work and depend on benefits to live on. Third generation Turks are a fine example of the current situation.

U.S. Still Welcomes Hamas Lobby on Capitol Hill

By Benjamin Baird

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65187/us-still-welcomes-hamas-lobby-on-capitol-hill>

Nov 09 – Just two weeks after Hamas terrorists stormed Israeli neighborhoods, massacring families in their homes and parading bloodied hostages through the streets of Gaza, an anti-Semitic [hate group](#) with multiple documented [links to Hamas](#) visited U.S. Congress members during its annual ["Palestine](#)



[Advocacy Days](#)." Americans for Justice in Palestine Action (AJP Action), the lobbying arm of American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), promotes [policies](#) that hamstring Israel and preserve the terrorist regime that rules over the Gaza Strip.



Osama Abuirshaid, executive director of American Muslims for Palestine, poses for a photo after activists defaced the office entryway of House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY). (Photo: Osama Abuirshaid/Twitter)

Scheduled on Oct. 23-24, the anti-Israel lobby came just days after radical demonstrators tore through Capitol Hill, illegally occupying the [Cannon Rotunda](#), vandalizing congressional offices, and assaulting Capitol Police. Since Oct. 7, AMP has [organized](#) multiple Capitol Hill [protest marches](#) featuring fiery speeches condemning Israel and denying Hamas atrocities.

Participants promoted debunked accounts of an Israeli airstrike on a Gazan hospital and even [referred](#) to the Oct. 7 killings as "*alleged* massacres

in settler communities around Gaza [emphasis added]."

Appearing just days after the terrorist attack in a live CBS News interview, AMP advocacy director Ayah Ziyadeh repeatedly [refused to condemn Hamas](#). Ziyadeh, a lead organizer of AMP's lobby day, called the massacre "more of a response than an attack" and referred to hostages who were "taken from concerts," and "raped in the streets" as "collateral damage."

Despite these radical views, AMP historically receives a [welcoming reception](#) from legislators, who have opened their office doors to the suspected Hamas front during similar advocacy events going back 2015. This year, [Sen. Tina Smith](#) (D-MN) and Democratic [Reps. Bill Pascrell](#) (NJ) and [Jan Schakowsky](#) (IL) were among the lawmakers confirmed to host AMP lobbyists.

In the past, AMP organizers typically [publicized](#) plenary speeches from [supporting lawmakers](#) and boasted about attendance. However, the few statements and images emerging from last week's "Palestine Advocacy Days" suggest Congress members are finally beginning to sour on the extremist group.

Instead of securing a face-to-face discussion with Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (NY), AMP took part in a disruptive "sit-in" inside the Democratic minority leader's office. At the entrance to Jeffries' office, AMP Director Osama Abuirshaid appeared in a [photo](#) with a "Free Palestine" banner placed above the Congressman's nameplate. AMP activists wallpapered the office entrance with dozens of post-it notes featuring the names of Palestinian "martyrs."

Such antics are not generally tolerated at organizational "Hill Days," where special interest groups schedule closed-door meetings between constituents and their elected officials. Exchanges are typically cordial and professional. Yet, AMP seemed more interested in harassing pro-Israel lawmakers than changing minds and wooing supporters.

Taher Herzallah, AMP's outreach director, admitted in a [Facebook video](#) that he "had a run-in briefly in the hallway" with Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN), where he "confronted her" for refusing to sign onto a House resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

McCollum is perhaps AMP's most steadfast supporter. In 2020, she [received](#) the "Champion of Palestinian Rights Award" from AMP for introducing anti-Israel legislation and advancing claims of "apartheid" in Israel. According to Herzallah, the congresswoman expressed "disappointment" at the "angry phone calls" she was receiving from anti-Israel activists.

AMP struggled to find a senator willing to introduce a companion bill to Rep. Cori Bush's (D-MO) so-called [Ceasefire Now Resolution](#), which Herzallah found "very disheartening." Endorsed by over a dozen far-left Democrats, Bush's [bill](#) demands that the White House "immediately call for and facilitate deescalation and a cease-fire to urgently end the current violence."

"The Senate has not been very good on this issue at all," Herzallah [said](#), adding, "and we've only gotten some lip service about Palestinian rights" in meetings with senators. Passing a [ceasefire](#) resolution, or "de-escalation," is part of a larger effort to blame Israel for Hamas atrocities and deprive the Jewish state of its ability to defend its population, a result that [policymakers agree](#) would only benefit Hamas and extend its terrorist reign over the Gaza Strip.

AMP's links to the Gazan terrorist group are not theoretical. Last year, a federal judge in Illinois allowed a [civil lawsuit](#) to proceed that examines AMP's connections to a U.S.-based Islamic organization that was shut down for funding and supporting Hamas. The plaintiffs, parents of the late David Boim, a 17-year-old



murder victim of Hamas, won a hefty 2004 judgment against the shuttered Hamas financier – a group called the [Islamic Association of Palestine](#) (IAP).

Founded by Hamas deputy chief Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook, IAP was the public voice of Hamas in the U.S., holding workshops and distributing Hamas literature that justified suicide bombings and called for violent jihad against Israel. IAP operatives funneled millions of dollars to Hamas through a Texas charity whose leaders are currently serving out lengthy prison terms.

Instead of paying the Boim family, IAP dissolved under the burden of federal investigations. AMP was founded the following year, and the Boim family claims it is an "alter ego" or successor of the shuttered IAP, and therefore responsible for \$156 million in [damages](#). The [evidence](#) is convincing. At least four senior IAP leaders went on to serve on AMP's national board of directors. In private communications, leaders of the newly-formed group discussed the importance of publicly distancing themselves from their IAP colleagues during a period of "transition." Indeed, the Boim family [claims](#) that AMP and IAP are indistinguishable in terms of strategy, agenda, and operating structure.

Today, AMP maintains its connections with Hamas. Abuirshaid, the group's fiery leader, visited Hamas leaders as recently as 2021, when he attended a [conference](#) in Jordan. Abuirshaid and fellow panelists – including at least two senior Hamas leaders and a convicted terrorist – discussed "the need to ... adopt plans to build military and economic power ... while supporting the armed and popular resistance and political and legal efforts."

"The Arab apostates allied with the despicable Jews and the hating Crusaders. But Allah is more powerful than them," Abuirshaid [wrote](#) on Facebook in 2014. "They want to defeat Hamas and disarm Gaza. However, they forgot that Gaza's men only know victory. For them it is either jihad, victory or martyrdom," he added.

A Hamas operative also sits on AMP's National Board of Directors. Salah Sarsour [reportedly](#) spent eight months in an Israeli prison for his connections to Hamas, where he allegedly met and befriended Adel Awdallah, the West Bank commander of Hamas's militant Izz ad-Din al Qassam Brigades. In 1988, Sarsour's brother Jamil told Israeli police that the pair laundered money to Hamas through their U.S.-based furniture company.

In the week since AMP's less-than-successful "Palestine Advocacy Days," the group has faced extreme setbacks. First, AMP's annual convention at Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Chicago was [canceled](#) after the hotel faced a public backlash. Then, on Oct. 31, Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares announced an [investigation](#) into AMP, alleging it "may have used funds raised for impermissible purposes under state law, including benefitting or providing support to terrorist organizations."

Despite facing multiple investigations and cancellations, a pro-Hamas lobby organization remains welcome on at least one stage: Capitol Hill. A dwindling number of Congress members continue to view AMP as a legitimate lobby that represents the concerns of Palestinian and Muslims Americans. Yet, AMP's presence in America's highest corridors of power, so soon after Hamas's slaughter of Israeli innocents, threatens to stain U.S.-Israel relations and empower extremists.

Benjamin Baird is the director of MEF Action, an advocacy project of the Middle East Forum.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Just another proof about the so called dubious "American diplomacy".

What does Iran want?

By Patrick Drennan

Source: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/what-does-iran-want/ar-AA1jludo>

Iran is a very diverse and beautiful country.

A Westerner who visits Iran will often be treated with kindness and generosity. Don't be surprised if people come up to you and want to practice their English. They are genuinely interested in where you come from and what you do. They will often offer to share food with you. Try the Azam Beryani wraps — they are delicious.

Iran is an oil- and mineral-rich country with sophisticated infrastructure, many local airlines and cheap petrol. It a cash society, with cash changers on every street.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Iran [ranks](#) 58 in healthcare and 93 in health-system performance. In 2016, [Bloomberg News](#) ranked Iran the 30th most efficient healthcare system, ahead of the United States and Brazil. [More than 90 percent of the population has health insurance](#); Iran also has health tourism.

As of 2023, [89 percent](#) of the Iranian adult population are literate, well ahead of the regional average of 62 percent. This rate increases to 97 percent among young adults (aged between 15 and 24), without any gender discrepancy. In 2008, the majority of students ([63 percent](#)) enrolled in Iranian universities were



women. According to a UNESCO world survey, Iran has the [highest female-to-male ratio at primary level of enrolment](#) in the world among sovereign nations, with a girl-to-boy ratio of 1.22 : 1.00.

Let's look at the reality of day-to-day life in Iran.

Every aspect of your life is controlled, including marriage, fashion, media, relationships, birth control, the internet, political candidates and all highly paid government jobs. Despite the educational statistics above, women make up less than [18 percent](#) of the official workforce. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a fundamentalist Shiite Muslim, sets the rules. He is backed up by a powerful militia called the Revolutionary Guards, the religious judiciary, the Guidance Patrol (morality police), and a vast bureaucracy, all paid for by billions of dollars of oil revenue.

The 2022 killing of student Mahsa Amini, in police custody for wearing an "improper" hijab, resulted in 12 months of protests and riots.

How does the Iranian government view the world?

First, it exists on the periphery of an often-hostile Arab world, which happens to be mostly Sunni-majority countries with the exception being Iraq and Bahrain; Bahrain is majority Shia but ruled by a Sunni monarchy. Second, Iran is surrounded by a large number of nuclear-capable countries, such as Russia, Israel, Pakistan and India. Third, it is bordered by countries hosting American military bases, including Türkiye, Kuwait and Iraq.

Their relationship with America is violent and wrought. America arranged to overthrow the Iranian government in [1953](#). Since then, the U.S. has [regularly imposed sanctions](#) on Iran, to ostensibly to stop them from becoming a nuclear power. Ironically, Iran, in response, has become a [highly specialized manufacturer](#) of home-made drones and missiles.

Although some commentators suggest that Iran will directly attack America, it is highly unlikely. The Iranian military is about [one-third the size of the U.S. military](#) with a quarter of these forces being the [Revolutionary Guard](#) (Sepah). They are armed with aging Russian equipment and aircraft (with new Chinese jets on order). Ironically, their best navy ships are made in the U.S. and France. The real worry for Iranian rulers is that many young people are less religious, more middle class, and less supportive of the fundamentalist government — hence the need for the Sepah and the [morality police](#).

The Iranian government will continue to use its proxies, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, to attack Israel and America. But many Americans fail to appreciate that even though these proxies readily take Iranian money, their goals are not the same.

Hezbollah and Hamas want to destroy Israel, and don't have a direct conflict with America. The Houthis [are at war](#) with Saudi Arabia, who support Yemen. The Houthis and the Iranians embrace different denominations of [Shiite Islam](#) and consider each other heretics. Furthermore, Hamas are mainly minority [Sunni Muslims](#) and do not want to be controlled by Shiites.

So, what does the Iranian government want? They want to be the prominent country in the Arab world, with the other countries adopting their [Twelver Shi'ah](#) version of Islam. Unfortunately, it is not only Turkey and Saudi Arabia that oppose their ideals and overlordship, but also other countries in the Arab world, including Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, Morocco and Tunisia.

So, what do the people of Iran want? Unsurprisingly, they want what we all want — [peace and freedom](#).

[Patrick Drennan](#) is a journalist based in New Zealand, with a degree in American history and economics.

Will America Be at War with North Korea in 2025?

By Gordon G. Chang

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/will-america-be-war-north-korea-2025-207244>



Nov 11 – Donald Trump turned America's North Korea policy upside down. After a period of strict sanctions enforcement and inflammatory words—"fire and fury," "locked and loaded"—he reached out to Kim Jong Un. He even became the first sitting American president to step into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

If Trump is elected president next November, will he continue his stunning outreach to the North?

In all probability, the answer is no. In all probability, America's North Korea policy will be the same regardless who is president.

Why?

When Trump was president, the United States was driving events in North Asia—as well as around the world. Today, a coalition of bad actors, led by China, is doing so.

President Biden's catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan triggered a rapid collapse of the international system. Since August 2021, China and Russia issued a 5,300-word joint statement declaring their "no-limits" partnership in February of last year; Russia invaded Ukraine 20 days later and China has backed



the Russian effort; China and Russia then fueled insurgencies in North Africa that resemble wars; and Iran's proxies, backed by China, attacked Israel on October 7.

U.S. forces have been repeatedly attacked in Iraq and Syria since the assault on Israel. One American contractor has died; dozens of service personnel have been injured.

In addition, China continues to threaten Taiwan. And [despite public warnings](#) that the Biden administration is prepared to use force to defend the Philippines, China's maritime militia and coast guard commit acts of war at Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea as well as engage in provocative actions at Scarborough Shoal.

Nothing is inevitable, but the international system is rapidly falling apart and the trend suggests the planet will soon be engulfed by war. Think 1930s. Then, separate wars and conflicts merged into what we now call the Second World War. The same thing can happen today as conflict spreads, especially in the absence of effective American responses.

China has stood behind attackers Russia and Iran, so it's possible that, should Xi Jinping attack some neighbor, China's partners will support its war efforts. For instance, Beijing could use all its considerable leverage on Pyongyang to force it to once again cross the Demilitarized Zone in force, launch terrorist attacks in South Korea, or hurl missiles in the direction of Japan.

Xi, should he choose war, will undoubtedly see that as the final struggle with the United States, which he views as the enemy. After all, [People's Daily declared a "people's war"](#) against America in May 2019. He is not about to let Kim Jong Un remain a bystander in such a critical situation.

By January 20, 2025, when Donald John Trump or someone else is sworn in, the United States could be in a hot war with North Korea. Then, there will be no more ["love letters"](#) between Washington and Pyongyang.

[Gordon G. Chang](#) is the author of [Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes On the World and the just-released China Is Going to War](#).

'A Gaza of Her Own': Is France Heading Toward a Civil War?

By Michel Gurfinkiel

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65215/a-gaza-of-her-own-is-france-heading-toward>

Nov 15 – About 100 members of the French National Assembly are in shock, having watched yesterday a 43 minutes film provided by the Israel Defense Forces: a succession of videos about the atrocities in South-West Israel, many of them triumphantly released by Hamas itself. While most people in the audience belonged to the France-Israel Friendship Caucus, some did not. Several burst in tears in the middle of the projection and had to leave hastily.



A Macronist member of parliament, Mathieu Lefèvre, explained to the press afterwards why, as the chairman of the France-Israel Caucus, he organized the screening: "These images are unbearable. Until you see them, you may have a theoretical perception of what happened. But as long as you don't see them, you don't really understand a bit about it."

A far-left member of parliament, David Guiraud, elected by the French expatriates and binationals in Tunisia, who had previously questioned the veracity of Hamas's crimes and even accused Israel of carrying similar crimes, attended the screening as well. Leaving in a state of

disarray, he admitted: "I may have looked as if I was taking all that lightly. This is an error I will not make again. I won't forget from now on to show respect to all victims."

President Macron may not have watched the film so far, but it stands to reason that he has been told about its content. It was all the more disquieting to hear him calling Israel — in an English-language interview with the BBC released on Friday — to stop the "bombing of civilians" and the "killing of women and babies" in Gaza, for which "there was no reason nor legitimacy." He spoke as if Israel were the aggressor and the war criminal. He later apologized in a message to the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, for a statement that was "misunderstood." Monsieur



Macron does not seem to know clearly where he stands on the Gaza issue. When visiting Israel on October 24, he fully supported the Jewish State's right to self-defense and even suggested that an anti-terrorist international coalition should be formed against Hamas. A couple of days later, after having met with Palestinian and Arab leaders, he switched to a quite different priority: humanitarian aid for the Palestinians in Gaza. What Monsieur Macron does not fully understand either is how much the October 7 massacres resonate in France. Nor why.

As l'op's chief executive, Frederic Daby, commented for *Le Figaro*, the "Black Sabbath" in Israel reawakened memories of France's "Black Friday": the Islamist killing spree that took place on November 23, 2015 at Bataclan Theatre and other places in Paris, leaving 130 dead and 416 injured.

The popular 32-year old songwriter and singer Vianney, who expressed sympathy for the Israeli victims on social networks, concurs with this parallel: "When you hear about people being beheaded, disemboweled, killed, that looks awfully like what we experienced at Bataclan..." Not to mention other Islamist attacks, including the point-blank shooting of Jewish children at Toulouse in 2012, the massacre of journalists and cartoonists at the premises of *Charlie Hebdo* in 2015; the slaughter in 2016 of an 86-year-old Catholic priest, Jacques Hamel, while he was celebrating a mass; the murder and beheading of high school teacher, Samuel Patym in 2020; and, last but not least, the assassination of two more high school teachers on the third anniversary of Paty's murder, on October 13 this year. The point is not just that Islamic terror in Israel is as barbaric as Islamic terror in France, or the other way around. It is that France is being challenged from within by a Gaza of her own: an increasingly assertive immigrant Muslim minority that rejects the mainstream French way of life and values and French nationhood itself.

What if, at the end of the day, this minority turns into a polity of some sorts, a State within the State, an independent military power — something between Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and *Da'esh* in Syria and Iraq? What if it engages then in all-out warfare against the host country — with a little help, arguably, from non-Muslim woke friends?

For many years, it was assumed that Muslim immigrants would assimilate over one or two generations, as previous Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist immigrants had done. The case of the Jews, the Armenians, and the Orthodox Christian Russians, who preserved much of their ethnic/religious identity while becoming fully French was seen as a worthy precedent.

Eventually, a different reality emerged. Most Muslims were not interested in joining the French mainstream as one "community" among others. What they had in mind was to be recognized as a "nation," with a separate culture and separate laws, along the non-Muslim French. Demographics were on their side.

Mass immigration since the mid-seventies (both legal and illegal) and a higher birth rate than among the native French have resulted in a ninefold increase of the Muslim community, to almost 9 million today from a bit more than 1 million in 1975 according to the Insee and Ined institutes. In other terms, the present French Muslim population is the equivalent of the Muslim population in Algeria in 1962: the "critical mass" that convinced Charles de Gaulle, at that time, to grant independence to that colony.

In the wake of Bataclan slaughter, the then-socialist president of France, François Hollande, bluntly admitted, in a lengthy interview with Gérard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme that the country was risking a "partition." The interview was published as a book in 2016 under the ironic title "A President Should Not Say That."

Mr. Hollande's successor, Mr. Macron, vowed in 2020 to fight "Islamist separatism." He had a law passed to this effect in 2021. When immigrant youths were involved, last Spring and early Summer, in arsons and riots all over France, the former socialist prime minister, Manuel Valls, opined that it was just the implementation of "separatism" on the ground.

This is the key issue in French politics today. The next president of France will have to address it without wavering or *legerdemain*.

Michel Gurfinkiel is the Founder and President of the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute, a Writing Fellow at Middle East Forum, and editor emeritus of *Valeurs Actuelles*.

America Is a Heartbeat Away From a War It Could Lose

By A. Wess Mitchell

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/16/us-russia-china-gaza-ukraine-world-war-defense-security-strategy/>

Nov 16 – The United States is a heartbeat away from a [world war](#) that it could lose. There are serious conflicts requiring U.S. attention in two of the world's three most strategically important regions. Should China decide to launch an attack on Taiwan, the situation could quickly escalate into a global war on three fronts, directly or indirectly involving the United States. The hour is late, and while there are options for improving the U.S. position, they all require serious effort and inevitable trade-offs. It's time to move with real urgency to mobilize the United States, its defenses, and its allies for what could become the world crisis of our time.





The USS Nimitz and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and South Korean Navy warships sail in formation during a joint naval exercise off the South Korean coast.

Describing the United States' predicament in such stark terms may strike many readers as alarmist. The United States has long been the most powerful nation on earth. It won two world wars, defeated the Soviet Union, and still possesses the world's top military. For the past year and a half, the United States has been imposing gigantic costs on Russia by supporting Ukraine—so much so that it [seemed conceivable](#) to this author that the United States might be able to sequence its contests by inflicting a decisive defeat-by-proxy on Russia before turning its primary attention to strengthening the U.S. military posture in the Indo-Pacific.

But that strategy is becoming less viable by the day. As Russia [mobilizes](#) for a [long war](#) in Ukraine and a new front opens in the Levant, the temptation will grow for a rapidly arming China to make a move on Taiwan. Already, Beijing is [testing Washington in East Asia](#), knowing full well that the United States would struggle to deal with a third geopolitical crisis. If war does come, the United States would find some very important factors suddenly working against it.

One of those factors is geography. As the last two U.S. National Defense Strategies made clear and the latest congressional strategic posture commission [confirmed](#), today's U.S. military is not designed to fight wars against two major rivals simultaneously. In the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, the United States would be [hard-pressed](#) to rebuff the attack while keeping up the flow of support to Ukraine and Israel.

This isn't because the United States is in decline. It's because unlike the United States, which needs to be strong in all three of these places, each of its adversaries—China, Russia, and Iran—only has to be strong in its own home region to achieve its objectives.

The worst-case scenario is an escalating war in at least three [far-flung theaters](#), fought by a thinly stretched U.S. military alongside ill-equipped allies that are mostly unable to [defend themselves](#) against large industrial powers with the resolve, resources, and ruthlessness to sustain a long conflict. Waging this fight would require a scale of national unity, resource mobilization, and willingness to sacrifice that Americans and their allies have not seen in generations.

The United States has fought multifront wars before. But in past conflicts, it was always able to outproduce its opponents. That's no longer the case: China's navy is already bigger than the United States' in terms of sheer number of ships, and it's [growing](#) by the equivalent of the entire French Navy (about 130 vessels,



according to the French naval chief of staff) every four years. By comparison, the U.S. Navy [plans](#) an expansion by 75 ships over the next decade.

A related disadvantage is money. In past conflicts, Washington could easily outspend adversaries. During World War II, the U.S. national debt-to-GDP ratio almost doubled, from 61 percent of GDP to 113 percent. By contrast, the United States would enter a conflict today with debt already in excess of 100 percent of GDP.

Assuming a rate of expansion similar to that of World War II, it's not unreasonable to expect that the debt could swell to 200 percent of GDP or higher. As the [Congressional Budget Office](#) and [other sources](#) have noted, debt loads on that scale would risk catastrophic consequences for the U.S. economy and financial system.

A global conflict would bring on other perils. Two U.S. rivals—Russia and Iran—are major oil producers. One [recent report](#) found that a prolonged closure of the Hormuz Strait amid a broader Middle Eastern conflict could push oil prices beyond \$100 per barrel, substantially increasing inflationary pressures. China is a major holder of U.S. debt, and a sustained sell-off by Beijing could drive up yields in U.S. bonds and place further strains on the economy. It's reasonable to assume that Americans would face shortages in everything from electronics to home-building materials.

All of that pales alongside the human costs that the United States could suffer in a global conflict. Large numbers of U.S. service members would likely die. Some of the United States' adversaries have conventional and nuclear capabilities that can reach the U.S. homeland; others have the ability to inspire or direct Hamas-style terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, which may be easier to carry out given the porous state of the U.S. [southern border](#).

If all of this sounds dreadful, well, that's the point. As the biblical proverb says, fear is the beginning of wisdom. [Global war is no longer a theoretical contingency](#) debated by policy wonks, nor is it a fever dream of supposed hawks and militarists. It is a real and foreseeable, if not imminent, possibility.

The United States should be straining every nerve to prepare for this scenario in hopes of deterring conflict but ensuring that Americans are ready for it if it comes. Effective preparation is the path to improved deterrence; steps to increase readiness for war send a clear signal to adversaries that aggression is riskier to themselves than stability and peace.

The immediate priority for the United States has to be to ensure that Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan have the weapons they need to defend themselves. These are the players with the most skin in the game at present. The best hope for avoiding a general conflict is that these frontier states will be so plucky and prickly that aggression is stopped or deterred before it can spread.

That won't be possible unless the United States gets its defense-industrial base in order. Since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, total U.S. defense production has increased by a [mere 10 percent](#)—even as the war demonstrates the staggeringly high consumption of military ammunition in a major conflict between industrial powers compared to the limited counterinsurgency operations of the recent past.

The situation is serious enough that Washington may need to invoke the Defense Production Act and begin converting some civilian industry to military purposes. Even then, the U.S. government may have to take [draconian steps](#)—including the rerouting of materials intended for the consumer economy, expanding production facilities, and revising environmental regulations that complicate the production of war materials—in order to get the U.S. industrial base prepared for mobilization.

It's obvious that Washington will have to increase defense spending. The Biden administration's [flatlining](#) of defense outlays, [loading defense bills](#) with domestic pork-barrel spending, and insistence on matching every dollar spent on the military with a dollar for climate policy or social spending is the wrong approach. To prepare for war without exploding the debt, Washington will have to pare back expenditures on social programs that enjoy broad popular support.

No one in the U.S. Congress wants to tell elderly constituents their benefits are being cut. But the alternative is to someday tell constituents why their children or grandchildren are being deployed to dangerous places without adequate weapons when war breaks out.

U.S. allies will also have to step up in significant new ways. The Ukraine war has prompted European NATO members, most notably [Germany](#), to get more serious about security. Yet even now, fewer than one-third of them are [fulfilling](#) their commitment to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defense. Major Western European members have yet to [follow through](#) on the promise they made more than a year ago at the bloc's summit in Madrid to deploy brigade-sized units on NATO's eastern flank.

Across the West, governments and citizens will have to reevaluate priorities that put their countries at a disadvantage in the coming struggle. It makes no sense for Americans to tie themselves to hasty and [exceedingly expensive](#) climate policies that sap economic growth at a moment when China is building coal-fired power plants at the rate of [two per week](#). Europeans will have to rethink their aversion to nuclear energy; American progressives will have to rethink [self-imposed restrictions](#) that limit the United States' ability to ramp up energy production.

Nothing on this list is easy. But the United States and its allies are entering a time of hard decisions. What's happening in Ukraine and Israel would have seemed unimaginable even a few years ago, and more shoes



are likely to drop in the days ahead. Americans and their allies need to start getting their affairs in order now so that they do not find themselves unprepared for a global conflict if it comes.

A. Wess Mitchell is a principal at The Marathon Initiative and a former assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia during the Trump administration.

“Absence of Evidence is Not Evidence of Absence”

By Dr Ameer Ali

Source: <https://groundviews.org/2023/11/21/absence-of-evidence-is-not-evidence-of-absence/>

“For 4000 years, the Gaza District was a thriving and bustling spice hamlet along the Silk Road. Pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves ... all passed through Gaza ... This once thriving spice capital is now barely recognizable in the emaciated strip that is actively being starved, scorched and sealed by the Israeli military.” (Lila Sherif)

Nov 21 – The title of the article comes from a comment made by Donald Rumsfeld when he was US Defence Secretary for President George Bush and when they learnt that the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission chaired by Dr. Hans Blix found no evidence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq. Rumsfeld was petrified and in sheer desperation to find a rationale for a preplanned invasion of Iraq he came out with that hocus-pocus, similar to the infamous “unknown unknowns”. He was an expert in camouflaging untruths. The US then went on to drop over 100,000 bombs and missiles on Mosul in Iraq, Raqqa in Syria and other areas occupied by ISIS. In Mosul alone, US killed over 40,000 men, women and children. Even before that invasion and under the previous Clinton administration his foreign secretary Madeline Albright was asked by a journalist about her views on the death of nearly 600,000 Iraqi children caused by US imposed economic strangulation of Iraq. Her response shocked humanity. “We believe the fruits of the siege are worth it,” she said. It is the same type of reasoning and explanation that is now being dished out by Hitlerite Netanyahu and his Gestapo commanders to justify their savagery in Gaza.

Having bombed and pulverized nearly two-thirds of Gaza’s homes and buildings including schools, hospitals, places of worship and refugee camps, having killed more than 13,000 Gazans including over 3,000 children and women; having killed 45 journalists so far and having made at least 1.2 million Gazans homeless, the Israeli military is now hunting for weapons and terrorist hideouts to justify to the world what it had done. In the name of a “specifically targeted operation” based entirely on Israeli and US intelligence, Israeli soldiers had raided Gaza’s largest hospital, Al-Shifa, to show the world how Hamas had used that hospital as its command centre and a bunker for weapons. According to one doctor there they came out almost empty handed. According to a CBS news reporter, who was taken along with the troops in the armoured vehicle, Namer, the evidence produced so far had been, in his word, “underwhelming”. Having seen what the troops displayed to the journalist his report concluded that it was no “unequivocal proof” of Netanyahu’s claim that his “theological mad cult” Hamas was using that hospital as a hideout. But the soldiers had told him that it would take time to display everything.

In the meantime, IDF posted the picture of a weekly roster time table of the hospital written in Arabic and showed to the world that and said that it contained the names of terrorists on daily duty there. In the absence of hard evidence, there are only two options for the military to justify its operation. Either plant their own weapons secretly and claim that they belong to Hamas or repeat Rumsfeld’s rigmarole and say absence of evidence is no evidence of absence. It has now been revealed that Hamas did not even plan to attack the Supernova music festival. Truth is always the first casualty in a war.

Where do all this leading to? There is no call for a cease fire from the so-called democratic and civilized Western governments except to propose extended pauses to allow a meagre amount of humanitarian aid to filter through to the comfort of the starving, wounded and dying. Netanyahu himself has shown extraordinary generosity to send two trucks of fuel daily just to keep the water and sewage system operational. But the Arab world with all its fuel stock is absolutely powerless to drop even one litre of fuel into Gaza while carrying business with Israel as usual. Like the Western governments the Arab rulers too have blood on their hands.

Once the genocide is completed and another Nakba set in motion Netanyahu would demand “security control” – a euphemism for total control – over Gaza before annexing it to Eretz Yishrael Hashlema or Greater Israel. What is unfolding from forty days of savagery and genocide is the violent removal of yet another hurdle to realize the eternal dream of Zionist forefathers such as Theodore Herzl (1860-1904) and Ben Gurion (1886-1973) to conquer Palestine, get rid of the Palestinians and create Greater Israel with the name Palestine erased out. To Netanyahu and his far right coalition, Gaza invasion is yet another step to scrap the irrelevant 1995 Oslo Accords with its two state solution. To put it bluntly, Palestine or its diplomatic nomenclature “Occupied Territories” has become a nuisance not only to Zionist Israel but also



to the US, its Western partners and most shockingly to Arab rulers themselves. The Zionist position needs no further elaboration. But why Palestine a problem to the other two? To the US and its partners, Palestine issue is an obstacle to realize the larger agenda of an American designed Middle East Order (MEO) in which the conservative Arab rulers and Israel would normalize their relations, keep the natural resources at the disposal of the imperial power and protect the region from any radical challengers.

Whether it is the Democrats or Republicans the US government is pro-Israel. America's continuous opposition backed by the force of arms to former governments of radical Arab rebels such as Gamal Abdal Nasser of Egypt, Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya, Hafiz al-Assad of Syria and Saddam Hussain of Iraq and its support and tolerance to brutal leaders like the one currently in power in Egypt, who came to power after killing 800 Egyptians to put an end to the Arab Spring, demonstrates the true design of America's MEO. Also, when the Muslim world, inspired by OPEC's financial clout and a successful mullah led revolution in Iran in 1979, was agitating for an Islamic World Order with the Gulf region as its epicentre, US immediately reactivated the historic Shia-Sunni split in Islam to divide the Muslim world religiously. Wahhabi Saudi Arabia with its giant oil wells became US' eternal friend replacing Shah's Iran.

It was to widen the US-Sunni Muslim friendship and bring Israel also into the extended family that a set of agreements were signed on September 15, 2020 between Israel and United Arab Emirates including Bahrain to normalize relations among them. Saudi Arabia too under its modernizer Prince Mohamed bin Salman was ready to join this concert of Middle East before Hamas intruded with its deadly message for independence from Israeli occupation and terror. It reminded the Arab regimes that without an independent Palestine no normalization of relations with Israel is ever possible. Thus, Palestine struggle has become an unwanted distraction to formalize the MEO agenda. The solution therefore is to leave Palestine under the care of Israel, and the conservative Arab regimes in spite of their ineffective condemnation of the present tragedy seem to be prepared to go along with the US plan. But this is bound to fail and will escalate the violence beyond the borders of occupied territories. Lebanon's Hezbollah and Houthis from Yemen had already joined the fray. Above all, millions of peace loving people from all parts of the world are demonstrating and calling for an immediate ceasefire and to bring Netanyahu and his war mongers before an International Court of Justice.

But there is one unknown or hidden factor in this macabre tragedy. What is hidden by the corporate media is the reaction of ordinary people in the Gulf countries. Television pictures have shown demonstrations against Israeli genocide from all parts of the world but not from Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries. Uncorroborated messages from there reveal that voices of support to Palestinians in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries are quietly being silenced. Obviously, the Arab regimes feel that they are sitting on a volcano. The kings, emirs, sultans and presidents of that region know very well that their subjects are not seeing eye to eye with the rulers on the question of Palestine. A regional intifada if not another Arab Spring cannot therefore be ruled out unless the carnage is halted. US' Middle East concert like the 19th century European counterpart is therefore bound to fail.

Sweden mulls laws allowing govt to deport immigrants for 'shortcomings in lifestyle'



Source: <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20231121-sweden-mulls-laws-allowing-govt-to-deport-immigrants-for-shortcomings-in-lifestyle>

Nov 21 – Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson's minority rightwing government came to power a year ago – with backing from the far-right [Sweden Democrats \(SD\)](#) – vowing to crack down on [immigration](#) and crime.

"A prerequisite for successful [integration](#) is that people who want to live in Sweden also adhere to basic norms and live in an honest and well-behaved way," Migration Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard told a press conference held with SD. Rights groups have yet to comment on the initiative.

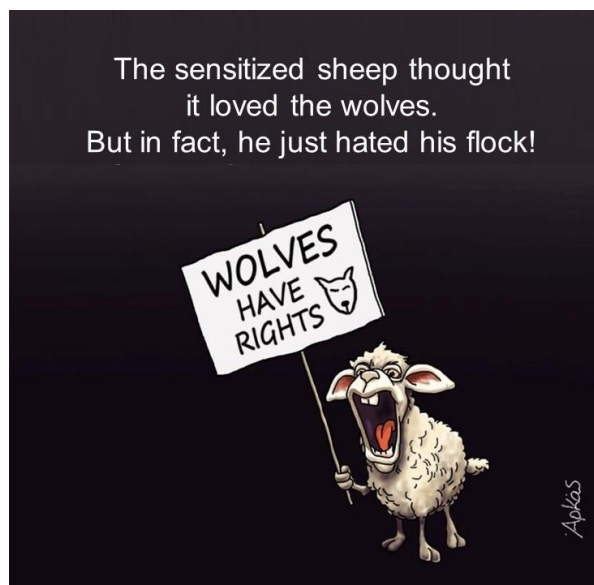
Paulina Brandberg, Minister for Gender Equality, told reporters the government would review Swedish legislation to determine if there were specific grounds for revoking residence permits. However, she listed potential examples of "shortcomings in lifestyles," including benefits fraud, debt, a dishonest livelihood, substance abuse, as well as association with criminal networks or violent and extremist groups "threatening basic Swedish values".





Brandberg said the review would also look into "whether it's possible and appropriate to include statements that seriously threaten basic Swedish democratic values." "If there is something other than these democratic values you wish for, or even actively work against what Sweden stands for, then it is simply not here you should live," Brandberg said. "A basic principle of Swedish immigration law is that only Swedish citizens have an unconditional right to reside in Sweden," Ludvig Aspling, migration spokesman for the Sweden Democrats, told reporters. Former judge Robert Schott was appointed to head the review, which is to report by mid-January 2025. Speaking to public broadcaster Sveriges Radio, Justice Minister Gunnar Strömmer also announced a probe looking at increasing powers on revoking citizenship. This could entail situations where a person had committed serious crimes, such as [terrorism](#), or cases where a person had either used threats, lies or bribes to obtain citizenship. In some cases, canceling someone's Swedish citizenship could render them stateless. "I myself see no objection to it. But it's part of a review, and we'll see what it comes up with," Strömmer told the radio. Sweden has taken in large numbers of immigrants since the 1990s, primarily from conflict-torn countries including the former [Yugoslavia](#), [Syria](#), [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), [Iran](#) and [Iraq](#).

The sensitized sheep thought
it loved the wolves.
But in fact, he just hated his flock!





T - NEWS

Hamas fighters 'took "poor man's cocaine" drug called Captagon to boost their alertness and make them feel invincible before Israel massacre'

By Isabelle Stanley

Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12650757/Hamas-fighters-took-poor-mans-cocaine-drug-called-Captagon-boost-alertness-make-feel-invincible-Israel-massacre.html>

Oct 19 – [Hamas](#) fighters have reportedly been using an illicit substance, nicknamed 'the poor man's cocaine', to 'feel invincible' and numb themselves while murdering Israelis.

[Israeli](#) news site, Channel 12, reported that **Captagon** pills had been seized from Hamas prisoners and found with the bodies of dead fighters.

They claim that some of the terrorists had taken the drug to 'commit the inhuman murders' during the October 7 attack on Israel.

More than 1,400 people were killed in the attack when Hamas launched thousands of rockets from the Gaza Strip and sent hundreds of fighters across the border.

[A small bag filled with a white powder is visible on the seat of the Hamas-linked car in the clip](#)

Ghastly atrocities have since been reported, including decapitated babies, children found with knives stuck in their bodies and people being burnt alive.

As the details of the atrocities committed by [Hamas](#) surface, the new reports suggest some fighters may have been fueled by the drug, and used it to stay awake and feel a rush of 'euphoria'.

A video has emerged on X, formerly [Twitter](#), showing bags of a white powder in the back of a Hamas-linked vehicle, although it's unclear what drug this was. The video is captioned: 'Documentation taken by a friend of mine in the surrounding settlements: the terrorists arrived with bags of cocaine to fuel their satanic urge.'

Captagon is a highly addictive amphetamine-like drug that has plagued the Middle East in recent years - it has been taken by fighters who say it gives them a feeling of invincibility on the frontlines.

It was first produced in Germany in the 1960s to treat attention deficit disorders, narcolepsy and other conditions.

It was discontinued, but an illicit version of the drug was made in eastern Europe and then in the Arab region and it has now grown into a multi-billion dollar illegal market.

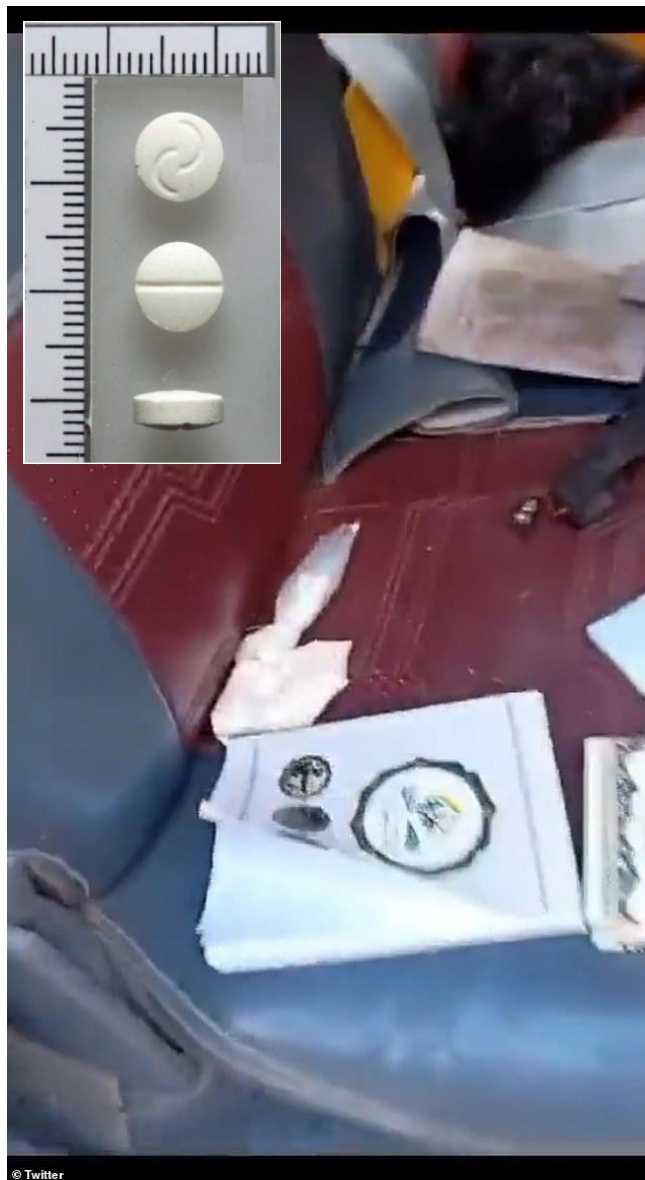
The illicit version - also nicknamed the 'the drug of jihad' - is thought to be made of a mix of fenethylamine, caffeine and other [fillers](#) - it generates focus and staves off sleep and hunger.

In an interview with the BBC in 2015, Captagon users described how the drug made them feel. One said: 'I felt like I own the world. Like I have power nobody has.' Another said: 'There was no fear anymore after I took Captagon'.

The drug has been given to fighters in neighboring countries to give them energy to keep killing and to overcome their nerves. It is not just used by soldiers, it is used recreationally and by people with physically demanding jobs across the Arab states.

The vast majority of Captagon is produced in Syria with a smaller production operation in Lebanon.

Millions of pills have been smuggled out of Syria into neighboring countries. In poorer countries, the drug can be purchased for a dollar or two, while in wealthier nations, it may cost up to [20 dollars per pill](#).



The Biden Administration Is Dangerously Downplaying the Global Terrorism Threat

By Charles Lister (*Foreign Policy*)

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/09/27/isis-islamic-state-al-qaeda-terrorism-strength-threat-afghanistan-africa-syria-iraq-biden/>

Sep 27 – In a series of interviews earlier this month timed to coincide with the 22-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, senior U.S. counterterrorism officials provided, in the [words](#) of *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius, “what amounted to an obituary” for al Qaeda in its original Afghan heartlands. National Counterterrorism Center Director Christy Abizaid [said](#) al Qaeda “is at its historical nadir ... and its revival is unlikely,” having “lost target access, leadership talent, group cohesion, rank-and-file commitment, and an accommodating local environment.” Another senior official [described](#) the remaining forces as “a nursing home for AQ seniors.” To all extents and purposes, the media reporting that resulted sounded like a proclamation of victory—and in one case, the Taliban were even singled out as an integral “partner” in this achievement.

As with most things, however, the reality is both more complex and far less encouraging. Although downplaying the current terrorism challenge amid an ever-greater emphasis on great-power competition makes political sense, the complete picture in 2023 is troubling: Today, there are more terror groups in existence, in more countries around the world, and with more territory under their control than ever before. While U.S. and allied attention turns away from combating terrorism threats abroad, it is not just China and Russia seeking to fill gaps—it is also the likes of al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Murder in France: Illegal African teen accused of slashing throat of 68-year-old woman in Lille

Source: <https://rmx.news/crime/murder-in-france-illegal-african-teen-accused-of-slashing-throat-of-68-year-old-woman-in-lille/>

Oct 20 – A 17-year-old Ivorian national living illegally in France has been arrested for the murder of a **68-year-old mother-of-four** who was found in her Lille home with her throat slit and her lower body exposed.



The unaccompanied minor, named as Mohamed B., was arrested and taken into police custody on Wednesday evening after being apprehended by a police patrol vehicle as he looked for a hostel to spend the night.

According to French broadcaster BFM TV, the teenager was born in 2006 in the Ivory Coast and is in France illegally. It is understood he remains in police custody and is being questioned.

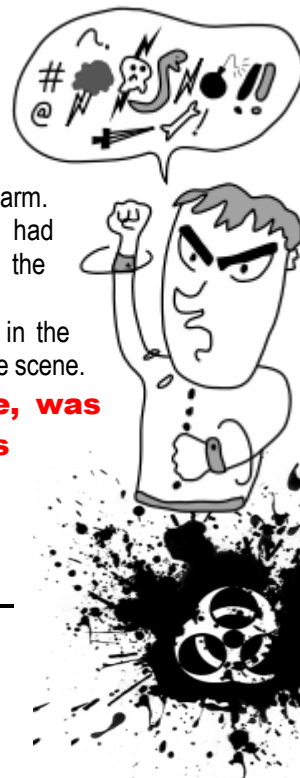
The victim had been found lying in a pool of blood in her kitchen on Wednesday by emergency responders, a police source told French newspaper [Le Figaro](#).

A neighbor had reportedly heard screams coming from the house shortly after 11 a.m. and witnessed the youth strangling the woman, but was herself beaten by the attacker when she tried to intervene.

“She returned home and raised the alarm. When the police arrived, the attacker had already disappeared,” a source close to the investigation told French media.

[Le Figaro](#) reported that a transport card in the name of the suspect was found at the crime scene.

A police source revealed that Mohamed B., despite his tender age, was already “unfavorably known to the police” but gave no further details about his criminal background.



A preliminary investigation found no link between the victim and the suspect, and police are working on the basis that this was a random attack with no clear motive.

An autopsy was conducted on Thursday, but the results have not been made public yet. It is unclear whether the victim had suffered any sexual assault before her murder.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Another incident that mass media are reluctant to describe as "terrorism". Terrorist was known to the police, but they did nothing pre-emptive (as always). Perhaps it is time to put certain police officers in jail for failing to protect the people. Or their political supervisors that do not allow them to perform their duties.

A primer on Hamas



[Part 1](#) | [Part 2](#) | [Part 3](#)

Hungary's Prime Minister claims there is 'very clear link between terrorism and migration'

Source: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1828518/Hungary-pm-terrorism-migration>

Oct 27 – Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban says there is a "very clear link between terrorist acts and migration" as the [European Union](#) considers its new asylum seeker rules.

He said Hungary is resisting the EU's plans to share responsibility for hosting asylum seekers across the bloc. Countries not willing to house their share of asylum seekers would have to contribute financially, [reports MailOnline](#).

Orban regularly clashes with Brussels over migration, LGBT rights, and judicial independence. Hungary felt the brunt of the European Commission last year when it froze billions of euros in funds over its stance on rule of law and rights - something Orban said was Soviet-era behaviour.

Ahead of a two-day EU summit in Brussels, he said: "I very much hope that more and more people here in Brussels will see that there is a very clear link between terrorist acts and migration.

"Those who support migration also support terrorism. We are against terrorism and therefore we do not support migration."



His comments came after recent attacks in Belgium and France that were committed by radicalised individuals who had their asylum applications rejected. When they meet, political leaders will discuss an extension to the EU's multi-annual budget, including aid of €50 billion over four years to [Ukraine](#).

This would include €17 billion in grants and €33 billion in loans. Talks will also consider an extra €15 billion for migration management, including strengthening border control and cooperation with third-party countries.

Orban said Hungary would not support the funding for [Ukraine](#) without a "very well-funded proposal". He also called for Europe to help stabilise the Middle East region in the wake of the [Israel](#)-[Hamas](#) war.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki meanwhile warned the war will result in "another powerful wave of illegal immigration". Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides also called for more consideration about migration.

He said: "There is also the migration dimension, especially if the crisis extends to Lebanon, which of course we do not want, it is something that we will discuss separately today as a matter of migration."



Gavin Mortimer



Why does Macron think France should learn to live with terrorism?

📅 24 October 2023, 8:02am



EDITOR'S COMMENT: The moment you learn to live with terrorism you have lost the fight and terrorists won. Two solutions though. Change attitude and fight back or change the President.

What the World Gets Wrong About Hamas

By Monica Marks

Source: <https://time.com/6329776/hamas-isis-gaza/>

Oct 20 – Since [Oct. 7](#), Israelis have struggled to find words raw and powerful enough to convey the [trauma](#) of what happened that day. Many have spent the past weeks watching Israeli generals, rescue workers, and forensics experts testify about the grisly ways Hamas killed 1,400 people.

Many Israelis, seeking to understand the horrors of Oct. 7, have turned to comparing Hamas to ISIS. The hashtag "#HamasIsISIS" has trended on social media as Israeli leaders—including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—have frequently equated the two. But scholars of Islamist movements like myself, as well as counterterrorism officials, have long understood the comparison to be false. As Gershon Baskin, who has been Israel's lead hostage negotiator with Hamas since 2006, told me recently: "Its acts of terrorism resemble ISIS, but they don't have the same ideology."

The first and most important difference is that Hamas is a Palestinian nationalist Islamist movement. That fused, dual identity differentiates it from ISIS, which is a transnational pan-Islamist movement that wants to gather a universal *umma*, or community of Muslim believers, into an "Islamic state" untethered from any nationalist project. Hamas, on the other hand, has more localized demands: it identifies "liberation of all of Palestine" from what it terms "the Zionist enemy" as its core goal in its 2017 Charter. There is also the inconvenient fact that ISIS "literally views Hamas as apostates" because of its support from Shia Iran, as the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Aaron Zelin recently [posted on X](#).

A second key difference is their relative religious extremism. Hamas is religiously conservative, but it does not ruthlessly harass or kill non-Muslims in Gaza simply because of their faith or religious comportment. It tolerates women who don't wear the hijab, people who sport tattoos, and teenagers who



listen to American music. Christians and churches also coexist with Muslims in the Hamas-run enclave. None of this would have been possible under ISIS, a far more religiously extremist organization that tortured and mutilated people to compel their adherence to an ultra-radical version of Islam. But comparisons between Hamas and ISIS abound in part because they can be politically useful. Insisting that Hamas is ISIS enables Israeli leaders to muffle criticism of the country's treatment of Palestinians, including [airstrikes](#) in Gaza since Oct. 7 that have left at least [8,000 people dead](#), two-thirds of them women and [children](#). The conflation could also help win over U.S. leaders and public opinion. "Since 1973, every Israeli war has ended early, from Israel's perspective, because of dwindling support from the U.S.," one former Israeli diplomat told me recently. "Keeping the U.S. onside here is very important, so this is useful *hasbara* [public relations] for Israel." This rhetorical sleight of hand helps convince people that Hamas is not just a threat to Israel, but to French boardwalks or American nightclubs in the way ISIS was.

Unlike ISIS, Hamas has existed for decades and is no mystery. It grew out of a Muslim charity established in 1973 and has a large social service wing. It split from the Palestine Liberation Organization as a result of the Oslo peace process' failures and pursues violence against Israel. It won the 2006 Palestinian elections in Gaza and remains, along with its rival Fatah in the West Bank, one of two main political forces in the Palestinian territories. It has continuously negotiated with Israel for years on borders, prisoner swaps, and governance of Gaza. It is also, to some extent, the Frankenstein's monster of Netanyahu, whose policies [empowered Hamas](#) in an effort to divide and weaken the Palestinian territories for years. Hamas justifies horrific acts of terror as resistance to Israel's occupation and has traditionally exploited the traumas caused by Israeli violence to grow its ranks. To recruit new members, it attends funerals and contacts bereaved relatives of family members killed in Israeli airstrikes. Its militants also capitalize on the deprivation, isolation, and prison-like conditions that have prevailed in the Gaza Strip since Israel began its blockade 16 years ago. Nevertheless, Israel last week [dropped leaflets](#) that proclaimed "Hamas=ISIS" and warned civilians—who remain trapped in the Strip with [nowhere safe to hide](#)—to "surrender." But that approach is likely falling on deaf ears in Gaza and throughout the Arab world, where most see Hamas as a religious-nationalist Palestinian resistance movement that is directly challenging Israel's ongoing blockade and occupation. Israel might—with time, blood, and grit—[dismantle](#) Hamas's principal political and military structures. But the suffering that Israel's methods—which have so far included cutting off water, food, and fuel to civilians—will cause Palestinians in Gaza is astronomical. Remnants of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, or a yet-to-be-formed armed movement can and will exploit these festering resentments to foment future attacks on Israel.

To combat security threats effectively, Israeli leaders must resist facile comparisons and reckon with the fact that, at the heart of Hamas's appeal among many of its recruits, lies not religious extremism but anger, anguish, and hopelessness. A hydra that feeds off of embittered youths will not be defeated by creating more destruction and despair. Ensuring that Palestinians get the freedom, dignity, and self-determination they have demanded for over 75 years would be the most effective way to ensure Israel's long-term security. Unfortunately, for millions of Palestinians and Israelis alike, that outcome looks ever more remote.

[Monica Marks](#) is an assistant professor at NYU Abu Dhabi who focuses on Islamist movements in the Middle East.

MUMBAI TERROR ATTACKS
Even after taking the 23 bullets,
this man stood to capture Terrorist
Ajmal Kasab alive...



& His name is Tukaram Omble ji...
Let's salute this warrior 🙏



I am innocent!
I just want to live!



في انس الشريف

Hamas Is Iran's Instrument for Obstructing Peace between Arabs and Israel

By Reza Parchizadeh

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65138/hamas-is-iran-instrument-for-obstructing-peace>

Oct 31 – On October 7, 2023, the Hamas terrorist group launched thousands of rockets deep into Israel and then attacked the south of the country by land, sea and air, killing over 1000 civilians and taking many hostages. Compared to the attack on the World Trade Center towers in New York on September 11, 2001, which resulted in the deaths of nearly 3000 people, the recent terrorist attack has been called "Israel's 9/11."

In the following days, Western and Israeli officials accused Iran of being behind the attack. In addition, some American outlets published investigative reports that indicated Tehran was directly responsible for the terrorist attack. According to them, IRGC officers and representatives of Hamas and Hezbollah had been planning the attack for several months in Beirut. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later said that the conflict between Israel and Hamas is "the war of the civilized world with an axis of evil led by Iran and its partners."

In my opinion, the Hamas terrorist attack was launched at the behest of the Iranian regime to obstruct the normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia and consequently the entire Arab and Islamic worlds.



The installation of Qassem Soleimani's bust in Isfahan's Naqsh-e-Jahan Stadium prior to the football match between Sepahan and Al-Ittihad, to which the Saudi squad responded by refusing to play against the Iranian team, could be interpreted as Iran's Supreme Leader's warning to Saudi Arabia to "dispel the illusion of a total-loss gamble" of normalizing with Israel. When Riyadh failed to take the warning seriously, defended Ittihad's decision to withdraw from the match, and under the auspices of the U.S. continued to negotiate with Israel, or in Khamenei's words, to "bet on the wrong horse," the attack on Israel became inevitable.

As long as it exists, the Islamic Republic will not allow Arabs and Israel to normalize relations. The Iranian regime regards this as an existential threat to itself and its far-reaching imperialist designs on the region. From Tehran's perspective, the Arab-Israeli normalization will lead to the collapse of the "Axis of Resistance," the network of extremist armed proxies that it has created from Yemen to Lebanon to impose its will on the Middle East.

By consistently inciting Hamas to attack Israel and forcing Israel to defend itself, and then declaring strong support for the rights of the "Palestinian people," the Iranian regime presents itself as the champion of Palestinian Arabs and the "Leader of the Islamic World." This catches Arabs in fait accompli and puts them between a rock and a hard place. When Arabs take a strong stand against Israel over the issue, normalization efforts fail. In fact, with its apocalyptic approach to world politics and particularly the issue of Israel, Tehran has taken the Arabs and the wider Islamic world hostage, not allowing them to lead a peaceful life.

The larger and long-term goal of the Islamic Republic is to drag the Middle East into the new not-so-Cold War between the superpowers of the Orient and the Occident in order to tip the balance of regional power in its own favor. By relying on the capabilities of Russia and China to overpower Arabs and Israel, Tehran intends to rule the region with complete hegemony as the junior partner to the Moscow-Beijing alliance. America's withdrawal from the Middle East and its highly costly conflicts with Russia in Ukraine and China in the Far East have left the field open for Tehran.

In addition, there are signs that the Kremlin is keen on opening a front against the West in the Middle East in order to break the Western resolve on the Ukraine front. President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine has accused Russia of wanting to precipitate conflict in the Middle East to undermine international support for Ukraine. Vladimir Putin's public stance towards Israel after the Hamas terrorist attack has also been muted and mostly unsympathetic. The Russo-Israeli relations started to deteriorate after an initially neutral Israel gradually tilted toward Ukraine under American influence.

It should be noted that China, as Iran and Russia's closest ally, might have endorsed the Hamas attack in order to put a knife in America's side and then gain further global prestige and leverage by posing as a mediator, as it did in the case of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Since the start of the war, both Moscow and Beijing have been trying to insert themselves into the conflict as mediators, but apparently with an agenda to undermine the West and gain more ground in the Middle East and on the world stage.

On the other side of the equation, Israel, which has received the most terrible national security shock in its 75-year history, intends to eradicate Hamas. The West, despite the clear signs that the Islamic Republic was instrumental in the attack on Israel, does not yet want a direct conflict with the Iranian regime and



consequently the spread of the war to the rest of the region. So, it has given Tel Aviv the green light to destroy Hamas, provided that it refrains from directly confronting Tehran. However, as the Islamists in Iran keep threatening Israel with annihilation, and as Tehran's proxies across the region keep attacking American military bases, there is a good chance that the war in the Eastern Mediterranean will escalate and spill over into the rest of the Middle East.

But the fate of Hamas has been sealed. Although the "head of the octopus" is in Tehran, Israel has decided to cut off one of its tentacles in its vicinity. Israel's next move could be to try to cut off the tentacles of the Iranian regime in Syria and Lebanon. However, cutting off the head of the octopus is not something that Israel can do alone, and in order to do that the United States must enter the field and take the lead by securing a global and regional consensus against the combined might of Iran, Russia and China.

Considering the recent developments in the Middle East, an American military confrontation with the Iranian regime in the foreseeable future is a distinct possibility. Tehran's direct attack on Israel and the ruthless massacre of Israeli and other citizens shocked the world and brought back to life the horrendous images of the suicide attacks on the Twin Towers, warning the West and especially the United States that similar acts of cold-blooded terror and mass violence can once again occur on Western soil.

Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel marked a turning point in the global strategic equations that will rock the region and change it forever. But in the meantime, the efforts of Tehran and Tel Aviv to hurt each other will exponentially increase, which is bound to further escalate the tensions and pull in other regional and global actors. Finally, it is not far from expectation that Khamenei will finally unveil his nuclear arsenal and hasten the Middle East's apocalypse.

Reza Parchizadeh, a Ginsburg/Milstein Writing Fellow at the Middle East Forum, is a political theorist, security analyst, and cultural critic.

Rethinking Counterterrorism

By Fionnuala Ní Aoláin

Source: <https://www.justsecurity.org/89563/rethinking-counterterrorism/>

Nov 02 – Writing in the aftermath of the terrorist [attacks](#) in Israel, [attacks](#) on an Islamic religious gathering in the Mastung district of southwestern Balochistan Pakistan, and continued [attacks](#) on civilians in the Sahel, the profound individual and societal harm caused by terrorism across the globe remains visible and devastating. The events of Oct. 7 – and Israel's response to them – may yet prove to be a tipping point in the entrenchment of national, regional, and global action on counterterrorism, but the costs and consequences of more than two decades of the "war on terror" should be instructive about the failures and limitations of current strategies. It remains the case that while the counterterrorism mantra provides rhetorical [talking points](#) for leaders at the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council, the fundamental failure to address the conditions and drivers that produce and sustain violence across the globe is indicative of broader failures that result in perpetual cycles of violence, including the most recent devastating violence in Israel and Gaza.

Two Decades On, Flawed Approaches to Counterterrorism Endure

More than twenty years since 9/11, counterterrorism remains [ascendent](#) in the U.N. system and beyond, despite little empirical [evidence](#) that the playbook of recent decades has actually worked to prevent and counter violence. The evidence may be [precisely the opposite](#) in places like the Sahel, where a decade of investment in counterterrorism has led to sustained human rights violations and a collapse of the democratic state. Counterterrorism has abjectly failed to address the root causes of violence in Israel and Gaza. While domestic regulation of terrorism has grown – deriving its legitimacy from U.N. Security Council regulation – the terminology of terrorism, including new vocabularies of preventing and countering violent extremism, has [widened and deepened](#) over the past two decades, resulting in counterterrorism laws and practices being systematically used against civil society actors, dissenters, journalists, humanitarians, and those who simply disagree with their governments. In short, permissive domestic regulation has facilitated the politicization and misuse of the term "counterterrorism."

Failure to address the drivers of violence have sustained the violence itself.

In addition to the counterterrorism international [treaty framework](#), for decades multiple States have extended (with international and bilateral incentives) their regulation of terrorism at the national level, using various exceptional legislative measures designed to define, regulate, and punish acts of terrorism. Notably absent alongside the widened application of the "terrorism" label is a general terrorism treaty, which has continued to elude broad international consensus. Conveniently, the lack of definition has served other nefarious purposes by providing no brake on the unstoppable proliferation of counterterrorism laws and practices, as well as ensuing rule of law abuses.



Unquestioned validation of counterterrorism comes with considerable costs, none of which States have been prepared to reckon with to date. Such costs include the weakening effect of counterterrorism exceptionalism on the rule of law, governance, accountability, and democracy. Counterterrorism provides cover and succour to authoritarian regimes and backsliding democracies alike. Tragically, genuine counterterrorism efforts focused on defined acts of terrorism under international law remain woefully under-addressed and the victims of terrorism are those who suffer most from largely empty promises of support and a lack of remedy for the harms they have endured.

Imagining Alternatives: How Can States Do Counterterrorism Differently?

What alternative approaches to counterterrorism exist? In short, a change to the ineffective and performative status quo would require profound recalibration of contemporary security and counterterrorism models. It would mandate engaging new forms of multilateralism which, despite their current elusiveness, are a necessary part of reinvigorating the largely marginalized role of international institutions in preventing terrorism. Crucially, prevention work must genuinely focus on addressing the root causes of violence. Some [discussion](#) on how best to meet the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) during U.N. High Level Week this past September touched on the importance of progress across gender, climate, poverty, and child development. But those discussions failed to deliver a resounding financial and political commitment to the SDGs, or fundamentally address how development itself is [being undermined](#) (albeit stealthily) by security-driven agendas such as preventing and countering violent extremism.

There are no shortcuts to reigning in the bloated [counterterrorism architectures](#) that have emerged nationally and globally. A good start, however, would be to reform the U.N. counterterrorism framework, which continues to grow exponentially — despite little evidence that counterterrorism is delivering value for money or answers to the societal problems producing violence on the ground. This would mean reallocating the resources being amassed by the U.N. Office of Counter-Terrorism to the peace and development architectures of the United Nations. It would entail an end to the continued production of counterterrorism norms in the United Nations system, whose added value is limited but whose permissiveness to rule of law abuse is [well-evidenced](#).

Second, in a world increasingly devoid of a meaningful commitment to peace, peace-making must become a fundamental U.N. policy imperative. Here, the present danger is that loose counterterrorism agendas will creep into the [New Agenda for Peace](#), undermining the hard work necessary to [identify and address](#) the push and pull conditions that breed terrorist violence in societies. This is not only a question of resources, for example, to provide much needed funding to the [peacebuilding commission](#), but it is fundamentally about the prioritization of active and pre-emptive peace building in fragile and complex geographies. The horror of the siege and counter-offensive to terrorist acts in Gaza demonstrates the [long-term costs](#) of counterterrorism strategies which bring neither security nor the basic elements of a flourishing human life.

Finally, the United Nations must help States from [Mali](#) to [Sri Lanka](#) end the practice of leveraging counterterrorism as a cover for poor governance, economic failure, and crackdown on civil society. To do so, the United Nations itself must be clear-eyed in calling out abuse and violations of human rights in the name of “countering terrorism.” The United Nations cannot have moral ambiguity on the causes or costs of terrorism, but rather must be unflinchingly focused on ending the conditions that produce it.

Mali is a particularly illuminating example of the challenges that arise from the overuse of and reliance on counterterrorism as a framework to address disparate societal problems. Defining Mali’s challenges through the lens of counterterrorism enabled the direct supply of weapons, technical assistance, and capacity building to a state where democracy and the judiciary were weak, and security sector reform and civilian control were disregarded. In a situation where the continued human rights violations by the military became unacceptable to western and other States supporting the [G5 Sahel initiative](#), constructed as a military response to prevent the spread of armed and violent extremist groups in the region, the armed forces [dismantled and overthrew](#) the civilian government and simply established military rule. It then sought and received [support from mercenaries](#) to ensure its “counterterrorism” responses could be continued. This circularity of counterterrorism governance, and its relationship to rising authoritarianism and the inversion of civil-military relations, demonstrates the under-estimation of threat assessment in the practice of counterterrorism responses at the United Nations and beyond.

Challenges to Moving the Needle on Counterterrorism

Nonetheless, counterterrorism rhetoric at the United Nations remains particularly challenging because there is evident tolerance for sustained counterterrorism abuses and plenty of shade for those who perpetuate them. Perhaps for this reason, none of the solutions identified to counterterrorism and security abuses are new. But the failure to adopt an approach to counterterrorism grounded in identifying the casualties and naming the abuses that define it has made the proliferation and abuse of counterterrorism *de rigueur*. The long-term suppression of terrorist movements and development of sustainable approaches to the problem of extremist violence would be better served by a long, hard look at the untrammelled growth of counterterrorism.



For many States, a counterterrorism legal framework is preferable to others precisely because of its inherently malleable application to a range of actors that are perceived to threaten States' narrow (read: political) security interests. For this reason, there is an evidenced tendency to consider any act of violence, and many nonviolent acts carried out by a non-state armed group in a non-international armed conflict, as being "terrorist" by definition, sidestepping assessments of lawfulness under international humanitarian law as well as the need to address the legal and political significance of non-international armed conflicts on the territories of States.

Going Forward: A Fundamental Shift in National and Global Approaches

The conditions that give rise to sustained violence in many societies – namely, continued human rights violations and an absence of the rule of law, justice, or accountability institutions – remain under-addressed by global leaders and in global fora. Ongoing challenges triggering and sustaining armed conflict also include climate change, grinding inequality, unresolved questions of self-determination, meaningful political participation, and adequate representation in fragile, complex, and disputed sovereignties. None of these issues – that is, the reframing of what are essentially complex conflict contexts as "terrorism" problems, in whole or in part – have been adequately addressed in the United Nations or elsewhere.

It is only through a willingness to spotlight the misuse of counterterrorism and those who benefit from this approach that the space for alternative approaches can emerge. Indeed, imagining alternative approaches to counterterrorism requires a fundamental shift in national and global approaches to regulating complex and entrenched violence. It means downsizing existing counterterrorism institutions, ending exceptional legal augmentations to enable the nomenclature of terrorism to apply to more actors and contexts, and substantially defunding counterterrorism agendas. This would lead to a sizable portion of the actors and events States currently label as terrorism no longer rightfully falling in that category. In this regard, any alternative to the status quo requires rethinking what constitutes a "threat" in national security terms.

An alternative approach to counterterrorism also means addressing the conditions fundamentally conducive to violence. These include deep rule of law deficits, a lack of judicial independence, a failure of social systems to provide for individual and community needs, disenfranchisement from social and economic benefits, poverty, insecurity, and a lack of investment in marginalized communities who have experienced historic discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, or religious belief. None of this is new, and the social science and policy research demonstrating the link between these conditions and the rise of insecurity, politically-motivated violence, and armed conflict is overwhelming. Unfortunately, it is clear that States are not yet ready for hard conversations on counterterrorism, and the horrific terrorist attacks of recent weeks in Israel may set back such a reckoning again. But such conversations cannot be avoided forever, for the failure of counterterrorism policy and practice will be continually evidenced in societies across the world locked into unending cycles of violence.

[Fionnuala Ní Aoláin](#) is Executive Editor at Just Security. She served as the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism from 2017-Nov 2023. She also concurrently serves as Regents Professor and Robina Chair in Law, Public Policy, and Society at the University of Minnesota Law School and Professor of Law at the Queens University School of Law in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

CSS Analyses in Security Policy

No. 332, November 2023

CSS
ETH Zürich

Assessing Hybrid War: Separating Fact from Fiction

Fear of "Hybrid War", a blanket term describing gray zone aggression short of all-out war, remains widespread. Many expect information technology to enable revolutionary gains in this strategic space. Yet, Hybrid War's track record does not support these expectations. Consequently, it is crucial to conduct a more systematic assessment of the different instruments used under this umbrella term.



[Lennart Maschmeyer](#) is Senior Researcher at the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zürich, where he focuses on cyber conflict, power politics, and subversions.



The Houthis and Operation Iron Swords

Source: <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/the-houthis-and-operation-iron-swords/>



Nov 03 – Since the beginning of Operation Iron Swords, on four different occasions missiles and UAVs have been launched at Israel from the Red Sea area, all of which were intercepted before they reached Israel's airspace. The Houthi movement in Yemen claimed responsibility for the attacks. Since the war began, senior figures of the Houthi movement have been threatening that if Israel continued its actions against the Gaza Strip they would not hesitate to join the campaign alongside Hamas. The Houthi movement was established in Yemen in the early 1990s on a foundation of the country's Zaydi Shi'ite Muslims, who make up about 30% of the population. In 2004, the movement rebelled against the centralist government on the grounds that it had become too closely identified with the United States and Israel. By 2009 six rounds of fighting between the parties had taken place, at the end of which the Houthis established an autonomous



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

region in north Yemen. They increased their power and areas of control, and in 2015 deposed the incumbent president. That led to the establishment of a coalition of Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, whose goal was to defeat them and restore the previous regime. In response, the Houthis attacked Saudi Arabia and the UAE using advanced weapons provided by Iran, which has supported them over the years and included them in the “axis of resistance.”^[2]

The Houthi movement, thanks to assistance from Iran, has at its disposal an arsenal of missiles and UAVs that can attack both Israeli territory and Israeli vessels in the Red Sea and near the coast of Yemen.

In ITIC assessment, the Houthi attacks on Israel were coordinated with Iran, since the Houthis are part of the “axis of resistance.” Iran regards the use of pro-Iranian Shi’ite militia proxies in Iraq, Syria and Yemen as an escalation which on the one hand is an expression of the concept of “consolidating the arenas,” especially in light of the Israeli ground attack, and which on the other hand does not currently require the participation of Hezbollah in an all-out confrontation with Israel, which might exact a high cost from the organization, and possibly from Iran itself.

The Houthis also have a direct commitment to the Palestinian “struggle,” thus it seems that as the war continues they will attempt to attack Israel again.

Weapons and Capabilities

On September 21, 2023, the Houthi authorities held a military display in the city of Sana’a to mark the ninth anniversary of their occupation of the city. Weapons from Iran were displayed for the first time, including a surface-to-surface Iranian Toofan missile, which has a range of 1,350-1,950 kilometers, or about 850 to 1,200 miles and can reach Israeli territory (the distance between north Yemen and the south of Israel is about 1,600 kilometers, or about 1,000 miles).^[3]

The display also featured new shore-to-sea missiles capable of hitting vessels in the Red Sea and near the coast of Yemen, among them Tankil missiles, which have an estimated range of 500 kilometers, or about 300 miles, and Quds Z-0s, which are cruise missiles capable of hitting targets both on land and at sea^[4].

The new weapons joined the extensive arsenal the Houthi movement has accumulated with the massive aid it receives from Iran. It includes surface-to-surface missiles, cruise missiles, shore-to-sea missiles and UAVs of various types with ranges of from tens of kilometers to 2,500 kilometers, or more than 1,550 miles. The arsenal constitutes a threat to various Israeli targets both in the shipping lanes adjacent to Yemen and in Israeli territory.^[5]



Right: A Toofan missile, which is capable of reaching Israeli territory. Left: A Tankil shore-to-sea missile (YouTube channel of the Houthi government’s al-Iman TV, September 21, 2023)

Attacks on Israel

On October 19, 2023, Houthi military forces launched five cruise missiles and about thirty UAVs at the Red Sea region and Israel. The United States Navy USS Carney, stationed in the Red Sea, intercepted all the hostile aircraft and four cruise missiles. A fifth missile was intercepted by Saudi Arabian forces after it entered the country’s airspace (Wall Street Journal, October 24, 2023). On October 22, 2023, **Abd al-Aziz bin Habtour, the prime minister of Yemen’s Houthi government**, officially claimed responsibility for launching the missiles and aircraft, stating they were aimed at Israel and claiming some had hit their targets. In addition, he threatened that if Israeli operations against the Gaza Strip continued Israeli vessels would be attacked in the Red Sea and off the coast of Yemen (Middle East Monitor, October 23, 2023).





On the morning of October 27, 2023, two UAVs penetrated Egyptian airspace. One crashed into a building near a hospital in the town of Taba on the Egypt-Israel border; the other was intercepted and parts of it fell in the area of the town of Nuweibaa. The spokesman for the Egyptian army, Colonel Gharib Abdel-Hafez, reported that both aircraft had been launched from the south of the Red Sea (Reuters, October 28, 2023). An “Egyptian military official” in the Sinai Peninsula, who spoke anonymously, said that the aircraft that crashed in Taba had been intercepted by Israeli Air Force planes while it was in Egyptian airspace (al-Araby, October 28, 2023).

A Volcano-2 medium-range ballistic missile. The Arabic reads, “We will continue military operations against the oppression of the Palestinian people until the Israeli aggression against Gaza stops” (Twitter account of the Houthi military media, November 2, 2023).

The Houthi authorities did not claim responsibility for the missile and UAV launches, however, **Hezam al-Asad**, a member of the Houthi movement’s political apparatus and Shura Council, tweeted the lone word “Eilat” on his Twitter account (Hezam al-Asad’s Twitter account, October 27, 2023). On the evening of October 27, 2023, the IDF spokesman reported that the Israeli Air Force had eliminated “an aerial threat in the Red Sea area.” According to an Israeli foreign minister

announcement, the missiles and UAVs were launched by the Houthis to attack Israel. The announcement also noted their connections with Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Hamas (Ynet, October 27, 2023).

On October 31, 2023, a ballistic missile and two cruise missiles were fired from the Red Sea towards Israel. The ballistic missile was intercepted by Israel’s Hetz 2 aerial defense system, and the cruise missiles were intercepted by Israeli Air Force planes. All the missiles were intercepted outside Israel’s airspace (IDF spokesman, October 31, 2023). A few hours after the launches, **Yahya Sarieh, spokesman for the Houthi security forces**, claimed the Houthi forces had carried out a “broad attack” on Israeli targets in a show of support for the Palestinian people. He said ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and UAVs had been directed at various targets in Israel. He said it was the third attack carried out by the Houthi forces in support of the Palestinian people, thereby also claiming responsibility for the previous two attacks. He threatened the attacks would continue as long as the “Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip” continued (al-Masirah, October 31, 2023).

Muhammad al-Bakhiti, a member of the Houthi political bureau, said in an interview that the leader of the Houthis, Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, had ordered the launching of missiles after Israel’s “ground aggression” in the Gaza Strip and after the United States’ threats against Yemen. He claimed they had launched a large number of ballistic missiles and UAVs, but Israel only reported the downing of one missile and hid the rest. He also claimed the United States was complicit in the “aggression” against the Gaza Strip and was crossing the red lines set by Yemen. (al-Mayadeen, October 31, 2023). On the night of October 31, 2023, the IDF’s air defense intercepted an “air threat” detected in the Red Sea area south of Eilat. No penetration of Israeli airspace was detected (IDF spokesman, November 1, 2023). It was probably another attack carried out by the Houthi forces.

Yahya Sarieh, spokesman for the armed forces of the Houthis in Yemen, announced they had launched “a series of UAVs at several targets deep in the Zionist entity in occupied Palestine and had hit their targets.” He also stated the armed forces of Yemen would continue their activities in support of the Palestinian cause until the “aggression in the Gaza Strip” ended (Yahya Sarieh’s Telegram channel, November 1, 2023).

Additional reactions to events

The events took place in the wake of threats by Houthi and Iranian elements, which began as soon as Operation Iron Swords was put in motion. According to the threats, continued Israeli activity in the Gaza Strip would result in a reaction against Israel and the United States from the “axis of resistance.” On October 7, 2023, the Houthi movement issued a statement claiming that the Yemeni people supported Hamas and the Palestinian “resistance,” and was prepared to participate in the battle to defend “Palestine” (al-Masirah Telegram channel, October 7, 2023). On October 10, 2023, the leader of the Houthi movement, **Abd al-Malik al-Houthi**, issued a statement on the



Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese al-Manar TV channel claiming Yemen was ready to respond should the United States intervene directly in the war between Israel and Hamas. He stated that the Houthis fully coordinated with their allies and were ready to respond by sending soldiers to the battlefield or by attacking with missiles, UAVs and other means (al-Manar, October 10, 2023). On October 17, 2023, Channel 1 of Iranian state television broadcast a speech by **Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran**, warning that if Israel's operations in Gaza did not stop, "the resistance groups will lose their patience and no one will be able to stop them" (IRNA, October 17, 2023). The information office of the Houthi movement (Ansar Allah) published a poster in Hebrew and Arabic threatening to attack Dimona with the caption "We will not hesitate" (Twitter account of Iran in al-Arabia, October 31, 2023).

The **Jordanian authorities** contacted the Houthis, Hezbollah and the Hamas leadership to ensure the security of Jordan's airspace during the campaign between Israel and Gaza, especially when the Houthis try to intervene and send missiles to attack Israeli territory. Jordan reportedly made it clear to the Houthis that a rocket sent to attack Israel could endanger the adjacent Jordanian territories, and Jordan would not hesitate to use all the means at its disposal to deal with missiles that might cross its territory (Rai al-Youm, October 1, 2023).^[6]

Mo'az Abu Shamala, the Hamas representative in Yemen, stated that Hamas welcomed the "jihadist action" of the armed Yemeni forces, which included the launch of a ballistic missile and a UAV at Israel. He said the "partnership" would "confuse and distract" Israel and contribute to reducing the pressure on the Gaza Strip. He added that the Yemeni people sent the message that they were part of the "axis of resistance" and the geographical distance from Palestine did not bother them (SABA Telegram channel, November 1, 2023).

Muhammad al-Bakhiti, a member of the Houthi political bureau, said that the Houthis were in a state of open war with "the Zionist entity" and claimed their motives were "humanitarian and moral in accordance with the values of the Qur'an [sic]." He added that they would continue the activity against Israel to "stop its aggression against our Palestinian brothers" (Muhammad al-Bahiti's Twitter account, November 1, 2023).

European Islamists Ignore — or Celebrate — Hamas's October 7 Massacre

By Soeren Kern

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65155/european-islamists-ignore-or-celebrate-hamas>



Islamist flags on display at anti-Israel rally held in Stockholm, Sweden on October 15, 2023. The protest was organized by Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international pan-Islamist group that seeks to re-establish the Islamic caliphate and implement sharia throughout the world. At the rally protesters chanted "Israelis are nothing but dogs of the West."

Oct 26 – Islamists in Europe have overwhelmingly come out in support of Hamas's October 7 brutal massacre of more than 1,400 Israelis. That support has been expressed in different ways: explicitly approving of Hamas's murder, rape and abduction of Israeli civilians; justifying the crimes by blaming Israel; and by remaining silent and refusing to condemn Hamas publicly. Some Islamist groups, especially Muslim umbrella groups that



benefit from public funding and are official interlocutors between Muslim communities and European governments, have resorted to moral equivalency by staking out equidistant positions between the aggressor and the attacked. Others have spread anti-Semitic propaganda by attempting to relativize or "contextualize" Hamas's murderous rampage as a response to Israel's existence. Still others have issued anodyne statements in which they flatly refuse to distance themselves from Hamas.

Here is a country-by-country roundup of the responses Islamists have offered since Hamas's October 7 attack. FWI will add to this summary in the weeks ahead.

Germany

The [Central Council of Muslims in Germany](#) (*Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland, ZMD*), an umbrella group that represents more than 20 Muslim organizations (including groups linked to Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood) in Germany, falsely [blamed](#) Israel for the massacre carried out by Hamas. In an October 8 statement, ZMD, [said](#) it was "deeply disturbing" that "settlers flanked by the Israeli army have been attacking Palestinian villages and the Al-Aqsa mosque for two years without the international community intervening."

One of the most influential Islamist groups in Germany is the [Islamic Community Millî Görüş](#) (*İslamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş, IGMG*), a neo-Ottoman political and religious movement that is close to both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Turkish government. Millî Görüş (National Vision), which rejects secular Western values, has been outspoken in its support for Hamas. The chairman of Millî Görüş, Kemal Ergün, justified the terrorist group's actions by [blaming](#) Israeli "interventions" on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. On Facebook, Abdülkadir Ali Demir, a Cologne-based theologian for Millî Görüş, [shared](#) a video titled "Gaza War in Preparation for Greater Israel," which promotes a conspiracy narrative that the Hamas attack was "staged by Israeli agents" to create a pretext for implementing "a Jewish 100-year plan to establish a Greater Israel." After an uproar of public criticism, Demir deleted the video from his Facebook page.

The [Muslim Coordination Council](#) (*Koordinationsrat der Muslime, KRM*), an umbrella group that represents six Islamist groups, issued a statement that [blamed](#) both Israel and Hamas for the violence. Reinhard Bütikofer, a German lawmaker and Member of the European Parliament, [criticized](#) the KRM: "How can you trust people who are unwilling to call a spade a spade?"

The [Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Germany](#) (*Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Deutschland*), which claims to promote a "peaceful and compassionate" version of Islam, issued a [statement](#) in which it failed to mention Hamas by name and instead claimed that Israel's blockade of Gaza "is disproportionate and violates international law."

The [Union of Islamic Cultural Centers](#) (*Verband der Islamischer Kulturzentren, VIKZ*), an umbrella group that controls 300 mosques in Germany and for decades has trained Islamic theologians, has yet to issue a statement publicly condemning Hamas.

The [Islamic Community of Shia Congregations in Germany](#) (*İslamische Gemeinschaft der schiitischen Gemeinden Deutschlands, IGS*), which is linked to the Iranian government, has also failed to condemn Hamas.

The [Islamic Community of Bosnians in Germany](#) (*İslamische Gemeinschaft der Bosniaken in Deutschland, IGBD*) [condemned](#) "the latest escalations of violence in and around Gaza" but failed to mention Hamas by name.

Not one of Germany's main Muslim umbrella groups agreed to attend a special hearing at the German Parliament on October 17, when lawmakers [asked](#) them to issue a joint statement condemning Hamas.

Cem Özdemir, a German-Turkish lawmaker who is currently serving as Germany's Agriculture Minister, [lamented](#) the "resounding silence from the Islamic associations in Germany about the terror against Israel." He [accused](#) them of "relativizing words along the lines of 'it's your own fault'" and said that Germany must "end its naivete" when dealing with Islamists in the country.

Turkish influence is clearly at play. German-Turkish Islam expert Eren Güvercin [noted](#) that many Muslim associations in Germany are reluctant to publicly criticize Hamas because of fear of retribution from the Turkish government. "As a critical German-Muslim voice, you end up in the crosshairs of AKP if you describe Hamas as a terrorist organization," he [wrote](#). "The anti-Jewish agitation and unconditional solidarity with Hamas terrorists has reached such an extent that not even a single critical Muslim voice is tolerated." Güvercin [added](#) that spies for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Germany are "reporting the commentary in Germany to Ankara in 'press reviews.'"

Türkiye is undoubtedly fomenting hostility toward Israel in German society. The Turkish government's Directorate for Religious Affairs (known in Turkish as *Diyanet*) controls nearly 1,000 mosques in Germany. In an October 20 speech, Diyanet chief Ali Erbaş [asked](#) "Allah" to "have mercy on our Palestinian martyrs who died under the oppression of Israel." He [accused](#) Israel of "perpetrating the greatest atrocities witnessed in human history in Palestine, Gaza" and [alleged](#) that the Jewish state was committing a "great crime against humanity in front of the eyes of the whole world."

Diyanet controls the Cologne-based [Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs](#) (DITIB), one of the largest Islamist organizations in Germany. It is frequently [referred](#) to as an "arm" of the Turkish state. Every week,



Diyaret circulates sermons that are recommended to be delivered in DITIB mosques during Friday prayer services.

On October 13, a *Diyaret* sermon [described](#) Israel as a "rusty dagger stuck in the heart of Islamic geography" and justified Hamas's massacre by accusing Israel of "damaging the reputation of Jerusalem" and "violating the sanctity" of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Another *Diyaret* [sermon](#), recommended for delivery in German mosques on Friday, October 20, claimed that "one of the greatest atrocities in human history is taking place today in Palestine, Gaza." It added that Israel was "brutally murdering innocent people, including babies, children, women and the elderly." Apparently alluding to Palestinians in Gaza, *Diyaret* called on "all of humanity to stand with the oppressed."

France

In neighboring France, which has Europe's largest Muslim population, the French Islam Forum (*Forum de l'Islam de France, FORIF*), a newly launched Muslim "dialogue forum" [established](#) by the French government to fight Islamism and promote an Islam "faithful to the values of the Republic," has had nothing to say about Hamas's massacre of Israelis.

The [French Council for the Muslim Faith](#) (*Conseil français du culte musulman, CFCM*), which has been replaced by FORIF as the government's principal interlocutor with the country's Muslim community, is an umbrella group controlled by the governments of Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In an October 10 [statement](#), the CFCM did not mention Hamas by name, but it did condemn the "intolerable attack on human dignity and life."

The statement [suggested](#) that Israel was responsible for the violence against its citizens because of the security measures it imposed on Gaza. It declared that "abuses committed by both sides" must be condemned "with the same force." The CFCM also complained about global support for the Jewish state. "Palestinian civilians do not benefit from this same solidarity and do not have this same security," it claimed.

The [Union of Mosques in France](#) (*Union des Mosquées de France, UMF*), which is controlled by the Moroccan government, failed to issue a statement condemning Hamas. On October 19, after public criticism, UMF's Moroccan-born president, Mohammed Moussaoui, wrote an [opinion article](#) for *Le Monde* in which he condemned "firmly and without reservation the atrocities, some of which amount to terrorism, war crimes and even crimes against humanity, committed against Israeli civilians." He then blamed Israel and the "dramatic situation of the Palestinians" for the attack.

Moussaoui also [claimed](#) that Muslims are the true victims of Hamas's atrocities. He lashed out at accusations that Muslims in France have refused publicly to support Israel. "French citizens of the Muslim faith have been put in the dock by opportunists of all stripes who harbor unbearable suspicion towards them." Moussaoui said that "wanting to blame this lack of mobilization only on French Muslims is a clear stigmatization."

The Union of Islamic Organizations in France, which changed its name to [Muslims of France](#) (*Musulmans de France, MF*), is a prominent Muslim umbrella organization [closely tied](#) to the Muslim Brotherhood. It has issued several statements about the "situation" in the Middle East, but none mention Hamas by name. MF warns that Palestinians will not stop their attacks until they have their own state.

In one statement, MF [claimed](#) that the conflict in Gaza has nothing to do with Islam. "We refuse a religious reading of this political conflict," it said. In another statement, it [repeated](#) that "we insist that the Israel-Palestinian conflict is not religious in nature." In fact, the Hamas Charter, which calls for the complete annihilation of Israel, is based on the Islamic doctrine of jihad and the concept that once land is Muslim, that land is always Muslim.

The [Grand Mosque of Paris](#) (*Grande Mosquée de Paris*), one of the largest and most influential mosques in France, issued a [statement](#) about "the situation in the Middle East" in which it failed to condemn Hamas or acknowledge Israel's right to exist. The mosque's Algeria-born rector, Chems-Eddine Hafiz, also failed to condemn Hamas. He did [call](#) on Muslims "not to import the conflict between Palestine and Israel into France."

French-Tunisian Imam Hassan Chalghoumi, leader of the Drancy Mosque in Seine-Saint-Denis, near Paris, is one of the few Muslim leaders in France to unequivocally condemn Hamas. "Hamas is a terrorist group, it is terror," he said in an October 12 [interview](#) with CNews television. "Hamas is the same as Daesh [Islamic State]."

In an October 13 [opinion article](#) published by *Le Monde*, French philosopher Abdenour Bidar criticized France's Muslim community for keeping silent about Hamas's atrocities. "As a Muslim intellectual, I condemn, without reservation, without ambiguity and without any hesitation, the massacres and hostage-taking perpetrated by Hamas, and I denounce them as pure barbarity and absolutely unjustifiable savagery."

Bidar [continued](#) that he was "alarmed to see that, on the Muslim side, there is so much delay in speaking out commensurate with the seriousness of the facts. I would not like this deafening silence to last too long, or for us to only hear people speaking out who are desperately incapable of escaping ambiguity or half-measures. I therefore call on the Muslim authorities of France to finally react."



Austria

Ümit Vural, president of the [Islamic Religious Community in Austria](#) (*Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich, IGGÖ*), the main organization representing Muslims in Austria, initially refused to issue a public statement on Hamas's attack on Israel. In the face of growing [criticism](#), he belatedly issued a statement on October 9, [condemning](#) the terrorist group. He said that "the brutality and violence" perpetrated by Hamas is "absolutely unacceptable" and "should be rejected in the strongest possible terms." The statement, however, did not once refer to Israel by name or acknowledge its right to exist.

On October 13, in a two-page "appeal for peace in the Holy Land," the [Islamic Center Vienna](#) (*Islamisches Zentrum Wien*), one of the largest Sunni mosques in Austria, failed to [condemn](#) the atrocities committed by Hamas, nor did it once refer to Israel or its right to exist.

Belgium

The Muslim Council of Belgium (*Conseil Musulman de Belgique*), the new official representative body for 800,000 Muslims in Belgium, has kept silent about the Hamas massacre, as has its president, 29-year-old Turkish-Kurd Esmâ Uçan. (The Council was established in June 2023 to replace the Muslim Executive of Belgium (*L'Exécutif des musulmans de Belgique, EMB*), which was [disbanded](#) by the Belgian government after a report by Belgian intelligence exposed the influence of Morocco and Turkey on that group.)

Denmark

The [Islamic Society in Denmark](#) (*Dansk Islamisk Trossamfund*), an Islamist group that was instrumental in inciting worldwide protests during the 2005 Danish Cartoon controversy, [called](#) on the estimated 200,000 Muslims in Denmark to protest Israeli military action against Hamas. Muslims in Denmark should "show Denmark that we stand with Palestine against oppression." In another statement, the group [justified](#) the Hamas massacre by blaming "incursions by Israeli security forces, including in the al-Aqsa mosque." It called on the "international community" to force Israel to "end the violence" and to "strengthen peacekeepers."

The [Muslim Joint Council](#) (*Muslimernes Fællesråd, MFR*), the largest multi-ethnic Muslim umbrella group, with 40,000 members, [justified](#) Hamas's massacre of Israelis as "the result of ongoing harassment, brutality and massacres that the Palestinian people have faced in the past 70 years." The group [referred](#) to Israel as an "apartheid state" and [called](#) for "the immediate end of all global political support for Israel and for the Israeli army to stop the ongoing brutal ethnic cleansing of Palestinians."

Neither the [Danish Islamic Council](#) (*Dansk Islamisk Råd*), a Muslim Brotherhood-linked umbrella organization that represents Sunni Muslims in Denmark, nor the associated [Grand Mosque of Copenhagen](#) (Hamad Bin Khalifa Civilization Center), publicly condemned the Hamas massacre of Israelis.

Greece

The [Muslim Association of Greece](#), which claims to represent 300,000 Muslims in the country, has [not](#) issued a public condemnation of Hamas, but its leader, Naim El Ghandour, has [posted](#) copious amounts of Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood propaganda on social media. In a Facebook [post](#), he "salutes the Palestinian uprising against the terrorist state of Israel." He has organized anti-Israel events in Athens, which is home to a large Palestinian community.

Ireland

The [Islamic Foundation of Ireland](#), the official representative of the estimated 85,000 Muslims in Ireland, failed to condemn Hamas's massacre of Israelis. But in an October 18 statement, issued together with more than two dozen Islamic associations in the country, it "strongly and unequivocally" [condemned](#) "the Israeli onslaught against the people of Palestine and the heinous assault carried out on the Al-Ahly Arab Hospital in Gaza." The deadly explosion at the hospital was caused by a Gazan — not Israeli — missile.

The Islamic Foundation of Ireland also [criticized](#) the "unconditional support" the United States has given Israel and the "support or silence of many European countries" which allows "the occupying forces in Palestine to perpetrate such atrocities."

Italy

The [Union of Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy](#) (*L'Unione delle Comunità Islamiche in Italia, UCOII*), one of the largest Muslim umbrella groups in Italy and one that is closely linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, has not condemned Hamas. In a television interview, UCOII president Yassine Lafram did criticize Hamas, but he [blamed](#) Israel for provoking the massacre.

The other main Muslim umbrella groups, the [Islamic Religious Community of Italy](#) (*Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana, COREIS*) and the [Italian Islamic Confederation](#) (*Confederazione Islamica Italiana, CII*) also failed to condemn Hamas.



The Netherlands

The [Contact Body for Muslims and Government](#) (*Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid, CMO*), one of the main Islamic umbrella groups in the Netherlands, and an official interlocutor between Muslims and the Dutch government, did not issue a statement on the Hamas massacre of Israelis. Instead, the group's chairman, an Islamist linked to the Turkish government's Diyanet, [called](#) for a "frank discussion between our religious communities in the Netherlands."

Spain

The main Islamic organizations in Spain have been silent about Hamas' massacre of Jews and its call for global jihad. Neither the [Islamic Commission of Spain](#) (*Comisión Islámica de España, CIE*), the sole interlocutor between Muslims and the Spanish government, nor its two constituent organizations, the [Union of Islamic Communities of Spain](#) (*Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España, UCIDE*), the [Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities](#) (*Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas, FEERI*), have issued any statement or condemnation of Hamas. "Their silence is complicit," [said](#) Spanish lawmaker Alberto Tarradas Paneque.

Sweden

Mikail Yüksel, a Swedish politician of Turkish origin who leads the Swedish Islamist party [Partiet Nyans](#) (Nuance Party), [justified](#) the Hamas attack on Israel because the latter "is an occupying power" [that](#) "commits war crimes in Palestine." He also [called](#) on the EU to remove Hamas from the bloc's list of terrorist organizations. Yüksel, who is [said](#) to be close to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, [added](#) that Nyans is "an uncompromising pro-Palestinian party." In a tweet, he [accused](#) Israel of abducting Palestinian children and called for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to arrest Israeli leaders and prosecute them for war crimes.

The [Vision Party](#) (*Visionpartiet*), another Islamist party that was created by disaffected former members of the Nuance Party, is equally anti-Israel and pro-Hamas. Party Secretary Adel Sadat [justified](#) Hamas's massacre of Israelis by invoking the Israeli "occupation." "Even a cat forced into a corner will start scratching and fighting for its life," he wrote. Sadat [condemned](#) the Swedish government's support for Israel, which he [described](#) as a "terrorist state" that is [committing](#) "generational genocide" of the Palestinians. In the center of Stockholm, representatives of Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international pan-Islamist group that seeks to re-establish the Islamic caliphate and implement sharia globally, [called](#) for jihad against Israel and the West. During an October 15 rally at Odenplan, a large plaza in central Stockholm, Islamists repeated chants, [including](#): "This fight is between Muslims and the rest of the world;" "Liberation from Western domination, liberation from the Western ruler;" and "Israelis are nothing but dogs of the West." On October 10, Hizb ut-Tahrir [held](#) a rally at Medborgarplatsen in Stockholm during which Islamists [called](#) for death to the Jews and for full support for Hamas.

Switzerland

The [Federation of Islamic Umbrella Organizations in Switzerland](#) (*Föderation islamischer Dachorganisationen der Schweiz, FIDS*), the largest Islamic organization in the country, did not condemn Hamas, but it did [publish](#) a statement by the [Swiss Council of Religions](#) (*Schweizerische Rat der Religionen*), an inter-religious dialogue group consisting of Christians, Jews and Muslims, that did denounce "Hamas's terrorist and inhumane attack on Israel." The statement said that Hamas's massacre of Israelis was "unprecedented" in "scale and brutality" and represents a "tragedy of immeasurable proportions."

The [Association of Islamic Organizations in Zurich](#) (*Vereinigung der Islamischen Organisationen in Zürich, VIOZ*), the largest cantonal Muslim umbrella organization in Switzerland with 41 member organizations, has not condemned Hamas.

The [Islamic Central Council of Switzerland](#) (*Islamische Zentralrat Schweiz, IZRS*), a Qatari-funded Salafist group whose leaders have been surveilled by Swiss intelligence agencies, has organized pro-Hamas demonstrations in Bern. The group's leader, Nicolas Blanco, a Swiss convert to Islam, continues to [incite](#) hatred and violence against Jews and the Jewish state.

Soeren Kern is a Middle East Forum Writing Fellow.

Could Hezbollah Destroy Israel?

By Maya Carlin

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/could-hezbollah-destroy-israel-207154>

Nov 03 – As Israel enters its 28th day of warfare against [Hamas](#), analysts are growing more concerned that other regional actors could expand and, therefore, prolong the crisis. Skirmishes between Israel's



Defense Forces and the Lebanon-based group Hezbollah have increased since Hamas waged its brutal surprise attack against the Jewish state. Since October 7, the Iranian-backed terror group has lost several dozen militants to Israeli strikes along the [shared border](#). For the first time on Sunday, Hezbollah debuted its surface-to-air missile capability for the first time when it claimed to have shot down an Israeli drone. Obviously, the group's weapons arsenal is only growing and advancing.

Since the last Lebanese-Israeli war in 2006, the terror organization has had ample time to expand its capabilities and secure more fighting essentials from Tehran. Now that tensions between [Hezbollah](#) and Israel are mounting, an all-out war is considered a real possibility.

Introducing Hezbollah

Like many of Iran's regional proxy groups, [Hezbollah](#) was a product of exploitation. In the middle of Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corp founded the organization to better export the Islamic Republic's revolutionary principles abroad. Domestic chaos during this period resulted from the emergence of terror groups, international failures, and widespread sectarian violence. Tehran took advantage of the power vacuum created from this instability. Under the guise of fighting against the "Zionist" and "imperialist" occupation of Lebanon at the time, Hezbollah was able to recruit Lebanese Shi'ite Muslims, who received scores of funding, training and assistance from the IRGC.

Since Hezbollah's founding, the IRGC has been able to deeply [entrench](#) itself into all aspects of Lebanon's polity. From the shadow economies it controls to the social services it provides, the terror-designated group is deeply embedded in the country. According to the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, Hezbollah seizes between \$500-\$1 billion annually from Lebanon's economy.

With this stolen wealth coupled with support from the Islamic Republic, Hezbollah has been able to amass a concerning weapons arsenal over the years. Even back in 2010, then-U.S. defense Secretary was quoted [asserting](#) that "We are now at the point where Hezbollah has far more rockets and missiles than most governments in the world." While the terror group had only fought Israel from within its borders at this time, Hezbollah would later deploy to Syria to support the rule of authoritarian leader Bashar al-Assad. As an Iranian proxy group, [Hezbollah](#) has the same objective as Hamas- eliminate the world's sole Jewish state. In fact, on October 7, Hezbollah said it was in "direct contact with the leadership of the Palestinian resistance."

Hezbollah's weapons arsenal is deadly

Considering the depth of Hezbollah's weapons arsenal, a full-scale war along Lebanon's shared border with Israel would be deadly for both sides. The terror group possesses a wide variety of weapons, including stockpiles of rockets and guided missiles which can travel distances of over 300 kilometers while carrying 500-kilogram payloads. Additionally, Hezbollah's air defense systems, combat drones and anti-ship cruise missiles could enable the group to mount a coastal blockade of the Jewish state down the line. As detailed in a [Politico](#) piece, "The rocket attacks against Israel by Hamas since October 7 would be a light summer shower compared to the deluge Hezbollah could bring down on towns and cities across Israel."

Analysts predict Hezbollah has roughly [150,000](#) rockets and missiles, making the terror group the most heavily armed non-state actor across the planet. The advancement of the group's arsenal over the years mirrors the evolution of other Iranian-backed groups in the region. The Yemen-based [Houthi rebels](#) have reportedly worked alongside its Lebanese affiliates to strengthen rocket development and launch divisions. Existing Shi'ite militias in Iraq and Syria also indicate that the spread of technology and more lethal weapons contribute to Hezbollah's evolution. Due to Hezbollah's arsenal and the willingness of other Iranian-linked groups in the region to join a war effort if one arises, a victory for the IDF in a potential northern war would result in many deaths.

[Maya Carlin](#) is an analyst with the Center for Security Policy and a former Anna Sobol Levy Fellow at IDC Herzliya in Israel. She has by-lines in many publications, including [The National Interest](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), and [Times of Israel](#).

Hamas vs. Gazans

By Daniel Pipes

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65182/>

In 1921, during the Rif War, Moroccan rebels inflicted a devastating defeat on Spanish forces at the Battle of Annual. Interrupted while playing a round of golf and informed of this disaster, Spanish King Alfonso XIII reportedly shrugged his shoulders, muttered, "The meat of chicken is cheap," and resumed his game. The king's response typifies dictators throughout history, who see troops as expendable. The lives of human drones matter little; more can always be conscripted. Russia's use of Wagner Group prison recruits in the Battle of Bakhmut typified this casual



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

use of cheap manpower. It hardly mattered to Russian dictator [Vladimir Putin](#) how many of his cannon fodder perished so long as the front line moved forward. Battlefield gains justify any loss of life.



Then there is [Hamas](#), the jihadi organization that has ruled [Gaza](#) since 2007 and which became the focus of global attention after massacring about 1,400 Israelis on Oct. 7. For 15 years, it has implemented an opposite and historically unique purpose in tormenting its subject population. Rather than sacrifice soldiers for battlefield gains, it sacrifices civilians for public relations purposes.

The more misery endured by the Palestinians in [Gaza](#), the more convincingly [Hamas](#) can accuse [Israel](#) of aggression and the wider and more vehement the support it wins from antisemites of all persuasions — Islamists, Palestinian nationalists, far-leftists and far-rightists.

[Hamas](#) actively wants [Gaza](#) residents to be bombed, hungry, suffering, homeless, injured

and killed. It bases troops and missiles in mosques, churches, schools, hospitals and homes. An Emirati political figure, Dirar Belhoual al-Falasi, explains that "[Hamas](#) fired a rocket from the hospital's roof, so that [Israel](#) would bomb this hospital." It calls on [Gaza](#) residents to serve as shields. It parks vehicles on the roads to block civilians from moving southward, out of harm's way. It even shoots these fleeing civilians.

The U.S. government has long noted this pattern of behavior. In 2014, the diplomat Dennis Ross commented that the people of [Gaza](#) paid a "staggering" price for [Hamas'](#) aggression, but its leaders "have never been concerned about that. For them, Palestinians' pain and suffering are tools to exploit, not conditions to end."

Douglas Feith, a former high-ranking Pentagon official, correctly finds it "unprecedented for a party to adopt a war strategy to maximize civilian deaths on its own side." He dubs this "not a human shield strategy [but] a human sacrifice strategy."

Of course, [Hamas](#) digs into its Islamist ideology to justify this practice. One official blithely explains that Palestinians "sacrifice ourselves. We consider our dead to be martyrs. The thing any Palestinian desires the most is to be martyred for the sake of Allah, defending his land."

Mosab Hassan Yousef, son of a founding [Hamas](#) leader, puts it another way: "I was born at the heart of [Hamas](#) leadership ... and I know them very well. They don't care for the Palestinian people. They do not regard the human life. I saw their brutality firsthand."

[Hamas'](#) brutal logic brings multiple benefits.

First, it provides [Hamas](#) tactically because it renders [Israel](#), which tries to avoid harming civilians, not attacking mosques and schools. Second, if [Israel](#) does hit such vulnerable targets, [Hamas](#) crows about the victims. Third, should [Hamas](#) misfire, as in the Ahli Hospital incident, and kill Palestinians, it can blame [Israel](#), convincing many. Fourth, campuses and streets worldwide erupt with anti-[Israel](#) demonstrations.

Fifth, [Hamas](#) chieftains enjoy the good life, whether in Turkey, Qatar or [Gaza](#) itself, where only its members have access to vast reserves of fuel, food, water and medicine. They even steal fuel from hospitals. The Majalla, a Saudi weekly magazine, found that control over [Gaza's](#) smuggling routes made 1,700 [Hamas](#) officials millionaires. Moshe Elad of Western Galilee Academic College estimates that Musa Abu Marzook, Khaled Mashaal and Ismail Haniyeh are all multibillionaires.

This inversion of logic and morality raises two questions: Why does it work? Can [Israel](#) find an antidote?

It works because victimization has become the currency of dictators and totalitarians. From Mr. [Putin](#) to Iran's Ali Khamenei, they divide the world between oppressors and the oppressed, then claim the mantle of the world's wretched. [Hamas](#) may be a jihadi organization, forwarding a medieval Islamic code, but it capably learned the modern language of discrimination.

As for an antidote, that requires [Israel](#) to extirpate [Hamas](#) and its foul works, then set up a decent administration in [Gaza](#) that will not continue deploying such degrading tactics. This will not be easy, but it can be done.

[Daniel Pipes](#) is president of the Middle East Forum.





Intelligence FRONT ✓

@Intelligencefnt · [Ακολουθήστε](#)



Qassam spokesman Abu Ubeida:

"The war is no longer limited to Gaza. "We also made preparations outside Palestine."



1:23 π.μ. · 11 Νοε 2023



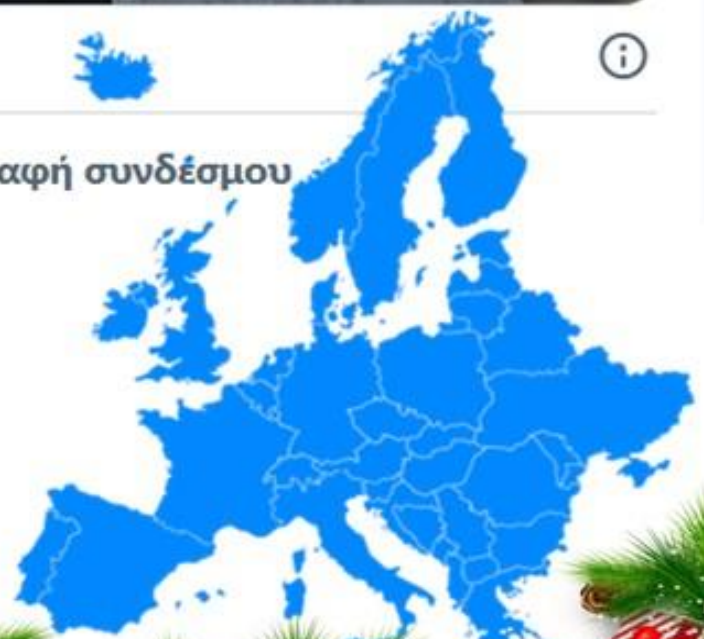
♥ 126



Απάντηση



Αντιγραφή συνδέσμου



To Defeat Hamas, Emulate the Destruction of the Tamil Tigers

By A.J. Caschetta

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65192/to-defeat-hamas-emulate-the-destruction-of>



Nov10 – There are many parallels between Sri Lanka's decades-long fight against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), more commonly known as the "Tamil Tigers," and Israel's decades-long fight against the Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya, more commonly known as Hamas. And while Hamas may be now stronger than ever, the Tamil Tigers are only a memory, thanks to the government of Mahindra Rajapaksa [raa·juh·paak·suh], who ended Sri Lanka's 40-year war against the terror organization by killing its leaders and destroying its war-making infrastructure. Israel should take a page from the Rajapaksa playbook and do the same to Hamas.

The LTTE was founded in 1976 when Velupillai Prabhakaran took control of the Tamil New Tigers (TNT) and renamed it. Soon he transformed the group from a clandestine terrorist organization into a sprawling mini-state, complete with a navy, air force, and infantry divisions.

Hamas also grew from a clandestine organization that emerged from the 1987 Intifada protests into a sprawling mini-state with a massive stockpile of Iranian and homemade weapons.

French counterterrorism analyst Xavier Raufer coined the term "[gray area phenomenon](#)" to denote a middle ground between covert, anti-state terror organizations and nation states that control their own citizens through terror. Like a nation state, a gray area group controls territory, provides services, and functions in many ways as a nation state. Both the LTTE and Hamas fit neatly into this category, and both benefitted from the services provided such as schools and orphanages, where young minds are twisted and child soldiers are forged.

Suicide Attacks

The LTTE is the only non-Islamic group to conduct a sustained campaign of suicide bombings, beginning coincidentally in 1987, the year Hamas was founded. However, as Paul Moorcraft shows in his book, [Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers](#) (2012), Prabhakaran "inspired a cult of suicide as a form of martyrdom for the cause which they described as punitha yutham (pure/holy war)."

Hamas began conducting suicide attacks against Israelis in 1993, and soon became the most prolific of the many Palestinian terrorist groups to do so.

Over a 22-year period, the LTTE conducted hundreds of suicide attacks using a variety of methods, including trucks, boats, and airplanes. [According to Rohan Gunaratna](#), the LTTE sent members to the



Beka'a Valley in Lebanon and "translated many of the training manuals of the Middle Eastern terrorist groups into the Tamil language." Moorcraft explains that the LTTE was instrumental in bringing about "a series of innovations to improve the suicide jackets" that Gunaratna credits the LTTE with inventing. It is "essentially a denim vest equipped with explosives," Gunaratna [explains](#), adding that, "The idea for this suicide device came from the jacket that the Tamil Tigers generally wore." Hamas adopted the same design.

Foreign Sponsorship

Both the LTTE and Hamas have received assistance from nation states. In February 2000, Gunaratna [claimed](#) that the LTTE "operates in 46 countries. In other countries, it has either opened offices, mostly in western democracies, or it has clandestine cells." For a time, India was an LTTE sympathizer, due to the large Tamil population in the south. India's friendly relations with the Soviet Union and Sri Lanka's with the West added a Cold War element to the conflict, but warming relations between India and Sri Lanka changed that. From 1987 to 1990, 100,000 Indian peacekeeping forces were in northern Sri Lanka to deter violence. In 1991, a female LTTE suicide bomber killed Rajiv Gandhi in the Tamil Nadu region of India as he was campaigning for reelection as Prime Minister, an office he assumed after his mother, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated.

Hamas openly receives support from Iran, Turkey, and Qatar. It receives aid and comfort from any nation that has outlawed its "military wing" but not its "charitable and political wings."

Decades of Appeasement

Successive governments of Sri Lanka spent decades appeasing and negotiating with the LTTE. The pattern was the same: LTTE violence led to peace talks, which inevitably stalled when Sri Lanka did not give over the northern third of the island nation to the Tamils for a Tamil nation state, followed by more LTTE violence, and then Sri Lankan retaliation, and so on.

The pattern changed when Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected president in 2005. Though he campaigned as a peace maker, events forced him to take a different approach. The first thing he did upon winning the election was to make his brother Gotabaya the Secretary of Defense. Gotabaya selected Sarath Fonseka to command the military and together they invested in Sri Lanka's fighting capabilities, increased military spending, and developed counterinsurgency strategies. But they also bowed to pressure from the [Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission](#), a "peace-processing" diplomatic mission led by Norway that had been trying to enforce a "permanent ceasefire" since 2002.

General Fonseka complained that the LTTE used the ceasefire to restock supplies and plan future attacks. And the attacks continued, though the LTTE claimed that they were conducted by independent, non-LTTE Tamils.

The Turning Point

Two events hardened the Rajapaksa brothers' resolve – an [attempted assassination via suicide bomber](#) on Fonseka in April 2006 in which he was seriously wounded, and the [bombing of a bus in Kebithigollewa](#) in June 2006, killing 60 civilians. The ceasefire was off, and the LTTE's days were numbered, though it took over two years of fighting before the final battle. 2007 and 2008 were particularly grim with increasing casualties on both sides.

When the final victory came in 2009 at the Battle of Puthukkudiyirippu, the Sri Lankan military outflanked and surrounded the LTTE, killed all of its top leaders and most of its elite fighters. On May 19, 2009, President Mahindra Rajapaksa [announced](#) to the nation that LTTE had been defeated.

Israel has spent decades appeasing and negotiating with its Palestinian enemies. It has entertained dozens of efforts by other countries to forge peace deals with Palestinians whose leaders wanted only a temporary truce to build up forces and plan for the next attack, the next Intifada. Burned out by the Oslo Syndrome, and frustrated by trading land and not getting peace in return, Israel's voters elected Benjamin Netanyahu again in December 2022. But it was the Hamas pogrom on October 7, 2023, that forced Israel's hand.

Resisting Calls for a Cease Fire

Israel could defeat Hamas in minutes if it cared as little for human life as its enemies do. Nevertheless, its battle to destroy Hamas in Gaza should not take long to complete, unless it bows to pressure to wage proportionate warfare and consents to more ceasefires. Sri Lanka also faced pressure from the "international community" which urged Colombo to reinstate a ceasefire, but the Rajapaksas understood how the LTTE used ceasefires in the past to resupply and plan future attacks, so they were having none of it. Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the UN at the time, wanted to send a fact-finding mission to the battleground. British Foreign Secretary David Milliband and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner also tried to broker a ceasefire. Gotabaya Rajapaksa told the foreign diplomats that they were being led astray by the LTTE propaganda, and the battle continued.



Today's "peace-processors" are being led astray by Hamas propaganda. Believing casualty and death counts from the "Gaza Health Ministry" is like believing [Baghdad Bob's reports](#) in 2003 that there were no American tanks in Iraq. Many have been urging Jerusalem to halt the IDF campaign in Gaza almost from the moment it started. [Joe Biden](#) and his Secretary of State, [Antony Blinken](#), have been pushing Israel unsuccessfully to implement a 3-day ceasefire. They have, however, convinced Jerusalem to implement a "[4-hour pause](#)" each day for an unspecified period of time. It's hard to imagine the Rajapaksas acquiescing to such demands.

After Velupillai Prabhakaran was killed at the Anandapuram junction, Sri Lanka released a grisly [photograph](#) of him with bullet holes in his head, likely under the assumption that cults tend to dissipate when the cult leader dies. That tactic won't work with Hamas. After its founder and "spiritual leader," Ahmed Yassin, was killed in an Israeli strike on March 22, 2004, he was quickly replaced with Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi who was killed in an Israeli strike on April 17, 2004. Others have followed. Since Hamas is more than a cult, it will not be defeated by killing only the leaders. The infrastructure, middle-managers, recruiters, and financiers will also have to be either killed or forced to accept their defeat and face consequences.

Finally, at the [Battle of Puthukkudiyirippu](#), the LTTE used the civilian Tamil population as human shields, refusing to let them flee the advancing Sri Lankan military. Similarly, Hamas is very proficient at using civilians, both Palestinian and Israeli, as human shields. In the aftermath of their victory, the Rajapaksa brothers came under even more scrutiny from the U.N. but refused to cooperate with international investigations looking to substantiate rumors of war crimes perpetrated by the Sri Lankan military and the "unnecessary" civilian deaths. Once Hamas is totally defeated, Israel should do the same.

[A.J. Caschetta](#), a principal lecturer at the Rochester Institute of Technology, is a Ginsberg-Milstein Writing Fellow at the Middle East Forum and a senior fellow at the Investigative Project on Terrorism.

An Interview with Erik Skare on the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

Source: <https://www.icct.nl/publication/interview-erik-skare-palestinian-islamic-jihad-pij>

Nov 10 – ICCT's Senior Research Fellow Kacper Rekawek sat down with Eric Skare of the University of Oslo and author of "[Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Islamist Writings on Resistance and Religion](#)" to discuss the group in the context of the current Israel-Palestine conflict.

Kacper Rekawek (KR): Erik, thanks for speaking with us. You are THE expert on the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a little-known terrorist group mainly operating out of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. How is it possible that there is space for another radical Islamist outfit when Hamas is supposedly the all-controlling entity in Gaza?

Eric Skare (ES): Thank you for having me. First of all, we have to understand why PIJ was founded in 1981 and has been engaged in armed struggle from 1984 onwards. PIJ targeted Israelis five years before Hamas did the same in 1989. In those five years, violence was what distinguished them from the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, the forerunner of Hamas.

I think it's very important to understand that PIJ was always a historical product of a very specific stage in Palestinian history because the fact was that if you were a Palestinian in the in Gaza Strip in the 1980s, and you wanted to carry out or participate in the armed struggle against the Israeli occupation, there was no viable organisational alternatives for you to join. You technically had the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its factions that were politically and ideologically or militarily irrelevant in the Gaza Strip in the 1980s, particularly after the evacuation from Beirut in 1982 to Tunisia. More importantly, the founding fathers of the PIJ were also fed up with what they perceived as the compromises of the PLO. For many of them, the point of no return was the adoption of the 10-point programme of the PLO in 1974 when it opened up to the possibility of using other means, including violence, to liberate the occupied Palestinian territories, opened up for the possibility of negotiating with the State of Israel, and opened up for the possibility for an only partial liberation of historical Palestinian land. This was in many respects the prelude to the Oslo Agreement in the 1990s.

At this point, the proto PIJ leaders ask the very Leninist question of "what is to be done?" Still, violence was extremely controversial in Gaza at the time, but they argued that the Islamic movement should not just participate, but it should lead the armed struggle. That was not the view of the Muslim Brotherhood, the forerunner of Hamas, in Gaza then, and this led to altercations and fistfights in the mosques between the proponents of the two views. Things, of course, changed once Hamas emerged and started its violence, and its relations with the PIJ become more cordial with the two organisations



signing the Charter of Brotherhood and Cooperation in 1992, which formally ended the dispute between the two, although competition between Hamas and PIJ has been there since.

KR: It is all in the name, isn't it? Palestinian Islamic Jihad – that implies that this would be the more radical faction?

ES: Yes, of course, PIJ sounds far scarier than Islamic resistance movement (Hamas). Nonetheless, the majority of PIJ leaders were, and are, former secular nationalist militants: members of Fatah, the early members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the PLO, early members even of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Although they were swayed by the religious wave in the region, from the 1970s, and particularly with the Iranian Revolution in 1979, they kept much of the secular analysis of the conflict. What mattered to them was not creedal purity, they didn't care about the correct political behaviour, what mattered for PIJ was armed struggle against Israel.

PIJ did, as such, not bother upholding community values (hisba) or engage in proselytization the way Hamas did. PIJ did not care what clothes you are wearing, whether unmarried couples held hands in the Gaza Strip. That was quite different from Hamas which for example, firebombed stores selling alcohol or protested against cinemas in Gaza. So, yes, despite the name, in the Palestinian streets, PIJ is perceived as a moderate player by Palestinians. And PIJ never had that kind of infighting with Hamas or Fatah as you saw in 2007, etc. PIJ focus very much on factional unity against Israel and on regional creedal unity against Western colonialism. It wants to keep Palestine outside of the sectarianism in the Middle East, for example, by declaring neutrality over Syria, Yemen, and Iraq.

Moreover, PIJ has never had the ambition of being a mass movement, right? It has instead perceived its own role as being an armed vanguard in the struggle. When I interviewed PIJ leader Anwar Abu Taha he noted that the difference between Hamas and PIJ is that Hamas is a political movement engaging in the military field, while PIJ is a military movement engaging in the political field.

KR: So PIJ is apolitical whereas Hamas is not?

ES: Not necessarily. When you read the political theory of Hamas, it is obvious that it envisions an Islamic, yet democratic, state enforcing, protecting, and preserving perceived Islamic values from the top down. PIJ, on the other hand, has always been far more suspicious of the state which will always turn, in their view, despotic. Their solution? A weak state apparatus kept in check by a viable civic society. Legislation, justice, and education, mentioning some, would thus be the responsibility of the latter.

PIJ wants politics, but once you have a free Palestinian state. They were against electoral participation in 1996 under Oslo and were critical of Hamas for participating in those in 2006. They said, "well, in the 1990s we had one camp of resistance with PIJ and Hamas together, and we had the forces of compromise to which the latter now also belongs." Bear in mind, however, this was not a religiously based argument, but rather based on real political considerations and also the democratic deficiencies of the Palestinian National Authority. In 2018, PIJ released a document of principles and yes, it says that only jihad can liberate Palestine, and jihad is a duty for every Muslim, but it is also based on an understanding of international law and rights and precedents made by other resistance movements, whether in Vietnam or Algeria. It is not based on Quranic exegesis.

KR: So in this sense PIJ are anti-colonial?

ES: Yes, they see themselves as resisting colonialism. They explicitly call Israel a colonial settler entity. Israel is only the extended arm of Western colonial interests in order to preserve Western economic, political and military dominance, not only in the Islamic world, but in the entire Global South. A two-state solution, then, is an oxymoron for the movement as it equals the continued subjugation and dependency not just to the Palestinians, or the Muslims, but the entire global south. Israel thus has to be abolished in order to obtain true independence for the entire global south. That said, they do not envision the creation of a Caliphate and operate with a clear territorial definition of Palestine as PIJ is a Palestinian nationalist movement.

KR: But the name implies radicalism, fanaticism even...

ES: Radical? Sure, in the sense that it completely refuses any negotiations with the state of Israel. It does not condone any peace process. It is only armed struggle that can liberate not just the occupied Palestinian territories, not just Gaza or the West Bank, but the entire historical Palestine from the river to the sea. PIJ is also not a secular movement. For example, the abolition of Israel will not just commence the Islamization of Palestine, but also Islam's global victory. And, as such, PIJ pretty much turned Hamas' logic on its head. Instead of Islamization for liberation as Hamas stresses, PIJ seeks liberation of Islamization. Still, PIJ does not interpret religion to decide strategy. On the contrary, it takes a strategic choice and religion is only subsequently interpreted to legitimize that strategy.



KR: For years, the PIJ has been described as an Iranian proxy or a puppet. What does this look like in reality?

ES: The first people who describe them that way was the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood - "Shias in disguise," "Iranian lap dogs," etc., which tried to slander an annoying competitor in Gaza during the great dispute about armed struggle and the Palestinian Islamic movement's role. And yes, PIJ view the Iranian Revolution as a huge source of inspiration, as it was one of the greatest examples of a people, and they were the people dealing a blow to Western imperialism with one of the greatest allies of Israel -the US - in the Middle East, but PIJ is not, and has never been, a Khomeinist movement.

KR: How was the link between PIJ and Iran made and how did this evolve?

ES: The leadership of PIJ was imprisoned from the mid-1980s and then were deported to Lebanon by the end of the 1980s. It was in Lebanon that they had meetings with Iranian officials in the Iranian embassy in Beirut. PIJ started receiving training in the camps of Hezbollah, and funding and weaponry from Iran. Hamas jumped on that train later, particularly with the deportation of 415 Palestinian Islamists, mostly from Hamas to the Lebanese Marj al-Zuhur in 1992. PIJ's relationship with Iran has always made it be portrayed as an Iranian proxy.

PIJ has always been very, very careful and very cautious that Iran does not infringe its own autonomy, about its own organisational independence. When PIJ suffered financial turmoil in the mid-1990s, the PIJ leadership even discussed borrowing \$250,000 and \$500,000 from Hamas out of fear that PIJ members would succumb to Iranian pressure due to the economic difficulties and because Iran threatened to intervene because of the lack of financial control in the movement.

Moreover, there was a fallout between PIJ and Iran in 2015 because the latter demanded an end to the former's neutrality in the Syrian civil war. PIJ refused, and that obviously put a strain on the relationship. Nonetheless, Iran is their main sponsor and PIJ has grown de facto dependent on Iranian aid given that it has been unable to diversify its sources of income, which necessarily limits PIJ's political maneuverability. Iran does not, however, control it as such. Moreover, PIJ is also of limited use to Iran as it views the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as bound within the Palestinian territory. It's not an international organisation which has an interest in targeting international targets. That's different from Hezbollah, for example, who have targeted a Jewish community center in Argentina in 1994, or attacked a bus with Israeli tourists in Bulgaria in 2012.

KR: PIJ has lived under Hamas rule in Gaza for the last 16 years. What kind of an experience has this been for them?

ES: First of all, there were more or less genuine attempts to merge the two organisations throughout the 1990s, but it never happened, partly, because PIJ viewed Hamas as a late-comer to the Intifada who was harvesting the fruits of PIJ's military efforts since 1984. At the same time, Hamas has always been arrogant in the way that it considered PIJ a splinter group that should be reunited with its mother organization. So they have coexisted but competition has persisted.

In 2004, for example, a tape was leaked showing Hamas' shura council member Fathi Hamad slandering PIJ calling them Shias, agents of Hezbollah, of Iran, etc. and slamming PIJ for attempting to outmuscle Hamas. Hamad even accused them of attempting to dress up Hamas terrorist attacks as their own to boost its own standing. The tape was symptomatic of the annoyance in Hamas that PIJ was presented as equally important in the press during the Second Intifada although Hamas was the far bigger organization.

This competition, of course, continued after 2007 when Hamas took over Gaza. Hamas has had to walk a far more delicate line between maintaining its ethos (the ethos of being a resistance movement), and armed resistance movement, where the majority of this legitimacy came from, and now also having to be a responsible governing actor. Ismail Haniya, for example, asked the other Palestinian armed factions, including the PIJ, already in 2007 not to send rockets into Israel because Hamas knew it would mean closed border crossings with no medicine, no fuel, no building material, etc. coming in via Israel.

This was definitely a win-win situation for PIJ. While Hamas claimed it sought political power to protect the resistance, many Palestinians began perceiving Hamas as a movement using the resistance to protect political power. At the same time, the PIJ, which was unencumbered by the inconvenient responsibility of governance, could continue to emphasise the need for an armed struggle, not just for ending the siege of Gaza but to liberate the whole of Palestine. So while Hamas had to moderate itself, the Islamic Jihad could portray itself as the continued principal defenders of Palestinian rights. PIJ was very happy to fill the void left by Hamas in the armed struggle from Gaza. That schism led to clashes between the two, particularly in the 2007-13 period.

Hamas broke with Syria in 2012, which meant that Iran cut much of Hamas's funding and redirected its funding to the PIJ. So from 2011 to 2014, you see PIJ grow bigger - it grows stronger, it grows more professional with more advanced weaponry. PIJ also saw a new wave of members from Hamas and Fatah because of the infighting in 2007. In 2014, after another round of fighting with Israel, Egypt negotiated a ceasefire without involving Hamas in the negotiations. That was a huge source of annoyance for Hamas, a complete sidelining of the supposed rulers of Gaza which led to more tensions. Finally, in August 2022, PIJ had grown to such an extent that it could wage a solo war against



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

Israel. So, I think that the last 16 years have been incredibly kind to Islamic Jihad, it has benefited vastly from the governance of Hamas as it has filled the void.

KR: So what happens to PIJ now, in the light of 7 October attacks on Israel?

ES: Many people now talk about the potential destruction of Hamas. Now, I would be more concerned about the future of the PIJ because we now are most likely seeing Hamas returning to its roots as an underground clandestine movement, but also falling back on the social infrastructure it has effectively been constructing in Gaza since the 1970s. At the same time, it is now fully invested in fighting Israel and thus, its new posture undermines that of the PIJ. No longer is PIJ the only faction waging war on Israel.

Because PIJ has fewer strings to play on than Hamas – which has its political wing and its social services – we know that PIJ traditionally is caught in a state of asphyxiation in periods of heavy Israeli counterinsurgency. This has happened before. During the 1990s when most of its militants were killed, or they were imprisoned, the activity of PIJ was almost non-existent. Only the Second Intifada allowed for their resurgence. Currently, a similar dynamic on the ground might be developing. PIJ is also targeted by Israel, and Islamic Jihad could be hit far harder than Hamas by this war.

KR: What is the situation on the ground right now for PIJ?

ES: When we read the interviews with PIJ and its militants, these are post-fact statements, there's no smoking gun connecting PIJ to the planning of these attacks. They joined the attacks shortly after the fighting erupted and according to PIJ, Hamas informed them about the attack a couple of hours before it started. As a consequence, they immediately joined and also sent rockets. They have approximately 30 hostages in Gaza if reports are correct.

Publicly, after the 7 October attacks, the politicians of the PIJ have given full support to Hamas. This is not really a surprise when you consider that the PIJ is about the struggle, the only thing that can liberate Palestine in their view, so it wants the other factions to join the fighting. Yes, they view the attacks positively. Moreover, it is now obvious that there is coordination, not just between Hamas and PIJ, but also Hezbollah in Iran about what's going to happen. There are reports of PIJ participating in the fighting against the ground against Israeli ground forces and they also inflicted casualties on the Israeli forces.

KR: Thank you for speaking with us Erik.

ES: Thanks for having me.



Why Are the Houthis Attacking Israel?

By Jonathan Spyer

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65197/why-are-the-houthis-attacking-israel>



Houthi missile strikes on Israel (YouTube screenshot)

Nov 11 – Israel last week made history when its Arrow air defense system intercepted a missile aimed at Israel – in space. While this first [Arab-Israeli battle in space](#) caught the imagination of many news outlets, the identity of the force responsible for launching the missile was equally notable.

The [Yemeni Houthis](#), known also as the Ansar Allah movement since 2012, immediately claimed responsibility for the launch. This was the fourth attack by the organization on Israel since October 7.

For many Israelis, the involvement of this distant organization in the current war effort against Israel is one of the most mysterious, even outlandish, aspects of the current moment. No one is entirely surprised by the desire of Lebanese Hezbollah to try to tie down Israeli forces in the North as part of an effort to relieve the pressure on its Gaza ally.

But [the Houthis](#)? What can they possibly be looking for? And no less interestingly, how did a Yemeni insurgent movement acquire the capacity to launch a stream of drones and missiles, including long-range ballistic missiles, at Israel?

What Do the Houthis Want?

Answering this question requires understanding a little more about the Ansar Allah/Houthi movement itself, and also regarding its relations with its patron, the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Houthis are a north Yemen Arab tribe, originating in Saada province in northwest Yemen. Along with around 35% of the Yemeni population, they are adherents to a stream of Shi'ite Islam known as Zaidiya, which differs significantly from the more familiar Twelver stream followed by Iranian and most Arab Shi'ite Muslims.

The political movement bearing their name was established by tribal leader Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi in the 1990s. Then in 2004, it turned to insurgent activities against the regime of president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Saleh, also a Zaidi Shi'ite Muslim, was a military officer who seized power in 1978 and presided over the reunification of Yemen in 1990. His regime was backed by the US and Saudi Arabia. The Houthis, meanwhile, were from the outset supported by Iran. In 2004, Hussein al-Houthi was killed by Saleh's



forces. The leadership of the movement and its insurgency then passed to Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, Hussein's brother, who continues to lead it today.

THIS BACKGROUND is important because it is noteworthy that Ansar Allah resembles Hamas and differs from the Lebanese or Iraqi Hezbollah movements in that it is a client of Tehran but not entirely a proxy of it. Hezbollah in Lebanon, Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq, and the other militias that resemble them, such as Badr in Iraq, are direct franchises of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

Tehran established them and stewarded them in their formative period. They are directly supportive of the Iranian form of government and would have little basis for their existence without Iranian financial and other support.

Hamas, by contrast, is a movement with genuine roots in the local Palestinian Sunni context. Ansar Allah/Houthis, similarly, emerged from an authentic local context and have ideological and religious roots distinct from the IRGC's various franchise groups. For this reason, it was for a time common to hear analysis that depicted emphasis on Ansar Allah's links to Tehran as overly formulaic.

Such criticism, however, tended to overlook the fact that (again similarly to Hamas), Ansar Allah's military capacities derive not from its local status, but entirely from its alliance with Tehran.

As a result of Iranian arms and training, Ansar Allah was able to leverage the period of internal unrest in Yemen in 2011, first participating in the unrest and demonstrations that brought down the Saleh regime, then from 2014 joining forces with the deposed Saleh, and seizing control of the capital city, Sanaa, and much of north and west Yemen. The Houthis turned on Saleh in 2017 and executed him. The Saudi intervention of 2015 failed to reconquer areas lost to Ansar Allah but prevented the disaster of an Iran-backed militia seizing control of the Bab al-Mandeb, a strategic choke point between the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.

Yemen remains divided between the Iranian-backed Houthis/Ansar Allah, the Saudi-backed official government of Yemen, and the UAE-supported separatists of the Southern Transitional Council.

Iran officially denies arming the Houthis, but such denials are no longer taken seriously. The weight of evidence is formidable, showing that Tehran has been in recent years supplying by sea routes the small arms, missiles, and rockets that have enabled the organization to transform itself from a rag-tag militia into a force that can strike at Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Tim Lenderking, UN Special Envoy on Yemen, told Reuters in May 2023, "The Iranians have continued to smuggle weaponry and narcotics toward this conflict, and we are very concerned that this would continue, despite the benefits that would come from a Saudi-Iran deal. So I think that is a space we have to watch."

IN RECENT years, Iran has begun to use Ansar Allah as its preferred deniable client for strategic-level strikes on its regional enemies. Until the current war, the most famous instance of this was the September 14, 2019, attack on the Saudi oil processing facilities at Abqaiq and Khureis.

In this sophisticated, two-wave attack, a swarm of drones and cruise missiles overcame Saudi air defenses and caused serious damage to the two facilities. Ansar Allah claimed responsibility. The sophistication and range of the attacks led to this claim being immediately dismissed by US, Saudi, and Western officials, who concluded that Iran itself was behind the strike.

Ansar Allah is of particular use to Iran for attacks of this kind for several reasons. Firstly, and obviously, Iran doesn't want to invite retaliation on itself and is indifferent to the lives of those who crew or live under its proxies.

But the Houthi-controlled part of Yemen has additional advantages. Iran controls or maintains a military capacity in several Arab states – it is dominant in Iraq and Lebanon and has freedom of action in parts of Syria. But in all three of these areas, the Iranian proxy must take into account complex local political realities and the interests of other players – the Russians and the Assad regime in Syria, the non-Iran aligned Shi'ites, and non-Shi'ite populations with their own political connections and interests in both Lebanon and Iraq.

In Yemen, this is not the case. There, the country is divided, and in the Houthi-controlled areas, the movement maintains a monopoly of power by openly coercive means, with only the most flimsy pretense of a formal political process. And while a 2014 UN embargo against weapons transfers to the Houthis has been in place since 2014, it remains poorly enforced.

For these reasons, the Houthis have become Tehran's preferred tool for the carrying out of strategic attacks by proxy. The use by the Houthis/Ansar Allah of ballistic missiles against Israel brings this process to its highest point yet.



The remaining question is whether, and for how long, Israel and the West will continue to indulge the obvious fiction of the Houthis' independent advanced missile capacity. On the one hand, this is a clear absurdity. On the other hand, pointing that out would mean acknowledging that Iran has launched drone and missile attacks on Israel – i.e., carried out clear acts of war – on four occasions since October 7.

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).

Why the Oct. 7 Attack Wasn't Israel's 9/11

By Raphael S. Cohen

Source: <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/why-the-oct.-7-attack-wasn-t-israel-s-9-11>

Nov 12 – Ever since Oct. 7, [commentators](#), [scholars](#), [politicians](#), and [Israeli officials](#) have referred to the terrorist attack as a hyper-charged, Israeli version of 9/11. On its face, such a comparison makes sense. In both cases, the terrorist groups gained strategic surprise; this intelligence failure is magnified in Israel's case by the fact that it has been locked in a conflict with Hamas since the organization's founding and Gaza is quite literally on Israel's doorstep. Both events killed hundreds of civilians, although on a per-capita basis the Oct. 7 attack was about [15 times](#) the scale of 9/11. And both attacks prompted large-scale, and likely protracted, military responses—although Israel's war in Gaza promises to be, if anything, more intense. Israel has already [dropped](#) more bombs in Gaza than the United States dropped in Afghanistan in all of 2019.

The analogy between the Oct. 7 and 9/11 attacks is also useful in general terms. It conveys—particularly to U.S. audiences—the level of national shock and anger in Israeli society. Similarly, the analogy helps explain why [international calls](#) for a cease-fire are likely to be ignored within Israel. After all, the Israelis are [about as likely to sit down](#) and negotiate with Yahya Sinwar, the head of Hamas in Gaza, as the United States was to sit down and talk to Osama bin Laden a little over a month after 9/11. And there are some basic strategic lessons to be learned from the U.S. response to 9/11 that are applicable to Israel's unfolding operation in Gaza, most notably the need to think about [what comes after](#) the terrorist group is removed from power.

But beyond that, using Afghanistan as a template for Gaza—as [some](#) observers have [suggested](#)—is downright misleading. In particular, the argument that Israel should somehow perform a sort of standoff, a targeted counterterrorism campaign—with a handful of highly precise drone strikes but limited ground operations—or that military force is [somehow futile](#) in these situations, is just wrong. Operationally, the two conflicts couldn't be more different. Afghanistan was fought mostly in mountains and across sparsely populated terrain; Gaza is one of the [densest urban environments](#) on Earth. Israel also exerts a degree of control over Gaza that the United States and its allies were never able to achieve in Afghanistan, with its porous border with Pakistan. From a military standpoint, this means that Israel stands a [better chance of wresting](#) Gaza from Hamas's control than the United States and its allies did with the Taliban in Afghanistan, but Israel also faces a significantly more difficult task in minimizing the civilian casualties than the United States ever did.

Israel exists under a microscope that the United States never faced in Afghanistan, or Iraq, for that matter. After 9/11, dozens of countries joined the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. For the first time in its history, NATO [invoked](#) its Article V security guarantees. Even Iraq, a far more controversial operation, included a [fairly wide](#) international coalition. In contrast, in Israel's situation, the war is unilateral and Israel faces [multiple countries](#) recalling their ambassadors over its actions. That international pressure has constrained Israeli actions in previous Gaza wars. Whether such international pressure will prove decisive in this current war—given the scale and ferocity of the Oct. 7 attacks—is still to be determined. But the pressure will build the longer the conflict goes on, which may force Israel into fighting a shorter, sharper conflict, rather than a slow-burn one like Afghanistan.

The greatest differences between Oct. 7 and 9/11 come from their very different strategic contexts. Sept. 11 stemmed from bin Laden's hostility toward the Western way of life and the U.S. presence in the Middle East. By contrast, while the roots of the Oct. 7 attack lie partly in Hamas's long-standing [commitment to Israel's destruction](#), they also grew out of Israel's decades-long failed strategy of [mowing the grass](#) in Gaza—which attempted to both contain and deter Hamas in Gaza, while simultaneously not addressing any of the underlying economic and political conditions that had helped bring Hamas into power and keep it there. While Hamas's core supporters may not have changed, a more far-sighted Israeli policy could have at least undercut Hamas's popular support.

Which brings us to the most important difference between the wars provoked by the 9/11 and Oct. 7 attacks. In the Afghanistan war, the United States could eventually leave. It took the United States two decades to come to that conclusion, and the merits of that [decision](#) are still [open](#) for [debate](#), but the United



States nonetheless had that strategic choice. For the simple reason of geography, Israel lacks such an option. For better or worse, Israel and Gaza are fundamentally intertwined.

That last point, the sheer fact of geography, should highlight why the difference between the two conflicts—the United States in Afghanistan and Israel in Gaza—matters so much. The United States opted for a low-footprint counterterrorism approach in Afghanistan because most Americans—particularly by the end of the conflict—did not [actually care](#) enough to do much more than that. In the end, even that modest investment proved too much. The United States' [national clock](#) proved [shorter](#) than the Taliban's. It decided that 20 years of war was enough, so it packed up and left.

By contrast, for Israel, Gaza is not half a world away. It is right next door and will never be out of sight or out of mind. Such proximity presents Israel an opportunity of sorts to think and act for the long term. It can, if it so chooses, invest the time and resources to rebuild Gaza economically, politically, and societally, if only to prevent another Oct. 7-style attack from occurring in the future.

In other words, Gaza will not be Israel's Afghanistan, simply because stepping away is a luxury Israel cannot afford.

Raphael S. Cohen is the director of the Strategy and Doctrine Program at RAND's Project Air Force and the lead author of "From Cast Lead to Protective Edge: Lessons From Israel's Wars in Gaza" (RAND Corporation, 2017).

The drug that stimulates, and finances, terrorists

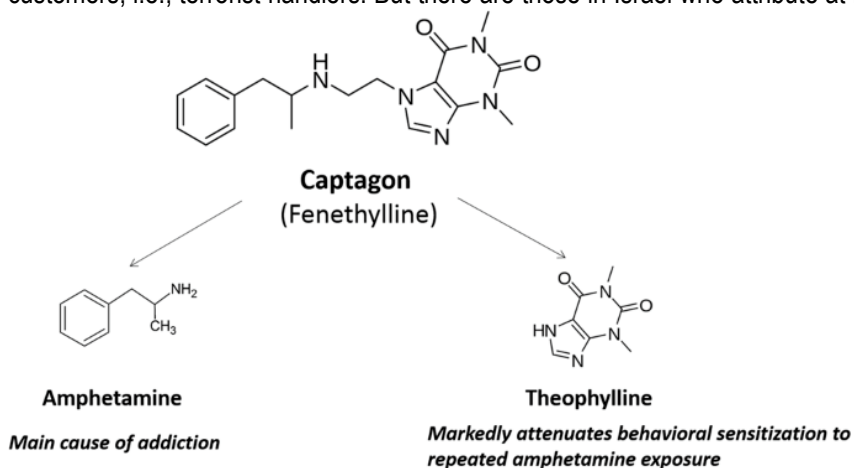
Source: <https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-The-drug-that-stimulates-and-finances-terrorists-1001462238>

Nov 12 – Captagon was found in large amounts on Hamas terrorists killed in the October 7 attack. How did an attention deficit disorder treatment become the engine of Arab terrorism?

Also known as ISIS' "chemical courage" and the "poor man's cocaine", l, and what role did it play in the October 7th massacre? Gali Weinreb "No matter how tired you are, it makes you wake up. Your senses become very sharp. Sometimes you don't sleep for 24 or 48 hours, depending on how many pills you take. If you shoot someone on Captagon, they don't feel it. And if someone takes many pills, like 30 or so, they become violent and crazy, paranoid, unafraid of anything... They'll have a thirst for fighting and killing and will shoot at whatever they see. They lose any feeling or empathy for the people in front of them and can kill them without caring at all. They forget about their mother, father, and their families. They build up a tolerance to it, so they always need to take more."

This is how one illegal manufacturer of the drug Captagon in Syria presented his wares in a 2015 interview with New York Magazine's ["Intelligencer"](#). Huge amounts of the stimulant, which has also earned a host of nicknames like "the terrorist drug" and "chemical courage", were found on the bodies and in the vehicles of thousands of Hamas terrorists who entered Israel on October 7.

It is unclear how accurate these descriptions are, or whether this is just a sales pitch of someone marketing fantasies to their customers, i.e., terrorist handlers. But there are those in Israel who attribute at least some of the cruel and inhuman behavior seen at the scenes of the massacre to the drug.



Metabolic scheme of Captagon (Fenethylamine). Captagon when orally dosed will go through the oxidative metabolism via cytochrome P450 (CYP450) enzyme, and in final be metabolized into 24.5% Amphetamine and 13.7% Theophylline. Amphetamine is the main cause of addiction, while Theophylline reduces the behavioral sensitization to repeated Amphetamine exposure, thus explain the less addictiveness of Fenethylamine than Amphetamine.

However, psychiatrists familiar with the effect of stimulants similar in composition to Captagon say that attributing the terrorists' actions to drugs is false. In fact, they say, these substances are not fundamentally different from the prescription drugs and party drugs routinely used by people who would never think of going on a killing spree.

"Substances do not make people cruel," says Dr. Shaul Lev-Ran, MD, Deputy Director of Lev Hasharon Medical Center and Founder and Head of the Israel Center on Addiction. "People make other people cruel through propaganda and brainwashing. The Hamas terrorists practiced their murderous plan, knew exactly what they were going to do, and took these drugs to help them do it."



Dr. Ilan Ruslan Volkov, psychiatrist and medical director at the MindME clinic, agrees. "Social mechanisms and dehumanization are at the base, but the drug gives you another little push to pull the trigger without thinking." According to him, drugs do make it possible to control soldiers who don't really want to be there, such as the guerrilla armies in Africa, which are built on very young soldiers, some of them children; addiction to a drug that only the army can provide ensures they will not try to run away.

But there is no evidence this was the case with the Hamas terrorists. "None of them ingested even a milligram innocently," says Lev Ran. "They knew the substance would help them kill more people and commit atrocities against them, that's exactly why they took it, and unfortunately, I think they feel they have fulfilled their evil mission."

Even if drugs are not at the root of the cruelty exhibited during the Hamas massacre, they are inseparable from terrorism in the Middle East. Captagon is the most popular stimulant in the region, known among other things as "the poor man's cocaine", and it fuels terrorism in the Arab world - both as a product consumed by the people carrying it out, and as a driver of the terrorist economy. The value of trade in the drug is estimated to be in the billions of dollars annually.



From construction workers to Gulf state elites

Fenethylamine (also phenethylamine and fenetylamine), marketed under the trade names Captagon, Fitton, and Biocapton, is a substance first synthesized in 1961 by German chemicals company Degussa AG. It was marketed, among other things, as a treatment for depression, and for attention disorders in children. Degussa itself has a dark history: it not only produced the Zyklon B gas used by the Nazi regime in the death camps, but also received and smelted gold teeth, caps, and fillings extracted from Jews before, or after, their murder. The company still operates, but under a different name and ownership.

Fenethylamine was marketed until the 1980s, and was considered healthier in terms of its effect on the heart, compared with other substances from the same family of stimulants - amphetamines - previously on the market. Over the years, it became clear the drug was highly addictive, and had other strong side effects; in 1981, it was banned in the US. Meanwhile, other drugs in the amphetamine category, such as Ritalin, became more popular as treatments for attention disorders, while more enjoyable stimulants, like cocaine, dominated the illegal drug scene in the West. But in the Arab world, Captagon remained a hit.

Today, however, a significant portion of the substances marketed on the black market as Captagon have none of the original active ingredient, but contain any stimulant or mind-altering substance the manufacturers manage to get their hands on. Captagon cannot be obtained in Israel at present, making it difficult to research. "It is probably common in the Palestinian Authority," says Lev Ran. "We haven't found it on the street in Israel, so we're not entirely sure what's in the pill called Captagon today. We know that the pills contain stimulants, and may contain a mixture of several stimulant substances, but we don't know exactly which ones."

Despite being closely connected to terrorist organizations, and its reputation in that area, Captagon has a far broader reach - used by everyone from construction workers to Gulf state elite partyers. The Saudi Arabian government, for example, estimates that a fairly large proportion of its population uses the drug. Saudi news websites run articles warning youths and young adults not to take Captagon for studying all night, or to lose weight, which are two common uses for the drug. "At higher doses, abusers can have aural and visual hallucinations, psychotic episodes or extreme dysphoria that manifests as paranoia or depression," stated Dr. Abdul Rahman bin Sultan Al-Sultan, a senior official in the Consumer Awareness Department of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority, in an article published by "Arab News." Saudi Arabia has declared the drug an epidemic and a national emergency.

The Captagon pills produced for terrorist use probably contain a different composition of substances than those sold to the recreational market. They are based on simple, cheap stimulants from the amphetamine family, whose effects include alertness, heightened senses, excessive confidence in one's abilities, lack of inhibition, and indifference to pain. The doses taken by terrorists also differ.

The cheap amphetamine flooding the Middle East

But why did Captagon become such a significant drug in the Arab world in general, and among Arab terrorists in particular? When the drug was removed from shelves in Western countries, part of the stock was destroyed, but part found its way to the Middle East. The decision to send this shipment had a dramatic effect on the development of the drug and terror network in the Arab world from the late 1980s onwards. When stocks ran out and demand remained, local Captagon production commenced.

"Lebanon was already a country with a very weak government," says Professor Simon Perry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Institute of Criminology, a former head of the Israel National Police (INP) Unit of International Crime Investigations, and a former INP attaché to the US and Canada at the rank of Brigadier General. "In places where governments are weak, all types of crime flourish. Lebanon at that time produced heroin and



hashish for the West, and also counterfeited cigarettes, dollars, and what not." When the demand for Captagon arose, so did another opportunity.

The drug was patented, but when the product went off the market, the patent was not maintained. Therefore, the big pharmaceutical companies had no interest in chasing its counterfeiters the way they chase those of expensive prescription drugs. The terrorist organizations, for their part, saw that they were onto a good thing. Hezbollah, followed by the parties fighting in Syria, began manufacturing Captagon, and marketing it in the Arab world, and a bit beyond. Presumably, Iran gave Hezbollah the first machines to produce the substance, and also took care of the *fatwas*, the Muslim religious rulings, qualifying its production and trade as a medicine, not a narcotic drug.

"Amphetamines began gaining greater popularity worldwide in the nineties," says Perry, "and Captagon is apparently a very easy amphetamine to produce, and its raw materials are cheap. But the European countries didn't need Lebanon for amphetamines. They had their own laboratories for their preferred amphetamines." On the other hand, the Arab world embraced the new product warmly. "That's how the substance began flowing to Jordan and the Gulf states," says Prof. Eyal Zisser of Tel Aviv University, who specializes in the contemporary history of Syria and Lebanon. "Then, the regime in Syria also collapsed, and the entire country became a Captagon production laboratory. The product is transported by drones and UAVs across borders. Saudi Arabia is flooded with it, Jordan is flooded with it." In 2015, even a Saudi Prince, Abdul-Mohsen bin Walid ibn Abd-Elaziz, was caught trying to smuggle large quantities of the substance into Saudi Arabia through Lebanon.

The political lever generating billions for Syria

The war on drugs is always a tussle between the government's wish to protect its population, and the temptation of potential big money generated by this industry. According to various reports, the cost of one Captagon pill ranges from half a dollar in Syria to as much as \$25 in Saudi Arabia. Estimated annual sales for the drug are in the billions of dollars, similar to the world's biggest pharmaceuticals.

The New Lines Institute, a US-based think tank, estimated the value of Captagon retail trade in 2021 at over \$5.7 billion, on the basis of large seizures alone. Official British government sources, on the other hand, put the number ten times higher, stating that, according to independent experts, the volume of illegal trade in Captagon is about \$57 billion annually.

According to the same UK government statement made in March this year, 80% of the world's Captagon supply is produced in Syria. According to the New Lines Institute, which has conducted several comprehensive studies on the subject, President Bashar al Assad's narrative before both the world and his people is that there is no Captagon production inside Syria, only smuggling through it. However, this claim blatantly contradicts evidence of Captagon production within the country. "...high-level cooperation should not be considered as the Syrian regime has not indicated any change in behavior and is incentivized to continue industrial-level Captagon production and trafficking," the Institute wrote in May, noting that change would come from those countries suffering from the phenomenon, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

"Ironically, the product is Syria's political leverage over its neighbors," says Prof. Perry. "They are trying to reach agreements with Bashar Assad, so that he will stop inundating them with Captagon." However, it is not so easy for Assad to control Captagon production, nor is it clear how much he wants to control it. "In order to be accepted by the Arab world, Assad promised to stop exporting Captagon, but this didn't happen," says Prof. Zisser. "Clearly the manufacturers and smugglers operate under the auspices of the government. And Hezbollah has a partnership with the Syrians. Drugs go out through one channel, and missiles come in through a parallel channel. The Lebanese government is trying to cooperate with the Americans to stop it, but it's not really working." Captagon's dual usage - on the one hand, a drug that finances terrorist organizations and, on the other hand, a drug fueling terrorism itself - makes this process particularly difficult to stop. Many of the world's terrorist organizations use it, and it flows easily through the terrorist channels. It became known in the West when it was used by the ISIS terrorists who carried out the 2015 Paris attacks. "This is the engine of terrorism and it keeps getting stronger," says Prof. Perry. "This economic enterprise helps terrorism, and thanks to the desire to continue making a living from Captagon, many parties find it convenient to let the terrorist regime continue. What can stop it? Another substance that will suddenly become more popular, giving another party the advantage in its production and distribution."

Khat fields feed the Houthi economy

Another stimulant, that plays a role like that of Captagon for the Houthis in Yemen, is an extract, or synthetic imitation, of the khat plant. Khat (also qat or gat), has been part of Yemeni culture since time immemorial, including among Yemenite Jews in Israel. Its active ingredient is cathinone, which, when chewed slowly in its natural form, is released at a low level into the bloodstream. The effects are described as hyper-sociability, enthusiasm, loss of appetite, and mild euphoria.



But the drug consumed in Yemen is more like "Hagigat" a popular, very potent cathinone extract once sold at Israeli all-night convenience stores until it was outlawed. There is also a synthetic version, which Israelis have nicknamed "Doctor," "MMC," or "Memesi"; chemical derivatives sufficiently different from cathinone that they do not fall under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance.

Apparently, the Houthis also use a potent extract, or a synthetic version of cathinone, to get a faster, stronger high. The effect of consuming the liquid extract in concentrate is different from the effect of chewing the plant slowly. The product is consumed by soldiers, mainly for alertness, but it does not reduce their brutality, even though its reputation in drug culture is as a prosocial, "good mood" drug.

Like Captagon elsewhere, this Super Khat drives the Houthi economy. Yemen has abundant fields of khat that can be processed, and sold all over the world to feed the war machine. This situation worsens the food shortage in Yemen, as no other crops can grow in khat fields, and water is used for irrigation instead of as drinking water. About 20% of households in Yemen have someone addicted to khat, usually the family father; the Houthis are happy to recruit such people as soldiers, and pay them in khat.

An army marches on its drugs

"Stimulant drugs have always been part of the history of war," says Volkov. The original war drug was alcohol, also called "bottled courage". Alcohol did impair a soldier's performance, but it also lowered inhibitions, and their sense of pain.

During World War I, cocaine was used among the armies. Officially, it was intended for medical pain relief purposes, but in practice it was also used as a performance enhancer. The product was not defined as a drug at the time, and the British Army distributed it freely to soldiers, but its addictive properties were soon discovered, and use of the product was declared illegal for soldiers in 1916. In the US, meanwhile, many soldiers who returned from the war developed opioid addiction, as morphine was used for pain relief by the military.

Just before World War II, the pharmaceutical world discovered synthetic amphetamines. These were probably used in abundance by all sides during the war, but especially by the Nazis. "There is a theory that amphetamines determined the outcome of the battle when the Nazis invaded France," says Volkov. "Fortifications were built to protect the borders for four or five days until reinforcements would come. But as the Germans didn't need to sleep, they shortened the timetable, circumvented the fortifications, and decided the battle." Hitler himself was also said to have been fueled by methamphetamine, an early version of crystal meth, along with opiates, steroids, and a continual cocktail of vitamins.

Towards the end of the war, the Germans tested a cocktail of cocaine, methamphetamine, and oxycodone (a type of opioid) on concentration camp prisoners, and found that those taking the drug could walk 90 kilometers a day without stopping, although many collapsed at day's end. The war ended before the new product, D-IX, could be widely used.

Today, stimulants are probably used by many armies in missions requiring constant alertness. For example, the Russian army apparently used stimulants in the invasion of Ukraine, to improve performance.

One can also encounter drugs in today's western armies. A 2007 survey of a US Army special operations unit found that about a quarter of soldiers took anabolic steroids to increase muscle mass, and speed recovery from injury. Similar results emerged from a US Navy investigation, after a soldier died during training in 2022. Apparently, some commanders had implicitly encouraged their soldiers to use these products.

Terror and the Secondary Trauma of Social Media

By Douglas Yeung

Source: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/11/terror-and-the-secondary-trauma-of-social-media.html>

Nov 04 – Like many, I've recently been using social media to follow [the war in the Middle East](#). As a habit, following news like this

makes a certain amount of sense—social media has often been one of the better sources for breaking information on emerging crises. Many aspects of this war are unique, but what is increasingly common is that my social media feeds, along with those of many others, are populated with extremely graphic images, many of which, having seen them, I fervently wished I could unsee. Yet I still felt compelled to follow the news, to seek out ever-more visceral [videos](#) and [details of this unfolding human tragedy](#).

I am far from alone in my exposure to this extreme content. And while it may seem like being an active, informed citizen requires such immersion in raw imagery, I am also a social psychologist and should know better.



Immersive Sensory Experiences Tied to Secondary Trauma

The effects of a traumatic event—and the events in Israel and Gaza are certainly that—are, as we psychologists well know, contagious. That is, their effects can spread well beyond their initial victims. In war, those victims include those who are displaced, injured, and killed, as well as those who have lost a loved one.

The effects of a traumatic event are contagious. That is, their effects can spread well beyond their initial victims.

The idea of secondary trauma recognizes that people indirectly exposed to an event like war can suffer as well.

Take, for example, [drone operators](#), who endlessly scan live footage and take split-second orders to fire rockets at suspected terrorists, then commute home in time for dinner. Even though they are not physically exposed to harm, these immersive sensory experiences become associated with real trauma. That jarring disconnect, especially because it often goes unacknowledged, becomes its own form of trauma for people in critical roles such as emergency rescuers, [social media content moderators](#), [law enforcement](#), and [intelligence analysts](#).

Secondary trauma was, for a long time, largely confined to people involved in the initial event, like first responders. Thanks to technology, however, it can now afflict anyone with a smartphone. And now, as graphic images from Israel and Gaza proliferate on social media, it is likely that these images are having significant negative impacts on the mental health and well-being of many—especially [adolescents](#) and [young adults](#), who already struggle mightily.

And Social Media Choices Help Spread Secondary Trauma

The proliferation of traumatizing social media content is, make no mistake, a deliberate choice. People post war dispatches for many reasons, such as to expose atrocities, but also to deceive and to serve as propaganda. Hamas attackers have [hijacked victims' social media accounts](#) to sow even more terror.

For their part, [social media platforms have actively encouraged](#) the [spread of misinformation](#)—this after [layoffs](#) shed their ability to weed it out. [Social media algorithms \(PDF\)](#) also drive people to extreme content, even when they're not actively looking for it.

The global mental health impacts of this war are only just beginning. But, like its casualties, they will likely be staggering. Social media companies could and should do more to moderate the virality of such content, but they have largely abdicated this responsibility. Many have [withdrawn from the business of providing news](#)—that is, accurate and relevant information—leaving behind a toxic stew of false and misleading posts. Communities might need to seek out less-toxic alternatives to the digital town square.

People post war dispatches for many reasons, such as to expose atrocities, but also to deceive and to serve as propaganda.

That mental health and health behaviors are contagious is both good and bad news. Parents should look to improve their own social media habits and model a healthy digital lifestyle for their kids. Digital health companies could also shift their focus [from individual to public health](#).

Young people are in many ways their own best hope. Today's youth are active and enthusiastic about shaping the world they will grow up in. Policymakers would do well to prioritize younger voices, concerns, and ideas when thinking through proposals toward building a less-traumatizing form of social media. Trauma is often described as a shattering of one's assumptions or worldviews. That is, when events collide with our expectations, beliefs, or hopes, we are forced to reconsider what is truly possible.

This latest war—set in a world still emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, grappling with social isolation and mental health crises—has provided plenty of traumatizing developments, with the grim promise of more to come. Mitigating their impact on global mental health might require some combination of regulations, “healthy” social networks, or personal behavior change.

It certainly requires making hard choices and doing the work to forge community bonds that prioritize everyone's well-being. And much of that work starts with knowing the spillover effects of trauma, and how it affects us all.

[Douglas Yeung](#) is a senior behavioral scientist at RAND Corporation and a member of the Pardee RAND Graduate School faculty.

German police raid group over alleged ties to Hezbollah, amid antisemitism crackdown

Source: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/german-police-raid-group-over-alleged-ties-to-hezbollah-amid-antisemitism-crackdown/>

Nov 16 – German police raided 54 locations across the country on Thursday in an investigation of a Hamburg-based center suspected of promoting Iranian ideology and supporting the activities of the Hezbollah terror group, the government said, as Berlin moves to stem a rash of antisemitism amid the Israel-Hamas war. The Interior Ministry said the Islamic Center Hamburg, or IZH, has long been under observation by Germany's domestic intelligence



agency. It said the activities of the group are aimed at spreading the “revolutionary concept” of Iran’s supreme leader.



Police officers search the 'Blue Mosque' housing the Islamic Centre of Hamburg, during raids across Germany over suspected links to the Iran-backed Hezbollah terror group in Hamburg, northern Germany on November 16, 2023 (Axel Heimken / AFP)

“We have the Islamist scene in our sights,” Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said in a statement. “Now in particular, at a time when many Jews feel particularly threatened, we tolerate no Islamist propaganda and no antisemitic and anti-Israel agitation.” Authorities were also looking into suspicions that the IZH supports banned activities in Germany by Lebanon’s Iran-backed Hezbollah terror group, which has repeatedly traded fire with Israel across the border since Hamas’s murderous onslaught last month in southern Israel, in which some 1,200 people were murdered, mostly civilians, and over 240 were kidnapped to Gaza.

The IZH runs a mosque in Hamburg. The Interior Ministry said German intelligence believes it exerts significant influence or full control over some other mosques and groups, and that they often promote a “clearly antisemitic and anti-Israel attitude.” It said authorities were examining whether it can be banned, and that material seized during the searches would be evaluated.

Wednesday’s raids were carried out in Hamburg and six other German states — Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria in the south; Berlin; and Hesse, North-Rhine Westphalia and Lower Saxony in the west and northwest. In addition to IZH, the investigation is also targeting five other groups suspected of being sub-organizations of it.

On November 2, the German interior minister [implemented a formal ban](#) on activity by or in support of Hamas and dissolved Samidoun, a group that was behind a celebration of the terror attack’s massacres in Israel, following up on a pledge made by Chancellor Olaf Scholz shortly after the attack.

Hamas Isn’t the First Military Group to Hide Behind Civilians as a Way to Wage War

By Benjamin Jensen

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20231117-hamas-isn-t-the-first-military-group-to-hide-behind-civilians-as-a-way-to-wage-war>

Nov 17 – The Israeli military said on Nov. 15, 2023, that it had found weapons and a [Hamas command center](#) at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, after sending troops into the medical facility.



Shifa has become the epicenter of Israel's ground invasion into Gaza, as the Israeli military says that Hamas has strategically placed its fighters and weapons in a broad tunnel system that connects to the hospital, and that Hamas is using hospital workers and [patients as human shields](#). The U.S. says its intelligence shows that Hamas, as The New York Times wrote, "has been using hospitals in Gaza, including Al-Shifa, [as command centers and ammunitions depots](#)." Hamas [has denied the allegations](#).

The hospital complex now houses about 700 patients, 400 health workers and 3,000 Palestinians who are displaced from their homes, [according to United Nations figures](#).

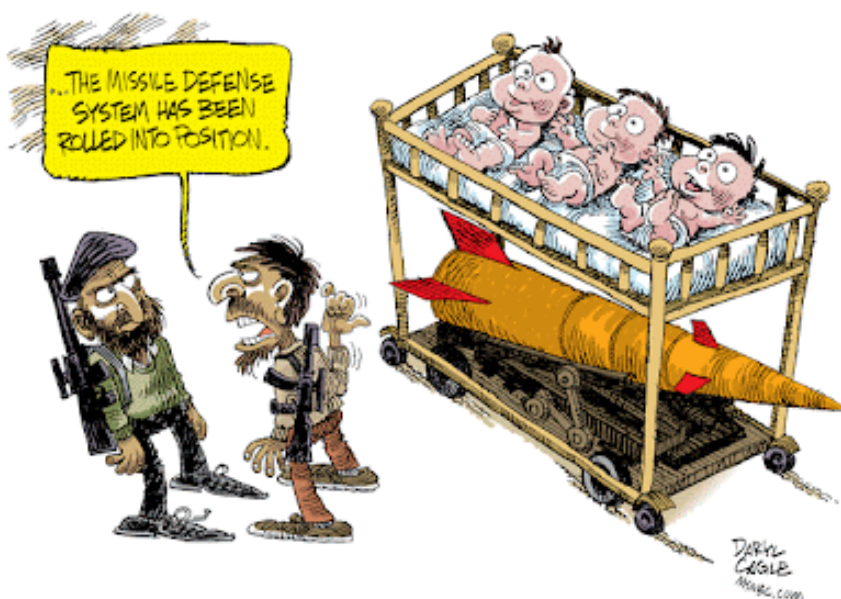
This is far from the first time that a military group has allegedly used civilians to shield themselves and their weapons, says [Benjamin Jensen](#), a war strategy expert from American University School of International Service who served 20 years in the military.

Jensen explained that civilians often become pawns in war when one side does not have a military advantage against a stronger adversary – and looks for other ways to weaken their opponent.

1. What purpose does using civilians to shield fighters serve in a conflict?

Using places and things civilians need, like hospitals, as a means to fight a war is considered a weapon of the weak. It is a way to use another side's values against it. I think it is clear that Hamas has – in this war [and historically](#) – tried to embed [themselves and weapons in places civilians live or visit](#), in order to make it more difficult for the Israelis to target them.

One question in war is, "How do I raise the cost that my adversary has to incur in order to attack me?" Your goal is to gain a relative advantage at the lowest possible cost to yourself, and with the lowest possible benefit for your adversary. And in this case, the costs to Israel are [damage to its reputation](#) and legitimacy, among some people, because of the [civilians it is killing](#) in Gaza while targeting Hamas.



2. Are fighters hiding behind or among civilians a new way of waging a war?

Using civilians to further a military advantage is not a new phenomenon.

We still have this ridiculous image of war looking like people lined up in neat rows, meeting each other in defined fields of battle. But that flies in the face of the actual history of warfare historically, and especially in the 21st century.

In the Japanese attack on the British stronghold of Singapore in 1942, during World War II, for example, one of the key features of Japan's approach was to bomb [people's water sources](#), in order to more rapidly compel the British surrender.

We've seen adversaries in [multiple modern conflicts](#) hide behind or among civilians. It's sad, because it means the only truth in war is that there will be tragedy, and civilians will pay the heaviest price.

3. Where else has this happened?

Even if you go back to the Vietnam War, you can find [examples of the Viet Cong](#) sometimes using the same routes or vehicles that were used for aid delivery to civilians. Wars dating back to the [Bosnian civil war](#) in the early 1990s are really where you start to see more examples of fighters trying to shield themselves with civilians or with U.N. peacekeepers, as happened in Bosnia.

We've seen the [Taliban in Afghanistan hiding in civilians' homes and in hospitals](#), as well as storing [weapons in mosques](#). The Taliban were very good at being fluid and moving in and out of civilian areas that would make it difficult to strike them.

The [battle of Mosul](#), between the Islamic State group and the Iraqi government from 2016 through 2017, was another example of this. The Islamic State fighters herded an estimated 100,000 civilians together and used them as [civilian shields](#).

Even in the case of the Ukraine war, Russian President Vladimir Putin has openly [declared war](#) on the entire society of Ukraine. But it's possible that some of Russia's [strikes against hospitals](#) in Ukraine happened because Russian intelligence received information that Ukraine may or may not have been moving soldiers or items in and out of the hospital.



Countries with weak or ineffective controls are attractive to money launderers and financiers of terrorism. These criminals seek to conceal their criminal activities by exploiting the complexity of the global financial system, differences between national laws, and the speed at which money can cross borders.

There are five crucial components of terrorism: the involvement of a violent act, an audience, the creation of a mood of fear, innocent victims, and political goals or motives. David C. Rapoport's 2004 essay, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism", is one of the most influential and widely debated theories in the field of terrorism studies. In his essay, Professor Rapoport outlines a wave system that maps the history of modern terrorism since the late 19th century; more importantly for our purposes, it attempts to take the "complex phenomenon of terrorism and put it in a historical context that not only explained different periods of international terrorism but also sets forth theories and concepts that may be used to attempt to anticipate the future of terrorism." A new fifth wave will emerge and take over in the next decade, and these alternative futures will pose ethical challenges for lawmakers and policy officials in balancing public safety and freedom.

The New Left wave started to ebb during the 1980s with the end of the Cold War. The effectiveness of participating terrorist groups was weakened by their inability to negotiate conflicting demands imposed by various international elements operating together. Working through the competing needs of different groups resulted in the neglect of their domestic bases. The coming together of the Left wokes with the Islamists and jihadi terrorists is that they follow similar tactics: fundamentally, both have deviated from their foundational principles.

The religious wave was precipitated by three major events in the Islamic world. The Iranian Revolution, the beginning of a new Islamic century, and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan all of which paved the way for religious fundamentalism to gain momentum and eclipse secular and political beliefs that motivated previous waves. In 1979, after almost two years of civil unrest and demonstrations, the Iranian Revolution unfolded, culminating in the overthrow and exile of the Shah, replacing a secular state with an Islamic Republic. The new Ayatollah regime encouraged ways to export the revolution and inspired terrorist activity in neighbouring states with large Muslim populations, including Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. To outside observers, the Iranian Revolution was unexpected, but many Muslims believed the 1979 revolution would hold significant meaning for them as it marked the start of a new Islamic century. They believed a "redeemer" would appear, a tradition that "sparked uprisings at the turn of earlier Muslim centuries." Militant Islamists stormed the Grand Mosque in Mecca at the start of the new year, protesting the Saudi government, which they believed had abandoned Islamic principles.

Violent militant Islamist groups are at the heart of the religious wave and have conducted the most significant and deadly international attacks since the 1990s, but they are not the only religious terrorist organizations using violence to achieve their goals. Groups like Boko Haram, Hamas, Al Qaeda and its affiliates, Hezbollah, and ISIS have received the most international attention since the start of the religious wave.

The deep emotional resonance created by extreme religious ideology, coupled with advances in technology and other effects of globalization, have made the religious wave of terrorism the most durable and difficult to contain. Rapoport warns that the wave pattern is so interesting and frightening that issues emerge unexpectedly to inspire terrorism, and there is no way to predict what they may be. Religious conflict involves the will of a higher power that is non-negotiable, and states cannot satisfy the demands of religiously motivated terrorists on a mission to carry out the "Word of God." Jihadi terror inspires genocidal violence to separate from the modern world, and the destruction of Western influences—including Marxism and all its varieties—is necessary to achieve their prime objective of establishing a Caliphate.

Technology and its knowledge and use are central to the Jihadi terror—very much like the Left and wokes, they talk of equality, but some are more equal, especially the woke leadership who live in extreme luxury, which many democratic leaders cannot even dream of. It involves successful cyber-terrorism attacks intending to sabotage critical infrastructure, disrupt governments and businesses, and manipulate international financial systems. Attacks in cyberspace may be carried out by a lone wolf, acting independently or as formal groups operating under the direction of their leadership. The next generation of terrorists has grown up in a digital world, and their technical knowledge related to hacking is greater than their predecessors. They know how to penetrate sophisticated systems and bypass computer security defences, allowing them to safely and anonymously launch attacks from anywhere worldwide, while quickly adjusting their tactics in response to counterterrorism and enhanced security measures.

Terrorists motivated by religion view their mission as a holy directive, making their goals irrefutable and non-negotiable. All major world religions have extremists that have used violence to further their perceived religious goals, but Islamist terrorist organizations have been the most active and are currently the greatest threat; some of their leaders are the neo-rich and have turned NGOs and terror into businesses to make money by violence while instilling fears among the masses.

Prof. Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit is the Vice Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University.



Houthi Islamic rebels seize ship in Red Sea, no Israelis among owners or crew: Israeli PM

Source: <https://tvpworld.com/74208215/houthi-islamic-rebels-seize-ship-in-red-sea-no-israelis-among-owners-or-crew-israeli-pm>



Nov 19 – Israel said on Sunday that Yemen’s Houthi rebels had seized a British-owned and Japanese-operated cargo ship in the southern Red Sea, describing the incident as an “Iranian act of terrorism” with consequences for international maritime security.

The Houthis, an ally of Tehran, have been launching long-range missile and drone salvos at Israel in solidarity with the Palestinian Hamas militants it has been battling in the Gaza Strip since October 7.

Last week, the Houthi leader said his forces would make **further attacks on Israel and they could target**

Israeli ships in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. There was no immediate comment from the Houthis but a spokesperson of the group said earlier on Sunday that all ships owned or operated by Israeli companies, or carrying the Israeli flag could be targeted. A U.S. Defense official said, “we’re aware of the situation and are closely monitoring it”.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said a ship - which it did not name - had been seized, and stressed that **Israel was not involved in its ownership, operation, or the make-up of its international crew.** “There were no Israelis on the ship,” it said. “This is **another Iranian act of terrorism that represents an escalation in Iran’s belligerence against the citizens of the free world,** with concomitant international ramifications vis-à-vis the security of global shipping routes.”

The Israeli military said in an earlier statement the ship seizure took place in the Red Sea.

EDITOR’S COMMENT: I wrote in the preface about the possibility of piracy incidents in the Mediterranean Sea. Now piracy has evolved in the Red Sea. Another proof that the unexpected is the new normal.

Agroterrorism: Nigeria’s awareness and preparedness

By Femi Oluwasanmi (Nigeria)

Source: <https://tribuneonlineng.com/agroterrorism-nigerias-awareness-and-preparedness/>

Nov 20 – Recent acceleration in multidimensional manifestation of the unscrupulous elements masquerading as Boko Haram, bandits, killer herdsmen, among others in Nigeria, has raised concern on the possibility of terrorists using pathogens to attack agricultural targets. This perhaps is inevitable



considering the increase in the threat of biological warfare from the superpowers in their egoistic struggle for supremacy on the global stage. While addressing the grouping of colleagues from post Soviet Union Republics on 8th November, 2023, the Russian Security Council Secretary, Nikolai Patrushev, said that the natural consequence of the United States and its allies' destructive policies is the deterioration in the global security, and are increasing the risk that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons would be used. Though he gave no specific details of where the weapons might be used or who would use it, the security situation in Nigeria and the hardship experienced during COVID-19 shows that such warning must not be taken for granted.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria witnessed natural biological incidents that resulted in famine and other unpalatable phenomena. For instance, the outbreak of desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*) swarm between 2003-2004 caused significant crop losses in the North West of Nigeria as well as most of the countries in West Africa to the extent that the then Senegalese President, Abdoulaye Wade, had to launch an appeal for planes, pick-up trucks, radio, protective clothing and spraying equipment to step up locust control campaign. The same was the experience when the avian flu epidemic spread from the index case on a farm in Kaduna State to 25 states within months in 2006 and its resurgence in 2008. A similar thing would have happened in 2013 if Ebola was not quickly detected and addressed. This might be worst in the case of a deliberate release of viruses, bacteria, toxins or other harmful agents to cause illness or death in animals, humans or harms to plant putting into consideration the "nature and character of Nigerian state".

Nigeria is a complex country amalgamated by Fredrick Lord Lugard in 1914. It gained independence in 1960 but continues to experience different forms of challenges that snowballed to civil war between 1967-70 and continue to drive ethnic/religious configuration, coloration and crisis in the struggle for authoritative allocation of values and power. The ethnic/religious cards contributed to the failure of the government to quickly deal with the Boko Haram issue at infancy in 2009 and continue to fuel its expansion. Through the activities of the sect more than 35, 000 people have loss their lives while over 2 million have been displaced. With greater access to cheap but powerful biotechnology tools that needs little or no expertise to operate, it's obvious that the terrorist groups might resort to manufacturing dangerous pathogens or modifying easily accessible ones to make them more suitable for agro-terrorism in order to further wreck havocs on the people through food scarcity and crisis.

Agro-terrorism is a subset of bioterrorism that has to do with deliberate introduction of detrimental agents, biological and otherwise, into the agricultural and food processing system with the intent of causing actual or perceived harm in order to intimidate or coerce a government or civilian population to further political or social objectives. The damage from this attack especially, when it's zoonotic in nature can cause widespread illness and death, instill fear and panic, cause food scarcity/crisis on a global scale among others. For instance, more than 3500 horses were sickened during world war I when the German agents in the United States infected the horses and cattle in transit across the Atlantic to France with anthrax and glanders before they were shipped from U.S. ports to Britain and France, making them unfit for wartime service by the time they arrived Europe. The same was the experience when a religious cult intentionally contaminated 10 restaurant salad bars with Salmonella, sickening more than 750 people in an attempt to influence the outcome of a local election at Dalles, Oregon, United States in 1994.

In 1952, a nationalist movement known as Mau Mau also poisoned 33 cattle at a British mission station using a local toxic plant called "African milk bush" in Kenya. While a group of Tamil separatists threatened to spread non-endemic plant disease among rubber and tea plantation in a scheme to undermine the government in the early 1980s. Although, there have not been a report(s) of agro-terrorism in Nigeria, however, putting into consideration the security and economic ties Nigeria has with the United States and many countries in the West, it will be suicidal to underestimate what the local terrorists like Boko Haram, bandits, killer herdsmen, and Islamic state in West Africa (ISWAP) can do with such tool at their disposal since the terrorists groups work in close network. The United States is the largest foreign investor in Nigeria. The trade in goods between the countries totaled over \$8.1 billion in 2022, making Nigeria the second largest U.S. export destination in Sub-Saharan Africa. U.S. exports to Nigeria include vehicles, wheat, machinery, fuels, and plastics. While Nigerian exports to the United States include crude oil, cocoa, cashew nuts, and animal feed. Contamination of the goods with pathogens will certainly have grave impact on both countries.

The 'anthrax letter' attack in New York in 2001 led to the rolling out of \$320 million in order to deep clear the building involved. Similarly, the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in the UK in 2001 cost the country \$21 billion while the dioxin contaminated animal feed in Netherlands in 2006 cost the country \$ 1 billion.

The chestnut blight occasioned by the cultivation of Japanese chestnut trees in the united states in 1904, virtually eliminated American Chestnut as canopy spaces in more than 8.8 million acres in 50 years despite the fact that it was not intentional.

That is why it's necessary to create more awareness on the damage an agro-terrorism can cause in or cost Nigeria, invest in researches that can lead to the development of mobile devices that can quickly detect and differentiate natural biological incident from the terroristic act, create national and regional counter agro-terrorism squads so that Nigeria can be strongly immuned to resist any biological attack from the terrorists or discharge by the super powers in their quest for supremacy on the global stage.



The Epicenter of International Terrorism

By Nick Turse

Source: <https://fpif.org/the-epicenter-of-international-terrorism/>



Nov 20 – America’s Global War on Terror has seen its share of stalemates, disasters, and outright defeats. During 20-plus years of armed interventions, the United States has watched its efforts implode in spectacular fashion, from Iraq in 2014 to Afghanistan in 2021. The greatest failure of its “Forever Wars,” however, may not be in the Middle East, but in Africa.

“Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated,” President George W. Bush told [the American people](#) in the immediate wake of the 9/11 attacks, noting specifically that such militants had designs on “vast regions” of Africa.

To shore up that front, the U.S. began a decades-long effort to provide copious amounts of security assistance, train many thousands of African military officers, set up dozens of outposts, [dispatch its own commandos](#) on all manner of missions, [create proxy forces](#), launch [drone strikes](#), and even engage in direct [ground combat](#) with militants in Africa. Most Americans, including [members of Congress](#), are unaware of the extent of these operations. As a result, few realize how dramatically America’s shadow war there has failed.

The raw numbers alone speak to the depths of the disaster. As the United States was beginning its Forever Wars in 2002 and 2003, the State Department counted a total of just [nine terrorist attacks](#) in Africa. This year, militant Islamist groups on that continent have, according to the Pentagon, already conducted 6,756 attacks. In other words, since the United States ramped up its counterterrorism operations in Africa, terrorism has spiked 75,000%.

Let that sink in for a moment.

75,000%.

A Conflict that Will Live in Infamy

The U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq opened to military successes in [2001](#) and [2003](#) that quickly devolved into sputtering occupations. In both countries, Washington’s plans hinged on its ability to create national armies that could assist and eventually take over the fight against enemy forces. Both U.S.-created militaries would, in the end, crumble. In Afghanistan, a two-decade-long war ended in 2021 with



the rout of an American-built, -funded, -trained, and -armed military as the Taliban recaptured the country. In Iraq, the Islamic State nearly triumphed over a [U.S.-created Iraqi army](#) in 2014, forcing Washington to reenter the conflict. U.S. troops [remain embattled](#) in Iraq and neighboring Syria to this very day.

In Africa, the U.S. launched a parallel campaign in the early 2000s, supporting and training African troops from Mali in the west to Somalia in the east and [creating proxy forces](#) that would fight alongside American commandos. To carry out its missions, the U.S. military set up a [network of outposts](#) across the northern tier of the continent, including significant drone bases – from [Camp Lemonnier](#) and its satellite outpost [Chabelley Airfield](#) in the sun-bleached nation of Djibouti to [Air Base 201](#) in Agadez, Niger — and tiny facilities with small contingents of American special operations troops in nations ranging from Libya and Niger to the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

For almost a decade, Washington's war in Africa stayed largely under wraps. Then came a decision that sent Libya and the vast Sahel region into a tailspin from which they have never recovered.

"We came, we saw, he died," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton [joked](#) after a U.S.-led NATO air campaign helped overthrow Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi, the longtime Libyan dictator, in 2011. President Barack Obama hailed the intervention as a success, but Libya slipped into near-failed-state status. Obama would later admit that "failing to plan for the day after" Qaddafi's defeat was the "[worst mistake](#)" of his presidency.

As the Libyan leader fell, Tuareg fighters in his service looted his regime's weapons caches, returned to their native Mali, and began to take over the northern part of that nation. Anger in Mali's armed forces over the government's ineffective response resulted in a 2012 military coup. It was led by Amadou Sanogo, an officer who learned English in Texas and underwent infantry-officer basic training in Georgia, military-intelligence instruction in Arizona, and was mentored by U.S. Marines in Virginia.

Having overthrown Mali's democratic government, Sanogo and his junta proved hapless in battling terrorists. With the country in turmoil, those Tuareg fighters declared an independent state, only to be muscled aside by heavily armed Islamists who instituted a harsh brand of Shariah law, causing a humanitarian crisis. A joint Franco-American-African mission prevented Mali's complete collapse but pushed the militants into areas near the borders of both Burkina Faso and Niger.

Since then, those nations of the West African Sahel have been plagued by terrorist groups that have evolved, splintered, and reconstituted themselves. Under the black banners of jihadist militancy, men on motorcycles — two to a bike, wearing sunglasses and turbans, and armed with Kalashnikovs — regularly roar into villages to impose *zakat* (an Islamic tax); steal animals; and terrorize, assault, and kill civilians. Such relentless attacks have destabilized Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger and are now affecting their southern neighbors along the Gulf of Guinea. Violence in Togo and Benin has, for example, jumped 633% and 718% over the last year, according to the Pentagon.

U.S.-trained militaries in the region have been unable to stop the onslaught and civilians have suffered horrifically. During 2002 and 2003, terrorists caused just 23 casualties in Africa. This year, according to the Pentagon, terrorist attacks in the Sahel region alone have resulted in 9,818 deaths — a 42,500% increase.

At the same time, during their counterterrorism campaigns, America's military partners in the region have committed gross atrocities of their own, including extrajudicial killings. In 2020, for example, a top political leader in Burkina Faso admitted that his country's security forces were carrying out [targeted executions](#). "We're doing this, but we're not shouting it from the rooftops," he told me, noting that such murders were good for military morale.

American-mentored military personnel in that region have had only one type of demonstrable "success": overthrowing governments the United States trained them to protect. At least [15 officers who benefited from such assistance](#) have been involved in 12 coups in West Africa and the greater Sahel during the war on terror. The list includes officers from Burkina Faso (2014, 2015, and twice in 2022); Chad (2021); Gambia (2014); Guinea (2021); Mali (2012, 2020, and 2021); Mauritania (2008); and Niger (2023). At least [five leaders](#) of a July coup in Niger, for example, received American assistance, according to a U.S. official. They, in turn, appointed five U.S.-trained members of the Nigerien security forces to serve as that country's governors.

Military coups of that sort have even [super-charged atrocities](#) while undermining American aims, yet the United States continues to provide such regimes with counterterrorism support. Take [Colonel Assimi Goïta](#), who worked with U.S. Special Operations forces, participated in U.S. training exercises, and attended the Joint Special Operations University in Florida before overthrowing Mali's government in 2020. Goïta then took the job of vice president in a transitional government officially charged with returning the country to civilian rule, only to seize power again in 2021.

That same year, his junta reportedly authorized the deployment of the Russia-linked Wagner mercenary forces to fight Islamist militants after close to two decades of failed Western-backed counterterrorism efforts. Since then, Wagner — a paramilitary group founded by the late [Yevgeny Prigozhin](#), a [former hot-dog vendor turned warlord](#) — has been implicated in [hundreds of human rights abuses](#) alongside the longtime U.S.-backed Malian military, including a 2022 [massacre](#) that killed 500 civilians.



Despite all of this, American military aid for Mali has never ended. While Goïta's 2020 and 2021 coups triggered [prohibitions](#) on some forms of U.S. security assistance, American tax dollars have continued to fund his forces. [According to the State Department](#), the U.S. provided more than \$16 million in security aid to Mali in 2020 and almost \$5 million in 2021. As of July, the department's Bureau of Counterterrorism was waiting on congressional approval to transfer an additional \$2 million to Mali. (The State Department did not reply to *TomDispatch's* request for an update on the status of that funding.)

The Two-Decade Stalemate

On the opposite side of the continent, in Somalia, stagnation and stalemate have been the watchwords for U.S. military efforts. "Terrorists associated with Al Qaeda and indigenous terrorist groups have been and continue to be a presence in this region," a senior Pentagon official claimed in 2002. "These terrorists will, of course, threaten U.S. personnel and facilities." But when pressed about an actual spreading threat, the official admitted that even the most extreme Islamists "really have not engaged in acts of terrorism outside Somalia." Despite that, U.S. Special Operations forces were dispatched there in 2002, followed by military aid, advisers, trainers, and private contractors.

More than 20 years later, U.S. troops are still conducting counterterrorism operations in Somalia, primarily against the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab. To this end, Washington has provided billions of dollars in counterterrorism assistance, according to a [recent report by the Costs of War Project](#). Americans have also conducted [more than 280 air strikes and commando raids](#) there, while the CIA and special operators [built up local proxy forces](#) to conduct low-profile military operations.

Since President Joe Biden took office in January 2021, the U.S. has launched 31 declared airstrikes in Somalia, six times the number carried out during President Obama's first term, though far fewer than the record high set by President Trump, whose administration launched 208 attacks from 2017 to 2021.

[America's long-running, undeclared war in Somalia](#) has become a key driver of violence in that country, according to the Costs of War Project. "The U.S. is not simply contributing to conflict in Somalia, but has, rather, become integral to the inevitable continuation of conflict in Somalia," reported [Eniolá Ànúolúwapo Sóyemí](#), a lecturer in political philosophy and public policy at the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University. "U.S. counterterrorism policies are," she wrote, "ensuring that the conflict continues in perpetuity."

The Epicenter of International Terrorism

"Supporting the development of professional and capable militaries contributes to increasing security and stability in Africa," said General William Ward, the first chief of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) — the umbrella organization overseeing U.S. military efforts on the continent — in 2010, before he was demoted for [profligate travel and spending](#). His predictions of "increasing security and stability" have, of course, never come to pass.

While the 75,000% increase in terror attacks and 42,500% increase in fatalities over the last two decades are nothing less than astounding, the most recent increases are no less devastating. "A 50-percent spike in fatalities tied to militant Islamist groups in the Sahel and Somalia over the past year has eclipsed the previous high in 2015," according to a July report by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, a Defense Department research institution. "Africa has experienced a nearly four-fold increase in reported violent events linked to militant Islamist groups over the past decade... Almost half of that growth happened in the last 3 years."

Twenty-two years ago, George W. Bush announced the beginning of a Global War on Terror. "The Taliban must act, and act immediately," he [insisted](#). "They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate." Today, of course, the Taliban reigns supreme in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda was never "stopped and defeated," and other terror groups have spread across Africa (and elsewhere). The only way "to defeat terrorism," Bush asserted, was to "eliminate it and destroy it where it grows." Yet it has grown, and spread, and a plethora of new militant groups have emerged.

Bush [warned](#) that terrorists had designs on "vast regions" of Africa but was "confident of the victories to come," assuring Americans that "we will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail." In country after country on that continent, the U.S. has, indeed, faltered and its failures have been paid for by ordinary Africans killed, wounded, and displaced by the terror groups that Bush pledged to "defeat." Earlier this year, General Michael Langley, the current AFRICOM commander, offered what may be the ultimate verdict on America's Forever Wars on that continent. "Africa," [he declared](#), "is now the epicenter of international terrorism."

[Nick Turse](#) is the managing editor of *TomDispatch* and a fellow at the [Type Media Center](#). He is the author most recently of [Next Time They'll Come to Count the Dead: War and Survival in South Sudan](#) and of the bestselling [Kill Anything That Moves](#).





Hamas's Asymmetric Advantage

What Does It Mean to Defeat a Terrorist Group?

By Audrey Kurth Cronin

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/hamas-asymmetric-advantage-gaza-cronin>

Nov 22 – Israel responded to Hamas's horrific attack on October 7 with overwhelming force. In the wake of the bloody terrorist raid, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant vowed to "wipe Hamas off the face of the earth." The Israeli military called up over 350,000 reservists and launched attacks on the Gaza Strip with the aim of eliminating the political and military wings of Hamas. Since then, Israeli forces have killed thousands of Palestinians, many of them women and children, piling agony on top of agony.

That Israel met Hamas's violence with violence is not remotely surprising, given the Israeli military's incomparable conventional military superiority to [Hamas](#). Israel has long responded to Palestinian terrorism with inordinate force. The Israeli military is stronger, larger, and better resourced than Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups, and Israeli planners know that their foes cannot go toe to toe with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Yet Israel's military advantages are growing slimmer. Hamas has proved difficult, if not impossible, to vanquish with military force. Technology has shrunk the gap between states and terrorists, allowing nonstate groups to behave in ways that mimic the operations of countries; Hamas can launch sophisticated attacks and spread propaganda much as Israel can. Ancient tactics, too, such as the construction of a warren of tunnels beneath Gaza, have helped Hamas fend off a more powerful adversary. And Hamas gained leverage by capturing some 240 hostages. States have always struggled to defeat terrorist groups, but the Israel-Hamas war shows why it has gotten even harder to do so.

For [Israel](#), perhaps the most galling outcome of this asymmetry is that its armed forces may have played squarely into Hamas's hands by striking Gaza with tremendous force. Hamas was founded with the goal of eradicating Israel, but the group is not capable of doing that, so it wields terrorism to gain attention and allies. The bloodshed on October 7 was intended to provoke the Israeli military into an overreaction that would undermine international sympathy for Israel, stoke an uprising in the West Bank and Jerusalem, and rally support for Hamas, notably from Iran and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. Hamas has used the deaths of both Israelis and Palestinian civilians to promote its political agenda. In many ways, the group has succeeded. The best way for Israel to defeat Hamas, therefore, is to regain the moral high ground by moderating its use of force and offering more protection to Palestinian civilians. It will be difficult for Israeli leaders to show restraint



because their constituents are furious. But doing so is the only way Israel can cut off Hamas's ability to draw support and incite further violence.

CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

States no longer have a monopoly on the resources needed to project power and promote narratives. Many advances in technology have disproportionately benefited terrorist groups. In fact, modern terrorism can be chalked up to the invention of dynamite in 1867. Previous gunpowder projectiles—such as seventeenth-century grenades or Orsini bombs, the spiky explosives used by anarchists in the nineteenth century—were finicky and heavy. But dynamite is easily concealed under clothing and can be swiftly lit and tossed at a target. The result was terrorism carried out by small groups and individuals, such as the 1881 assassination by dynamite of the Russian Tsar Alexander II.

The Kalashnikov assault rifle, also known as the AK-47, was the next major technological boon to terrorists. Firearms had been around for centuries but were expensive, difficult to maintain, and more effective in the hands of trained professionals. Early machine guns, including Gatling and Maxim guns, were used by European colonial powers to wreak devastation, as when British soldiers killed hundreds of Zulu warriors in 1879 in the Battle of Ulundi in what is today South Africa. The same gun models were used by private security forces, federal and state troops, and police departments to put down labor strikes; in 1892, the Pennsylvania National Guard used Gatling guns to end a strike at the Carnegie Steel Company.

The AK-47, invented in 1947 in the [Soviet Union](#), changed the equation in favor of nonstate actors. It was easy to carry and use, weighing around ten pounds. Today it is thought to be the most widely used firearm in history, earning its reputation as a symbol for terrorists around the world. The al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden often had a later-model Kalashnikov propped up behind him in his video addresses. Hezbollah's flag bears an assault rifle similar to the AK-47. The statistics are telling: between 1775 and 1945, insurgents won against state armies about 25 percent of the time. Since 1945, that figure has jumped to around 40 percent. Much of that change can be attributed to the introduction and global spread of the AK-47.

On October 7, Hamas militants appear to have used old Chinese and Soviet AK-47s to storm Israeli military outposts, kill civilians, and take hostages. But they also used some relatively new tactics and technologies. The group began its assault by firing thousands of rockets to overwhelm Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, another terrorist group based in Gaza, have smuggled rockets from Iran and can make some explosives and missiles themselves from commercial parts. Earlier Qassam missiles built by Hamas around 2005 had a range of about ten miles. The missiles they used on October 7 can travel 150 miles. Like the Ukrainians, who have successfully used commercial drones to attack tanks and troops, Hamas and PIJ have been innovative in building their own weapons systems. To avoid Israeli air defenses, Hamas launched dozens of Zouari suicide drones, fixed-wing weapons that Hamas made with materials that are available in Gaza. Hamas also used small commercial-grade drones to drop grenades on Israeli observation towers and on remotely operated machine guns. Such drones can be purchased online and can evade Israel's radar systems by flying slowly and close to the ground. Hamas's attack was successful because it inundated Israeli defenses with cheap, accessible weapons.

A revolution in information technology has also benefited terrorists, allowing them to magnify the impact of their violence. The invention of satellite television facilitated an uptick in global terrorism in the 1970s: over the last 50 years, the Global Terrorism Database notes, the highest number of terrorist attacks in the combined regions of North America and western Europe was recorded in 1979. Satellite television enabled terrorists to publicize their cause, drawing support and recruits. Black September, a terrorist group connected to the Palestine Liberation Organization, took advantage of satellite television when it kidnapped and murdered 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich in front of 800 million television viewers, reaching roughly one in five people on the planet. The massacre raised the profile of Palestinian nationalism and sparked copycat attacks, even though Israel obliterated Black September after the Munich killings.

Social media has had a comparable effect on terrorism. Hamas is now on a similar footing with Israel in its ability to project its own narrative about the war. Hamas uses the messaging app Telegram to recruit new members and spread misinformation. Even after Israel cut off electricity and shut down the Internet in Gaza, Hamas was able to proliferate disinformation on messaging apps and social media by relying on a global army of sympathizers. Such blackouts may have mostly hurt Israel, as they made it more difficult for trusted media organizations to verify facts on the ground. A great deal of the online information about the Israel-Hamas war is challenging to collect and verify. Many observers unintentionally promote falsehoods, including well-meaning nongovernmental organizations, media outlets, and open-source intelligence groups that make every effort to cross-reference videos and photographs of the war through the use of satellite imagery, maps, geolocation tools, and reverse image searches. In late October, for example, *The New York Times* acknowledged that its initial reporting on an explosion at a hospital in Gaza City a few days earlier had "relied too heavily on claims by Hamas government officials"



that “an Israeli airstrike was the cause.” The U.S., Canadian, and French governments said later that evidence suggested that the explosion was caused by an errant missile fired from within Gaza.

TUNNEL VISION

Tunnels provide Hamas with another asymmetric advantage. In 2021, the group claimed to have built over 300 miles of tunnels—a strategy that has been used for thousands of years by groups facing more powerful or entrenched adversaries: Jews against Romans in Judea in the first century, Union troops against Confederates in the siege of Petersburg in 1864, Japanese soldiers against the U.S. Marines in Peleliu in 1944, the Vietcong against American troops in the Vietnam War, and more recently, [al Qaeda](#) and the Islamic State against American forces and Hezbollah against the IDF. Tunnels can be used to smuggle goods, to launch operations, and to store food, weapons, and militants. A single fighter who knows a tunnel’s layout can hold off dozens of enemy soldiers groping in the dark.

Tunnels allow Hamas fighters to move through the city even when Israeli forces have taken the streets above, making it easy to ambush them. Firing a weapon in a tunnel can injure the shooter more than the target because bullets may ricochet or produce sound and shock waves that can cause concussions. Night-vision goggles work poorly in tunnels because there is no ambient light, and soldiers cannot rely on hand or arm signals in the pitch dark. It is also difficult for commanders to communicate with soldiers in tunnels because of weak signals for communication devices.

Well-equipped armies can try to use robotic tools to fight against groups that dig tunnels. Aerial drones can map out tunnels by using high-resolution cameras and sensors, and unmanned ground-based robots can scout, test air quality, record distances, move supplies, carry weapons, and shield soldiers. But they can go only so far. Uneven ground, wet surfaces, and unexpected obstacles such as tripwires or even rocks can topple robots. In narrow spaces, disabled robots become obstacles themselves.

Israel could use massive bombs to destroy tunnels, but doing so would kill thousands more civilians in the process—winning the country only more international opprobrium and promoting Hamas’s narrative that the IDF deliberately slaughters innocent people. Even if the military operation were successful, the political cost would further isolate Israel and spur more people to take up arms against it.

Hamas’s most important asymmetric advantage has been strategic: its exploitation of Israel’s response to its assault. Because the goal of Hamas’s attack was to provoke Israel into a counterproductive overreaction, the IDF’s bludgeoning response has inflamed public opinion in the region against Israel exactly as Hamas wanted. In recent years, Israel had succeeded in convincing several Arab governments to put concerns about Palestinians aside and normalize bilateral relations. Hamas wanted to halt or reverse that trend—and for the time being, it has.

Put simply, Israel took the bait by responding to Hamas’s attack with violent repression, a popular but rarely successful method of counterterrorism that works best when members of terrorist groups can be distinguished and separated from the civilian population—an impossible task in Gaza. According to Hamas, Israel killed over 11,000 people in the territory within a handful of weeks after the [October 7 attack](#). With every civilian death, Israel invites a global backlash that makes it harder to defeat Hamas and protect Israeli citizens.

MOVING FORWARD, HOLDING BACK

Israel can make some gains against Hamas with better surveillance, stronger defenses, and increased use of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence-assisted targeting, counterdrone capabilities, and Iron Dome interceptors. Hamas no longer enjoys the element of surprise. Unless it is joined by [Hezbollah](#), its ability to project force has peaked. Tunnel warfare will be slow, costly, and extremely difficult for Israel—but Hamas cannot win by indefinitely hiding in the dark. Hamas’s ability to integrate operations has been damaged by the shutdown of Internet, cellular, and landline telephone capabilities in Gaza. Israel is preventing Hamas’s forces from easily coordinating with one another, gathering intelligence, and reaching political leaders in Lebanon. It should continue to isolate Hamas in this way.

But more important, Israel needs to counter Hamas’s political mobilization—that is, cut off its ability to attract attention, recruits, and allies. Doing so would involve using force discriminately and reclaiming the moral high ground it had in the immediate aftermath of the attack but quickly forfeited with a reckless bombing campaign that killed “far too many” Palestinian civilians, in the words of U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Israel should, for example, clearly articulate that its enemies are Hamas fighters, not Palestinian civilians. Hurting the latter is morally wrong and often illegal—and strategically counterproductive. (To adapt a line often attributed to Talleyrand, Napoleon’s minister of foreign affairs, killing civilians in a fight against terrorists is worse than a crime; it is a mistake.) After weeks of pressure from the Biden administration, Israel agreed on November 4 to what it calls a “humanitarian corridor” that opens for four hours each day so that civilians can escape from the war zone to the south in Gaza, and international actors can supply food, water, and medicine to

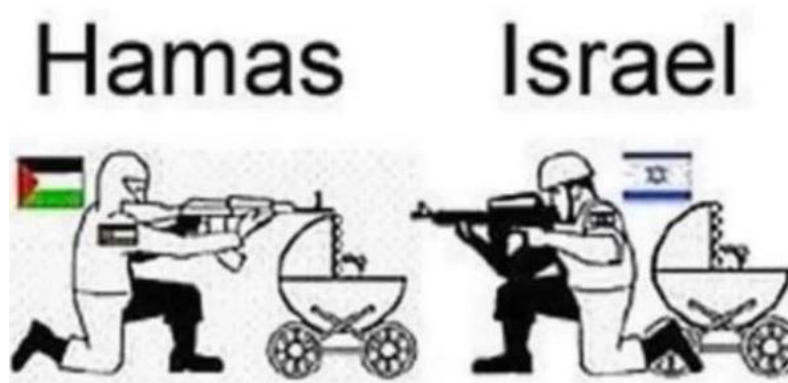


those who are trapped. Hamas, PIJ, and other hostage-holding gangs apparently do not care about starving Palestinian civilians; but Israel must.

In addition, Israel must not drive the Palestinian Authority toward supporting Hamas. As the terrorism expert Daniel Byman [wrote](#) in *Foreign Affairs*, Israel needs to avoid inciting anger in the West Bank, preventing settlers from attacking Palestinians and punishing those who do. Israel should also keep tax and customs revenue flowing to the Palestinian Authority, which has suppressed riots by Hamas sympathizers in the West Bank.

Israel has few ways to eliminate Hamas's asymmetric advantages. The country cannot reverse technological change or completely shut down pro-Hamas messaging on social media. But Israel does have the power to react to Hamas's terror attack strategically, and with restraint. Doing so can sap Hamas of much of its power. Given that Hamas designed its attack to stoke an overreaction from Israel, the best thing Israel can do now is to refuse to play into Hamas's hands.

Audrey Kurth Cronin is Director of the Carnegie Mellon Institute for Strategy and Technology and the author of [How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns](#).



Al-Qaeda: A Defeated Threat? Think Again.

By Sara Harmouch

Source: <https://warontherocks.com/2023/11/al-qaeda-a-defeated-threat-think-again/>

Nov 22 – U.S. President Joe Biden's withdrawal from Afghanistan marked the closure of America's longest war against the very adversary that started it. "Remember what I said about Afghanistan? I said al-Qaeda would not be there. I said it wouldn't be there," [declared](#) Biden, resonating with a nation eager to turn a new page. However, reality clashed with this confidence on Aug. 15 when a 17-year-old tied to al-Qaeda was [arrested](#) in Philadelphia on charges related to weapons of mass destruction. Americans must now confront a question many thought the nation had left behind: Is al-Qaeda really defeated or has the threat merely evolved?

President Biden may have announced the end of the Afghan war, but al-Qaeda has not. As of June 2023, U.N. [reports](#) indicate that the group's activities are intensifying not just in Afghanistan, but globally as well. The group's sustained ties with the Taliban and their leaders' strategic [return](#) to Afghanistan are an advancement — not a decline. While top al-Qaeda figures are also calling for renewed jihad in Sudan, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is simultaneously [targeting](#) nations like Morocco with new propaganda campaigns. Additionally, al-Qaeda's threats against [Sweden](#) and [Denmark](#) aren't mere talk. In the wake of Quran [burnings](#), the group has declared, "[w]e're still here and open for business." The escalating Israel-Hamas conflict further fuels al-Qaeda's resurgence, [leveraging](#) the Palestinian cause to rally support, reinvigorating its base, and staging a comeback. These developments not only reaffirm al-Qaeda's adaptability and determination but clearly underscore that any claims of al-Qaeda's defeat are, at this point, premature.

The Contagion

Contradicting Biden's assessment, the Taliban's 2021 ascension [reinvigorated](#) al-Qaeda's Afghan operations. Al-Qaeda [commanders](#) are back in Afghanistan, swiftly reactivating the group's presence. Training camps are now operational in five [provinces](#), including Zabul and Nuristan, areas that Osama bin Laden once [earmarked](#) as crucial for al-Qaeda. In Nuristan, these camps are actively [training](#) suicide bombers, signaling a revival



of al-Qaeda's past strategies, evocative of their roles in the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings, the 2000 USS Cole bombing, and the 9/11 attacks — all executed under the [Taliban's shield](#).



However, al-Qaeda's resurgence is no longer confined to Afghanistan. In 2023 alone, al-Qaeda's affiliates orchestrated 1,305 [attacks](#) globally. Al-Shabaab, leading with 1,057 attacks in Somalia and Kenya, continues to be a major threat with its developing transnational capabilities. Concurrently, Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin in the Sahel and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen conducted 184 and 64 attacks, respectively. In West Africa, frequent coups and military withdrawals have [emboldened](#) al-Qaeda affiliates to proliferate in countries like Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. The global scope of these attacks highlights al-Qaeda's penchant for capitalizing on regional instabilities. This pattern becomes clearer when we observe the unfolding situation in Sudan.

Al-Qaeda is exploiting Sudan's [civil strife](#) to establish a new stronghold. Abu Hudhaifa al Sudani, a prominent [figure](#) within the organization and a former bin Laden [associate](#), [intends](#) to "sow the seeds of jihad" amidst the chaos. Al Sudani's militant rhetoric, backed by his [history](#) in Afghanistan and Iraq, adds weight to his call to arms and lends credence to this threat. His al-Qaeda-aligned Rapid Support Forces have weakened Sudan's armed forces, creating openings for extremist activities. Sudan, with its strategic location, resource wealth, and Islamic heritage, has been a prime target for al-Qaeda since the [1990s](#). Under Omar al Bashir, Sudan [harbored](#) bin Laden and [formed](#) the notorious Janjaweed militia ([now the Rapid Support Forces](#)). Al Sudani's 2022 [manifesto](#), "Now the fighting has come: War messages to the Mujahideen in Sudan," and [recent strategies](#) by Ibrahim [al Qussi](#), outline ambitions to turn Sudan into an "Afghanistan 2.0" — a central hub to orchestrate attacks exceeding the scale of 9/11.

Misguided Optimism

Despite Biden's reassurances, al-Qaeda's domestic threat looms large. In May 2022, former al-Qaeda fighter Shihab Ahmed Shihab [plotted](#) to assassinate President George W. Bush in Ohio and smuggled four Iraqi operatives into the United States through the southern border. Remarkably, Shihab had entered the United States undetected by intelligence agencies despite his [history](#) of [killing](#) U.S. soldiers in the Iraq War. These incidents display al-Qaeda's ability to exploit national security gaps. The FBI thwarted this plot, yet it, along with the 2019 Naval [Air](#) Station



Pensacola attack, reminds observers that al-Qaeda is neither distant nor defeated. FBI Director Christopher Wray's [warning](#) of an anticipated rise in terrorist activities, including increased risk of al-Qaeda attacks on U.S. soil, further corroborates this unsettling trend.

Between 2021 and 2023, al-Qaeda ramped up its publications, reiterating its longstanding strategy of targeting the far enemy – the United States. On the eve of the 9/11 attacks' 22nd anniversary, al-Sahab, their media wing, divulged plans for new attacks involving skilled militants, some being 9/11 veterans. The burgeoning [reach](#) of their media outlets, primarily through the [magazine](#) "Mujahideen in the West," heralds a transition toward a more ideologically driven warfare. This platform not only incites lone-wolf attacks but also pioneers innovative methods. In "Road to Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam," al-Qaeda explicitly labeled attacks on American economic assets and citizens as "simple and easy," recommending low-effort tactics like arson. Al-Qaeda's communiqués forewarn of an imminent "Islamic strike," limited in resources yet potentially devastating in impact.

Contrary to Christy Abizaid's [assertion](#) of a minimal al-Qaeda presence in Afghanistan, the group's operational success does not solely depend on numbers. Al-Qaeda is renowned for favoring strategic ingenuity over sheer numbers. The 9/11 attacks, executed by just 50 members, are a testament to their efficiency. Despite a modest Afghan footprint, by 2020, al-Qaeda [boasted](#) 20,000 fighters in Syria, at least 2,000 in the Sahel, 6,000 in Yemen, and 7,000 in Somalia. Their *modus operandi*, adhering to a low-tech, high-impact ethos, enables them to transcend geographical and numerical constraints.

Al-Qaeda's strategic flexibility is also evidenced in its response to regional tensions, such as the Israel-Hamas conflict. The group's leadership celebrated Hamas's Oct. 7 strike as a historic triumph for global jihad, exposing Western and Israeli vulnerabilities. This stance is reinforced by [endorsements](#) from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, and al-Shabaab, who not only elevate the conflict's international profile but also weave local issues into their broader jihadist agenda. Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent's calls for [attacks](#) on Western targets and al-Shabaab's [potential](#) "solidarity" attacks exemplify this expansive approach. The narrative culminates with al-Qaeda's Syria branch, Hurras al-Din, urging Muslims to join jihad, a move that exacerbates old animosities and galvanizes a new generation of militants. This concerted effort positions al-Qaeda to reclaim its role as the vanguard of the global jihad.

The group's capacity to leverage geopolitical upheavals is a recurrent theme. A prime example was during the Arab Spring of 2011. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, [seizing](#) the moment, integrated seamlessly into Yemen's local power structures, simultaneously pursuing their global jihad agenda. This dual strategy was apparent in their 2012 [attempt](#) to down a U.S. airliner. The group's [ability](#) to turn regional conflicts into opportunities for broader aggression poses a significant threat to international security. This pattern, reflected in the [spate](#) of attacks across the United States and Europe, particularly between 2004 and 2006 and again from 2015 to 2018, persists in today's Middle Eastern conflicts.

A New Rallying Point

Al-Qaeda's adaptive strategy amid the Israel-Hamas conflict marks a new phase in its operations. The group is now actively seeking an alliance with the Islamic State, aiming to create a unified jihadist front against shared adversaries. This shift, [highlighted](#) in the 4th issue of "Mujahideen in the West," signifies a blend of operational dexterity and ideological fervor, challenging perceptions of its waning influence. This evolution is not new: In West Africa, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have previously [collaborated](#), coordinating attacks and establishing joint influence zones to subvert both Western and local authorities. Such adaptability continuously positions al-Qaeda as a formidable threat.

Following the death of former leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda demonstrated its resilience by strategically concealing its leadership transition. This tactical opacity, designed to protect its key figures, is evident in revelations from al-Qaeda's [publication](#) "The Road to Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam" and the bin Laden [documents](#). These insights reveal a pragmatic leadership approach fixated on enduring and evading targeted strikes, validating the effectiveness of their post-9/11 decentralized model. Similarly, al-Qaeda has honed its operational process, providing overarching attack plans and granting ground operatives full autonomy for execution. This improves their agility as an organization. In another striking disclosure, al-Qaeda's publications also show how counterterrorism actions have unexpectedly eased their financial logistics. Together, these factors depict an entity that, despite setbacks, remains undeterred.

Saif al Adl, al-Qaeda's presumed de facto leader, is crucial in this transformation. In his groundbreaking book, "[Free Reading in the Book 33 Strategies](#)," inspired by Robert Green's "33 Strategies for War," al Adl advocates for a departure from conventional methods, emphasizing creativity and agility. He promotes unpredictability and advises "striking where the enemy least expects," incorporating urban guerrilla warfare and potent propaganda to instill fear. Focused on the psychological ramifications, he suggests a series of consecutive strikes to amplify their effect. Interestingly, while endorsing "soft targets," al Adl diverges from targeting civilians, "whether on our lands or enemy lands," indicating a



strategic recalibration in al-Qaeda that melds militancy with a form of outreach. This evolution within al-Qaeda's ranks is a microcosm of the group's upward trajectory as al Adl reshapes its approach.

Conclusion

Dispelling myths of decline, al-Qaeda remains a resilient and evolving force, continually refining its methods. Cunning and resourceful, this group stands as a sophisticated global menace, deftly navigating geopolitical dynamics and circumventing counterterrorism measures. Despite these realities, some argue that al-Qaeda is yesterday's news. Experts like Daniel Byman [paint](#) al-Qaeda as an afterthought — overshadowed by today's latest flavor of emerging terror factions. Byman's assessment side-steps bin Laden's time-tested, strategic [direction](#) for the group: A "war of attrition against tyrannical superpowers." The Mujahideen won against the Soviets, and the rise to power of an al-Qaeda friendly Taliban regime following the U.S. withdrawal only affirms bin Laden's situational understanding. For al-Qaeda: It's a marathon, not a sprint.

Decades of conflict have left the West weary and dismissive, but underestimating al-Qaeda's resolve is a critical error. Wishful thinking won't eradicate terrorism, and complacency invites it home. History's lessons are clear: the Taliban's rise foretold 9/11, the Islamic State's growth unleashed international terror, and vacuums in Iraq and Afghanistan nurtured extremism. The resurgence of Hamas is a reminder that terrorism's embers still burn, unseen but ever-present. In our battle against terror, miscalculating al-Qaeda's threat could be our gravest oversight — for what is unseen often poses the greatest danger.

[Sara Harmouch](#), a Lebanese national and doctoral candidate at American University's School of Public Affairs, specializes in counterterrorism. She has firsthand experience with the impacts of terrorism through her upbringing and extensive fieldwork conducted across the Middle East and North Africa region. Harmouch consults for the U.S. government and the private sector, and has recently briefed NATO on religious terrorist groups. Her research focuses on asymmetric warfare, political violence, and threats to democracies.

Gaza War: How Representative Is Hamas of Ordinary Palestinians?

By Christoph Bluth

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20231123-gaza-war-how-representative-is-hamas-of-ordinary-palestinians>

Nov 23 – After more than a month during which Israel has relentlessly bombarded then invaded Gaza with the [stated aim of destroying Hamas](#), Gaza's health authorities [have estimated](#) that more than 13,000 people – mainly civilians and a distressingly high proportion of those children – have been killed.

Yet it should be remembered that it was the [initial attack on Israel](#) by Hamas fighters on October 7, killing 1,200 people – again, mainly civilians, many in the most brutal manner – that led to Israel's invasion of Gaza.

Initially, the Israel Defense Forces issued warnings to Gazan civilians to move south. But repeated airstrikes on towns in the south of Gaza have left the population fearing that there are no safe spaces left in the enclave.

Israel continues to insist, with the backing of its allies in the west, that this military operation is aimed at rooting out Hamas. They say it is the fact that Hamas embeds itself in civilian populations that is causing so many casualties.

But recently there have been signs that some Palestinian civilians are openly challenging Hamas's authority. Associated Press [reported on November 10](#) that angry crowds threw stones at Hamas police in one location while in another, people huddling in a UN shelter hurled insults at Hamas officials.

Political Party or Terror Group?

Hamas was founded in Gaza in 1987 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, an imam, and his aide Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi. This was shortly after the beginning of the first intifada – [an uprising](#) against Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Initially emerging as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas later established a military wing known as the [Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades](#). Its primary goal was to engage in armed resistance against Israel with the aim of liberating historic Palestine.

While there is international support for [Palestinian self-determination](#), Hamas's aim – [spelled out](#) in its founding charter – to destroy the state of Israel has cost it legitimacy with many who would otherwise support Palestine's cause.

The group has effectively controlled Gaza since shortly after the then-Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon withdrew troops and settlers from Gaza in 2005. In elections in 2006, [Hamas secured a majority of seats](#) in the Palestinian Authority's legislature and established a [government](#). This gave Hamas some legitimacy as far as the Palestinians in Gaza were concerned – at least temporarily.



Hamas's early success has been ascribed to its [provision of social services](#) such as healthcare and welfare. Initially, it also seemed to be a valuable counterpoint to what was perceived as corruption within the incumbent Fatah party. But Fatah and its western backers found the election outcome to be unacceptable, leading to the removal of Hamas from power in the West Bank. This effectively denied Hamas the role in the PA that it believed it deserved.

A [2008 presidential election](#) confirmed Fatah's Mahmoud Abbas as the head of the PA. But by this stage the split between the two parties meant that while the Fatah-dominated PA governed the West Bank, Hamas was largely unchallenged in Gaza.

Vote of No Confidence

But a [survey](#) undertaken by Arab Barometer, a nonpartisan research network, between September 28 and October 8 2023 revealed dwindling confidence in Hamas (the surveys in Gaza were completed on October 6). Asked to identify the amount of trust they had in the Hamas authorities, 44% said they had no trust at all, while 23% said they had little trust. Significantly this lack of trust was roughly uniform across age groups with those between the ages of 18-29 and those over 30 giving similar answers.

An [earlier poll](#) taken by the Washington Institute in July 2023, moreover, found that 62% of people in Gaza supported Hamas maintaining a ceasefire with Israel and 50% agreed that: "Hamas should stop calling for Israel's destruction, and instead accept a permanent two-state solution based on the 1967 borders."

So, given the gulf between Hamas's aims and style of governance, how has it kept control of the enclave of 2.2 million people for so long? It's important to remember that there have been no elections since 2006 and the average age of people in Gaza is [about 18](#), meaning most people have not had the chance to vote for any other leadership.

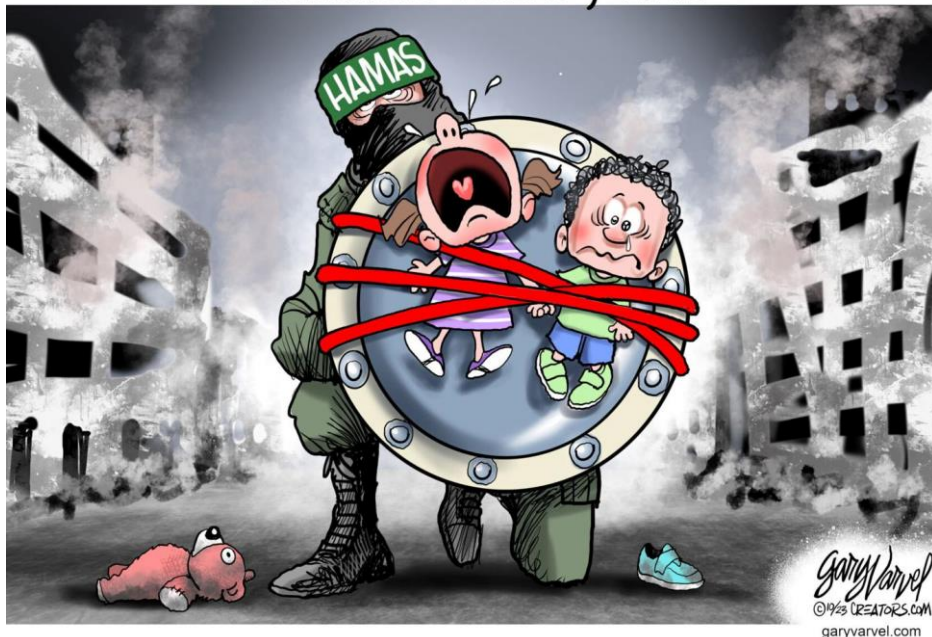
Hamas has also reportedly [ruled with an iron fist](#). Hamas has used [strict and authoritarian](#) methods of control, applying its own interpretations of strict sharia law, enforcing gender segregation in public, controlling the media, repressing any political opposition and eliminating all mechanisms of transparency and accountability.

Numerous reports have detailed human rights abuses conducted by Hamas against Palestinian civilians, including arbitrary detention, torture, punishment beatings and the [death penalty](#). To be fair, a report in 2018 from [Human Rights Watch](#) found that similar human rights abuse was just as common in the West Bank under the Fatah-led PA. Hamas also [stands accused](#) of harassing journalists who criticize its government.

The catastrophic Hamas attack on October 7 which has led to the deaths of so many Palestinian civilians in Gaza has eliminated any pretense of legitimacy that Hamas may ever have had in the eyes of most of the world. Indeed, the days of Hamas may be over. But this will only increase the urgency of finding a long-term solution for Palestine, something that seems further away than ever.

[Christoph Bluth](#) is Professor of International Relations and Security, [University of Bradford](#).

TERRORISTS' RULES of WAR



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



C²BRNE
DIARY



CHEM NEWS



Sharing information critical to tackling chemical threats

Source: <https://www.interpol.int/fr/Actualites-et-evenements/Actualites/2023/Sharing-information-critical-to-tackling-chemical-threats>



Oct 19 – In just six hours, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) system was able to create tens of thousands of chemical compounds that could be used as chemical weapons, demonstrating the potential for nefarious actors to exploit new technologies for lethal purposes. Earlier this year, USB keys containing improvised explosive devices were delivered to several media stations in Ecuador, resulting in the publication of an INTERPOL Purple Notice to share critical crime-related information on new modus operandi.

Incidents such as these show how chemical threats are complex and varied, requiring a diverse set of strategies across the supply chain in order to combat them and strengthen global chemical security.

This week more than 300 experts from law enforcement, industry, international organizations, government and academia convened in Bangkok to share information, case studies and best practices on issues related to risk management, public/private partnerships and challenges in implementing effective chemical security.

Police Lieutenant General, Assistant Commissioner-General of the Royal Thai Police said: “We need to stay one step ahead of criminals and terrorists in their pursuit to acquire dangerous chemicals to harm innocent lives. INTERPOL’s role in facilitating partnerships between law enforcement and government, as well as the private sector is key to ensuring that critical information is shared between the right people at the right time.”

Under the theme of Chemical Security in Action, this year’s plenary meeting also focused on emerging threats including nefarious use of 3D printing, pharmaceutical-based agents and AI.

Since its establishment in 2018, the Global Chemical Congress and Emerging Threats network has helped close security gaps by using a multi-sector approach and providing actionable information to participants.

A private chemical company in the United States improved its policies and procedures for transporting chemical goods following last year’s meeting as a direct result of sharing best practices and viewing INTERPOL’s awareness raising video, [‘The Watchmaker’](#), which highlighted potential vulnerabilities across the supply chain.

INTERPOL’s Counter-Terrorism Director, pro tempore, Catherine Colthart, said: “Breaking down silos and strengthening our relationships across every area of the chemical supply chain is the only way we can



secure dangerous chemicals from getting into the wrong hands. Chemical security is a global responsibility, and the focus of this network remains in supporting the partnerships that enable law enforcement and the international community to tackle this threat effectively.”



The Global Chemical Congress is an international network of more than 1,500 experts. It is jointly led by INTERPOL, the U.S. Cybersecurity, and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the U.S. Defence Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and implemented in cooperation with the G7 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. The Global Congress receives additional support from Global Affairs Canada and the U.S. Department of State.

Scoop: Israel says it found Hamas files with instructions for making cyanide-based weapon

Source: <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/21/israel-hamas-cyanide-weapon-instructions>

Oct 23 – The Israeli military found a USB key with instructions for the production of a "cyanide dispersion device" on the body of a [Hamas operative](#) who participated in the [Oct. 7 terrorist attack](#), according to two Israeli officials and a copy of a classified Israeli Foreign Ministry cable obtained by Axios.

The big picture: It is not clear from the file whether [Hamas](#) had any serious or operational plan for using makeshift chemical weapons or whether the group had attempted to produce them.

Behind the scenes: The Israeli Foreign Ministry's weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation department sent a classified cable to Israeli embassies in dozens of capitals worldwide, including Washington, on Thursday under the headline: "Hamas intention of using chemical weapons."

- The authenticity of the Hamas file could not be independently confirmed by Axios, but Israeli officials have previously said they wouldn't share information with allies if they didn't think it was authentic and reliable.



- The Israeli Foreign Ministry declined to comment.
- A Hamas spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Israeli intelligence traced the origin of the document to a 2003 Al-Qaeda manual, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said in the cable.

- "This finding points to an intention by Hamas to use chemical weapons as part of its terror attack against civilians," the cable alleges.
- The Israeli Foreign Ministry sent the original file with an English description to its embassies and in the cable asked them to privately transfer it to the embassies' host governments and not use it publicly in any way.
- The Israeli Foreign Ministry in the cable instructed its diplomats to tell their counterparts that Hamas wants "to conduct attacks in a similar way that ISIS tried to do."

Between the lines: Israel has both publicly and privately [shared](#) many documents it says it found on dead [Hamas attackers since Oct. 7](#), including information that has provided more insight into the group's planning.

- Several of these documents, which were classified by Hamas as "Top Secret," allegedly included operational plans for attacking Israeli villages and military bases near the border with explicit orders to kill as many people as possible and take hostages back to Gaza.

February 2003 – AQ-related Bahrain terrorist cell, designed a hydrogen cyanide dispersal device, the al-Mubtakkar (The Invention), planned to be used in the NYC subway – plot failed/postponed.

The Paranoia of Cyanide

By Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, PhD

War Blog #10

Source: <https://www.nancykobrin.org/post/hamas-s-choice-of-poison>

Oct 23 – The IDF found a USB key containing a PDF of al-Qaeda material which included instructions to behead babies, take hostages and create chemical weapons – how to create "improvised cyanide dispersion devices."

Cf. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-769692>

Political Paranoia

In one of the most highly venerated texts for the study of political terrorism, which is written by Robins and Post, is entitled *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (1997) In it they argue that paranoia lies at the core of the terrorist personality. True, Hamas's hollow jihadis are flagrantly paranoid.

[In 2004 Jerrold M. Post, M.D., also edited *Military Studies in the Jihad against the Tyrants: THE AL-QAEDA TRAINING MANUAL* in the sixteenth lesson on how to assassinate using poisons and cold steel. However, cyanide is not mentioned by Post.] Cf.

<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CSDS/Books/alqaedatrainingmanual2.pdf>

The Absence of the Mother in Political Paranoia

It is a telling sign of the deep denial in which many counter terrorist experts reside concerning the failure to deal with early childhood development, maternal attachment and the toxic environment in which the



jihadis were raised when infants. I do not say this in order to promote empathy for them. They do not have empathy nor do I have empathy. They are cold-blooded killers. *Political Paranoia* is a prime example of this significant oversight, failing to explain the origin of paranoia for political terrorism. This misleads us. This signals too that there are deeply hidden terrors within the experts and within us all. There is not only no mention of the mother, there is really no depth discussion of its psychodynamics.

As I have been emphasizing throughout my blog posts, maternal bonding is the source from which paranoia springs. In Arab culture it is said – “Paradise lies beneath the feet of the mother.” Think of the image of giving birth. It all springs from the toxic environment in which ummi was raised, without power save for her enmeshed relationship with her future jihadi son.

The “Paranoid” Attack of the Baby on the Mother

Yes, you read that right -- the baby attacking the mother?! The theme of attacking returns. *In paranoia the mother experiences the baby as attacking*. While that may seem odd to a lay person, consider the fact that the mother is the chronically hated object in the shame–honor culture and religion. Because of being objectified and having all this male rage projected into her fragile sense of female self as a little girl who also lives under the eternal death threat of the honor killing, *she projects her annihilation anxieties into the baby as having a male baby is her first taste of power*. The bonding is automatically skewed if not toxic as the male baby is her narcissistic object of power and control. The mother experiences the baby as attacking because she misinterprets the baby’s needs as exhausting demands on her already depleted self.

Hamas’s Cyanide and their Mothers

Cyanide is an excellent choice of jihadis because of it striking psychological terror as well as rapid physical death. Cyanide poisoning can lead to death in a matter of minutes or hours. The paranoid mind always strives to poison the other. It can be thought of as a concretized introjection. There is a book whose title aptly catches this idea – *The Prison of Paranoia*. Hamas lives in its own imprisoned inner world always already embattled. cf. Hamas’s Battle War Blog #9. They feel; they act. They make concrete what they feel as if they are speaking in a concrete sign language, they are actually signing that the trauma of their early childhood was toxic, a poisoned environment and by golly, they are going to make you imbue that poison by having it inflicted upon you, the victim, quite literally.

Cyanide Bonding

Cyanide also affords Hamas, Al Qaeda and ISIS a uniquely perverse way of bonding with its victims who remain a replacement for the mother. Cyanide causes annihilating devastation, which fits with the psychotic primitive mental states of the jihadi. The paranoia of the jihadi is writ large with weapons of mass destruction, which also harkens back to the concept of nuclear and its fusion and fission.

*Contagion terrorism involves bioterrorism of some kind and exposure to a toxin, which spreads. “Contagion terrorism at some point can be reversed when the cumulative number of incidents begins to decrease rather than increase the probability of future incidents.” From a psychological point of view, behavioral contagion is a kind of hybrid terrorism interwoven or mingling with contagion terrorism because the use of poison or biological elements to create terrorism is communicated through contact. Jihadi terrorism engages a herd mentality, which mobilizes imitative and copycat tendencies [i.e. copying the Al Qaeda playbook.] This psychological aspect gets concretely formulated in contagion terrorism. Contact such as touching creates a fusion, even if it is only for a moment or split second, and delivery may be through an object of some sort such as a weapon or missile. The phenomenon of contagion refers back to the dyadic, fused behavioral experience. It also involves paranoia because of the primary maternal relationship in which paranoia arises. The mother experiences the needs of the baby as attacking. Paranoia often entails terrors of poisoning and in this case is concretized through the weapon of contagion. cf. *The Jihadi Dictionary**

To conclude I offer some food for thought instead of poison. Political Islam has always been the tip of the spear for Islam, though this is always denied by the Ummah. Now we are hearing that Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people, yet the Palestinians celebrated upon hearing and seeing the massacre of October 7. It is not really denial though rather an effective maneuver to deflect while at the same time engage in aggression and rage vicariously by splitting it off and letting the jihadis do the dirty work. To admit that they share in a group psychosis is terrifying and this is precisely the function of political terrorism, though it is not spoken about very often -- its goal is to make you get sucked into and suffer the insanity of their world, only then do they feel momentarily alive.

Dr. Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin is a psychoanalyst, Arabist, and external expert on Jihadese, La Universidad de Granada, Department of Linguistics.



Soldiers test new Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Recon Stryker vehicle

By Mr. Joshua Smith | Test Officer, Maneuver Support and Sustainment Test Directorate, U.S. Army Operational Test Command

Source: https://www.army.mil/article/270969/soldiers_test_new_nuclear_biological_chemical_recon_stryker_vehicle



Oct 20 — Soldiers from Joint Base Lewis-McCord have been taking part in operationally testing the new Sensor Suite Upgrade, or SSU, on the M1135 variant Stryker — the Army's high-speed, high-mobility, armored carrier.

Soldiers with the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team of 2nd Infantry Division and the 110th Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Battalion are employing the Stryker Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Reconnaissance Vehicle SSU along with testers of the U.S. Army Operational Test Command based at West Fort Cavazos, Texas.

The SSU supports the warfighter by performing NBC reconnaissance on the battlefield.

Its dedicated system of CBRN detection on a Stryker vehicle can locate, identify, and report NBC contamination to commanders.

"As a CBRN Reconnaissance Platoon, seldom are we presented the opportunity to focus on in-depth front-line reconnaissance, surveillance, warning and reporting, and identification of realistic CBRN threats," said 1st Lt. Kassi Gulliford, platoon leader of RECCE Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 23rd Brigade Engineer Battalion.

"This operational test has given my platoon the opportunity to focus on our critical war-time collective tasks of mounted CBRN reconnaissance and surveillance, especially operating as crews," she added.

"The amount of hands-on training and employment opportunities with CBRN simulants we received, really gave all of us confidence in our capabilities with respect to our operational readiness as a mounted RECCE platoon."

According to Test Officer Joseph Scheerer of the USAOTC's Maneuver Support and Sustainment Test Directorate, test data and feedback collected informs senior Army leaders on effectiveness, suitability, and reliability of the SSU.

Scheerer explained during the four-day record test, the test players employed the sensors, detected, and identified CBRN threats, provided detailed warning and reports, and conducted decontamination of the systems over 16 varying targets.





“Mounted CBRN reconnaissance and surveillance operations are complex missions that require our CBRN assets to remain equipped with systems that are effective and suitable in Soldiers hands,” he said.

“This test event is about making sure the systems developed provide proper capabilities in the environments in which Soldiers and units train and fight.”

About the U.S. Army Operational Test Command:

As the Army’s only independent operational tester, USAOTC enlists the “Total Army” (Active, National Guard, and Reserve) when testing Army, joint, and multi-service warfighting systems in realistic operational environments, using typical Soldiers to determine whether the systems are effective, suitable, and survivable. USAOTC is required by public law to test major systems before they are fielded to its ultimate customer — the American Soldier.

The Maneuver Support and Sustainment Test Directorate conducts operational tests of combat engineer, chemical, transportation, military police, quartermaster, ordnance, and medical service systems to provide our senior leaders with the necessary information to field the highest quality equipment for the warfighter.

A New U.S. Strategy Against WMD Threats

By **Mohammadreza Giveh** | November 2023

Source: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2023-11/news/new-us-strategy-against-wmd-threats>

The U.S. Defense Department has released a new strategy for countering weapons of mass destruction (WMD) around the world, arguing that the threats from nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons have increased and changed significantly since 2014. “For nearly two decades, the security environment required the department to focus on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations [and] prioritize managing WMD risk emanating from hostile, fragile or failed states and safe havens,” according to the strategy document released on Sept. 28. But now the United States is facing a “pacing” challenge from China and an “acute” threat from Russia while Iran and North Korea are considered “persistent” threats



and such adversaries “seek to leverage [weapons of mass destruction] to influence and constrain the United States across the spectrum of conflict,” the document said.



A Chinese H-6K bomber, which has nuclear strike capability, arrives at Zhuhai Air Show Center in Guangdong Province in 2022. China is aggressively expanding its nuclear arsenal. (Photo by VCG/VCG via Getty Images)

It argued that “the department must now recapitalize, and in some cases reconstitute, its ability to conduct large-scale joint operations within a WMD-contested battlespace.”

The document, entitled the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Strategy, expands on the Biden administration’s 2022 National Defense Strategy. It lays out four priorities: defending the homeland from WMD attacks; deterring WMD use against the United States and its allies and partners; building a joint force to prevail in an environment where chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats are contested; and preventing new WMD threats.

The United States is set to undertake these activities “in an integrated approach along with military, diplomatic, and economic instruments of power” to diminish the political advantage gained from WMD use in an adversary’s decision calculus and “demonstrate the undesirable costs [the adversary] will face should it use” these weapons, it said.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin drove home this point in his introduction to the strategy document. “We will sustain and broaden our work in collaboration with other U.S. departments, agencies, allies and partners to deter [WMD] use,” he wrote. “If deterrence fails, we will field a force that is resilient and prepared to prevail in a [WMD] contested environment.”

U.S. extended deterrence is one tool that underlies the new strategy. An example cited by Richard Johnson, deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear and countering weapons of mass destruction policy, was the Washington Declaration in April 2023 between U.S. President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol. He said that the declaration reflected a U.S. effort to integrate its nuclear forces with South Korea to prevent an unintended escalation of tensions with North Korea and to enhance deterrence. Johnson, speaking at an event in Washington on Oct. 18, said this approach prevents proliferation, presumably referring to South Korean support for developing its own nuclear weapons. (See [ACT, May 2023](#).)



The strategy document notes the global availability of dual-use technologies, particularly biotechnology, and said that adversaries are adapting to U.S. counterproliferation measures. These two defining features of the evolving global security environment must be addressed.

In a noteworthy addition to the last strategy published in 2014, the new document recognizes emerging technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence, multidomain WMD misinformation pursuits by China and Russia, and the complexity of determining a biological weapons attack as exacerbating new features of WMD activities.

The WMD document assesses the risk from China in the context of the People's Liberation Army's aggressive expansion and modernization of its nuclear forces in combination with the ambiguity about the conditions under which China would act outside of its declared policy of no first use of nuclear weapons. It also expresses concern that China violated the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention.

The different strategic approaches in the 2014 and 2023 defense strategy documents reflect a shift toward a more dynamic, proactive, and comprehensive approach to weapons of mass destruction, considering a wider array of factors and resources.

For a Metaverse of CBRN Training

By Yves Kovalevsky

Source: <https://nct-cbnw.com/for-a-metaverse-of-cbrn-training/>

Nov 01 – Today, the word “metaverse” often refers to a marketing concept encompassing several immersive technologies such as augmented reality and virtual reality. The recent name change of the Facebook Group to Meta has brought a new focus to the conversation and reflections around this concept. Thus, projects as varied as virtual reality platforms, multiplayer video games, platforms for broadcasting shows in augmented reality or blockchain-based marketplaces, all use the term “metaverse” to characterize themselves. The following general definition will therefore be used in this article: *a metaverse is an online service giving access to shared and persistent simulations of real-time 3D spaces, in which we can live immersive experiences together.*

Although CBRN threats have now regained their acuity, the CBRN field nevertheless offers few real opportunities for practice. However, it is essential that authorities, e.g. NATO (cf ATP 3.8.1), know with certainty that forces placed under their command are capable of both surviving CBRN incidents and continuing operations in a CBRN environment, hence the prevailing need to put effort into training. In order to ensure the safety of people, guarantee the success of missions, or even meet ever-increasing societal demands, it is vital that simulation tools provide a lasting response to the challenges faced by military and civilian organizations alike.



Being ready, everywhere, all the time

While CBRN threats did represent an unavoidable challenge during the Cold War, CBRN defense experienced a general disaffection from the early 1990s. A turning point took place after the attacks of September 11, 2001, followed by increased consideration of CBRN terrorist threats. However, on a strategic level, the upsurge in CBRN threats has only been a subject on the table for about ten years. The issue, which has been brought forward by more diverse stakeholders, is complex and has multiple effects.



CBRN threats encompass an entire spectrum of surprises, both technical and tactical, in a context of weakening international treaties and the decline of taboos. It is also **one of the facets of hybrid strategies**; we are witnessing a reduction in the thresholds for the use of weapons of mass destruction, as well as a concealment of their use, making it difficult to apportion blame. On the other hand, the effectiveness of CBRN weapons is reduced when effective and immediately available means of protection are made available to the relevant personnel, who must nevertheless be properly instructed and strictly respect the guidelines provided to them.

Faced with an event whose probability is always extremely difficult to assess, it is necessary to prepare appropriate and realistic responses. The finest possible assessment of the threat facilitates the development of the most proportionate response.

●► **Read the full article in the source's URL.**

[Yves Kovalevsky is former French Army CBRN Experts Corps and serves as operational advisor to the CEO of NBC-Sys.](#)

Deep Dive Recap: Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defence and the Gender Perspective

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_217722.htm?selectedLocale=en

On the 12 July 2023, the NATO International Military Staff Office of the Gender Advisor hosted its twelfth Deep Dive Session focused on Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defence and the Gender Perspective. The session discussed how CBRN threats affect men, women, boys and girls differently while highlighting how NATO is considering the gender perspective in force protection and protection of civilians to increase military readiness and support national resilience against CBRN threats.

Subject matter expertise was provided by Major Adelheid Obwaller (PhD), the Gender Advisor for NATO Mission in Kosovo (KFOR) and an expert on Infectious Diseases, Mr Paul Rushton, Policy Officer for CBRN Defence NATO's Arms Control, Disarmament and WMD Non-Proliferation Centre, and Major Stijn Van Den Bosch, the Deputy Gender Advisor for NATO Allied Command Operations (ACO).

Major Obwaller opened the session with an explanation of gender and its broader socio-cultural context as an imperative for the effective provision of security. She emphasised the need to account the differing needs of the entire population in order to develop a stable environment for all. Looking at CBRN threats in particular, Major Obwaller discussed the security risks of bioterrorism agents and diseases. Using Ebola as a case study, due to its high potential to be weaponised, Major Obwaller explained how the gender perspective can help us understand the nature of a disease, its prevalence, distribution, determinants and consequences. She explained the heightened risks in women contracting Ebola due to their social roles for example as frontline healthcare workers, involvement in cultural funeral practices that lead to intensive interaction with contaminated bodies, and potential financial barriers and stigma they face in accessing healthcare. Additionally, risk perception and communication for infectious diseases are affected by culture, values, attitudes and social organisation. For example with Ebola the fear and mistrust of health services, the fear of stigmatization and social exclusion lead to individuals refusing to seek care.

Major Obwaller compared the spread of misinformation surrounding Ebola and similar narratives seen during the COVID-19 pandemic to show how actors can also use targeted disinformation campaigns to reduce social trust in institutions and undermine policy and responses. While there are significant similarities between different disease outbreaks, Major Obwaller stressed that each outbreak is highly complex and must be considered individually including the gender perspective. Gender and levels of education can cause differing individual risk perception and can undermine the ability to rapidly respond to outbreaks. Although NATO is not a first responder for such outbreaks, it is essential for NATO to anticipate and be prepared to respond in order to maintain stability, support cooperative security and provide crisis management.

Following Major Obwaller, Mr Rushton presented a broad overview of the current CBRN security environment and what it means for NATO. Mr Rushton identified two dominant CBRN threats: state threats and CBRN-enabled terrorism. He further highlighted the use of new hostile techniques including cyber and hybrid attacks and echoed Major Obwaller's comments on the use of misinformation as a constant feature of CBRN threats. With NATO's CBRN Defence policy, Mr Rushton explained how the gender perspective could be further integrated to make NATO more secure and resilient in the current and future CBRN security environment.

He highlighted gender as "a strategically important emerging issue, alongside climate change and emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs)", which must be taken into consideration to strengthen NATO's capabilities. He explained that mainstreaming gender is core to CBRN defence, especially when



viewed as a capabilities issue, and he identified specific areas where the gender perspective could identify and address potential gaps in capabilities, such as in personal protective equipment, medical countermeasures, force protection, and training and capacity building. “The need to account for the gender perspective when developing technology for military use is crucial. We don’t yet know

what we don’t know, and we need to build our understanding of any possible gaps,” Mr Rushton explained. He highlighted that every aspect of CBRN defence capabilities needs to ensure that every person who *wants* to contribute to NATO CBRN defence is appropriately equipped and empowered to do so. Lastly, Mr Rushton gave considerations for where NATO can further incorporate effective gender approaches into its work.



Figure 1. NATO’s CBRN defence policy: 2 Core Principles and Commitments underpinned by 6 Strategic Enablers

Finally, Major Van Den Bosch stressed the need for the gender perspective to be considered in all three Key Components of fighting power: Conceptual, Moral and Physical, explaining that the gender perspective has a force multiplying effect when integrated in the three key components. Major Van Den Bosch explained the need to mainstream the gender perspective in more conceptual documents at NATO to inform

the practical integration, to account for the gendered physical determinants of warfare so that forces are appropriately prepared and lastly, to integrate the gender perspective into morale to maintain the confidence of forces in their preparedness and equipment. He highlighted challenges in integrating the gender perspective appropriately, including the lack of investment in adapted kits for women due to their low numbers but stressed that design requirements must be considered in advance of a crisis, citing current challenges to outfit female soldier in Ukraine. He further discussed the need to be forward looking and consider the long-term gendered impacts of CBRN threats, using the post-conflict reconstruction for areas where weapons containing depleted uranium have been used, such as in the Ukraine conflict. He explained how depleted uranium could continue to contaminate and affect air, soil, water and vegetation and how the gender perspective in these environments must be considered to understand who may be involved in the agricultural or other use of the land and thus will be at risk. The gender perspective and CBRN must be considered beyond the initial issues of equipment. While the risk for women is heightened when their protective equipment does not fit, the nexus between CBRN and gender is much more complex. Hostile actors can exploit a pandemic with disinformation to reduce societal resilience and undermine the response efforts, which directly impacts all genders. If the research between CBRN and gender specific vulnerabilities is not further analysed, it may lead NATO to miss opportunities for ensuring a more secure and more resilient alliance.

Send in the Blow Flies: Using Insects to Sample Areas for Chemical Warfare Agents

Source: <https://globalbiodefense.com/2022/04/11/send-in-the-blow-flies-using-insects-to-sample-areas-for-chemical-warfare-agents/>

Apr 11 – Researchers at the School of Science at [IUPUI](https://www.iupui.edu/) have found that blow flies can be used as chemical sensors, with a particular focus on the detection of chemical warfare agents.

Despite widespread bans, chemical weapons have been deployed in recent conflicts such as the Syrian civil war, and some experts fear they may be used in the war in Ukraine. An IUPUI study shows that blow flies could be used as a safer alternative for investigating the use of these weapons — as well as other chemicals in the environment — keeping humans out of potentially dangerous situations.



The research was funded through a contract from the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).



Photo by Erik Karits / Unsplash

“Blow flies are ubiquitous, and they are very adept at sampling the environment around us,” said [Christine Picard](#), an associate professor of biology and director of the Forensic and Investigative Sciences Program in the School of Science at IUPUI. “They will fly through the environment, taste it, and that information will be stored in their guts. Through a series of experiments, we were able to look at how different environmental factors would impact their detection of chemical weapon simulants.”

“We used a mass spectrometer to determine what chemicals were in the blow flies’ guts,” Manicke said. “We were able to detect the chemical warfare agent simulants, and also some of the things chemical agents get broken down into once they’re in the environment. If a fly were to come across a water source, with a chemical agent hydrolyzed in the water, we would find that in the fly.”

While chemical warfare agents do not persist for long in the environment, the researchers found they’re preserved well enough in the fly’s guts for chemical analysis. They also were able to detect the chemical warfare agent simulants up to 14 days after a fly’s initial exposure — illustrating a safer alternative for the collection of samples, without risking human lives.

“If an area is too dangerous, too remote or in an access-restricted area — or if one just wanted to collect samples covertly — then one just needs to put out some bait and the flies will come to the bait,” Manicke said. “We can scan through big areas by drawing the flies into a trap and analyzing what is in their guts.”

This research also has important applications for environmental scientists who want to understand how pollutants, such as pesticides, move through the environment.

“Due to the collaboration between Dr. Manicke and Dr. Picard, we were able to work on a project with the potential to make a direct impact,” said Sarah Dowling, a Ph.D. student who co-authored the study. “It is fulfilling to know that the work we did throughout this project could improve the safety of warfighters and others who deal with chemicals in the environment.”

The team of students who conducted the experiments using a chemical weapon simulant were led by [Nick Manicke](#), an associate professor of chemistry and chemical biology and of forensic and investigative sciences at IUPUI. A chemical weapon simulant shares features of actual chemical warfare agents — but is not poisonous to people — as well as pesticides, which are chemically similar to chemical warfare agents in the terms of their molecules’ behavior.

Next, the researchers plan to apply what they learned from this study toward a new two-year project funded by the Army Research Office on Environmental Chemistry. This work will focus on the detection of molecules from “insensitive munitions,” which are a new type of explosive compounds that are less likely to detonate by accident. Because of this, however, they tend to deposit more in the environment.



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

Using blow flies from areas that are remote or dangerous, Manicke and Picard will look for traces of insensitive munition compounds in the flies, indicating environmental contamination.

[Insects as Chemical Sensors: Detection of Chemical Warfare Agent Simulants and Hydrolysis Products in the Blow Fly Using LC-MS/MS](#). *Environmental Science and Technology*, 21 September 2022. (subscription required)

In this work, blow flies were investigated as environmental chemical sample collectors following a chemical warfare attack (CWA). Blow flies sample the environment as they search for water and food sources and can be trapped from kilometers away using baited traps. Three species of blow flies were exposed to CWA simulants to determine the persistence of these compounds under varying environmental conditions. A liquid chromatography mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) method was developed to detect CWA simulants and hydrolysis products from fly guts. Flies were exposed to the CWA simulants dimethyl methylphosphonate and diethyl phosphoramidate as well as the pesticide dichlorvos, followed by treatment-dependent temperature and humidity conditions. Flies were sacrificed at intervals within a 14 day postexposure period and analyzed with the LC-MS/MS method. The amount of CWA simulant decreased with time following exposure but were detectable 14 days following exposure, giving a long window of detectability. In addition to the analysis of CWA simulants, isopropyl methylphosphonic acid, the hydrolysis product of sarin, was also detected in blow flies 14 days post exposure. This work demonstrates the potential to obtain valuable samples from remote or access-restricted areas without risking lives.

UK MoD to use scarily realistic mannequin to train Army surgeons

Source: <https://newatlas.com/military/uk-mod-scarily-realistic-simulator-train-surgeons/>



Could be used for CBRN non-ambulatory victims training

Nov 08 – In a stomach-churning development, the UK Ministry of Defence has unveiled the latest version of the Surgical Advanced Mannequin (SAM) for training combat surgeons, which is almost too good at simulating battle injuries, including very realistic bleeding. As anyone who has gone through CPR training knows, training mannequins aren't exactly rare. Since 1967, when the Sim One robot was developed to teach





anesthesiologists, simulation mannequins that can mimic symptoms with increasing realism have been used to train doctors, surgeons, nurses, medics, EMTs, and first-aiders.

Invented and developed by civilian orthopedic major trauma surgeon Professor Ian Pallister over 10 years, the latest version of SAM will be used during a highly realistic clinical exercise run by the Army Medical Services Training Centre (AMSTC) that simulates a field hospital taking on casualties.

This realism comes partly from the mannequin's design, which is based on CT scans and 3D-printed masters of specific wounds, including gunshots and pelvic injuries.



This means it can not only breathe, simulate various vital signs, and be intubated, it also looks very much like the realistic victim of a battlefield.

SAM's realism is so, well, realistic it has simulated 'dead' tissue that can be removed, and allows the surgeon to practice exploratory surgery. It also bleeds in an all-too human fashion, including arterial bleeding. To put it bluntly, it all adds up to something very gory and as a result, most of the images we found are not suitable to be included here.

Needless to say, any surgeon who can get through an exercise involving SAM will get a real education even without touching it.

"Traditionally at AMSTC, we've used a live casualty actor with some make-up to deliver a list of symptoms and injuries," said Clinical Adviser for Deployed Hospital Care, Army Medical Services Training, Colonel Jonny Round. "Professor Pallister's model simulates, very realistically, combat wounds requiring surgical intervention.

"The surgeons get to operate, and the entire team train, in a field hospital that replicates the one they will find themselves deployed to. We are immensely proud that through this training we can deliver world-class medical teams to operations."



EU Project P88

Training course on preparation to respond to CBRN risks and threats, in the period November 06-10, 2023, at Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. Project 88: Strengthening of CBRN Medical





Preparedness and Response Capabilities in SEEE countries, through the STCU scientific and Technological center in Ukraine with EU support.

Prepare for Pandemics or CBRN Threats? We must do both.

By Greg Burel and David Lasseter

Source: https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2023/11/09/prepare_for_pandemics_or_cbrn_threats_we_must_do_both_991646.html

Nov 09 – In our fight against the growing threat of manmade weapons and natural born agents, we no longer have the luxury of focusing on one at the expense of the other. It's time for the preparedness community to walk and chew gum at the same time.

That's especially true given the relatively little attention that many in the U.S. Government and the media pay to the biological threat compared to the shiny objects of cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and hypersonic missiles. While those evolving capabilities will certainly shape dynamic and changing future battlefields, the threats posed by manmade chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons and natural occurring germs are a clear and present threat today that is only growing given the sheer scale of violence the world is now experiencing. The U.S. Government must ensure the American people and warfighters, as well as its allies and partners, have the capabilities necessary to defend against and respond to the broad array of threats that can turn from regional to global in days. Recent U.S. Government national security related strategies and reviews have effectively described the current threats and what the government, in conjunction with industry, must do to combat them. First, the 2022 National Security Strategy highlights the growing competition between democracies and autocracies which requires technological improvements, successful diplomatic initiatives, and recognition of the consequences of pandemics and biodefense. Second, the National Defense Strategy acknowledges the dangers posed by China, Russia, and Iran, among others. Third, the 2023 Department of Defense's Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Strategy emphasizes the need to invest in capabilities for the joint force, enable partner and allied capabilities, and defend the Homeland against WMD. Beyond the aforementioned threats and strategies, the U.S. Government has clearly articulated the growing concerns in multiple Department of State reports. The first of which is that the People's Republic of China



(PRC) and the Russian Federation, in addition to their vast and growing nuclear capabilities, possess or have possessed chemical and biological weapons. Further, North Korea has offensive CBRN capabilities and Iran continues to develop a nuclear program while financially supporting global terrorism. The 2023 Annual Threat Assessment from the Office of Director of National Intelligence emphasizes another acute threat, the pharmaceutical based agent fentanyl, which kills more than 100,00 Americans annually by product produced in Mexico from Chinese precursors. While fentanyl is not officially a WMD it could be effectively weaponized and increase the death toll by killing more Americans via counterfeit pills and other drugs.

We have also learned a hard lesson from the recent global pandemic of SARS-COV2 or COVID. The world, and our nation specifically, discovered that our domestic supply chain of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals is limited at best. These domestic supply limitations have been apparent for years. We cannot hope to successfully defend our national health security with fragile supply chains unless we make robust investments to prepare for probable threats in advance. Efforts to prepare for pandemic influenza in the early 2000's were not maintained by appropriations from the Congress after the H1N1 pandemic in 2009. This is a large part of why there were less stockpiled respiratory protective products when we were faced with COVID. In short, we ceased working toward preparedness for pandemics and focused on preparedness for CBRN events.

Before the next pandemic, the US Government must continue investment in domestic manufacturing and stockpiling pharmaceuticals and other critical medical supplies. These investments can help ensure that material is available for pandemic events. Stockpiling and rotation of essential products is mandatory; however, stockpiling is only a part of the preparedness solution. Continued investment in expanding and supporting domestic capability is imperative. Manufacturing support must go beyond investing in greater production capability to securing a market for those products in routine healthcare. The failure to invest in pandemic preparedness creates a new risk that must be addressed. As our nation invests in health security against new emerging infectious diseases (EID) there is a great risk that we will fail to continue investment in being prepared for CBRN events. It is a fact that CBRN medical countermeasures (MCM) have a limited market and are generally only purchased by the government to protect the warfighter and the general population. There always exists a possibility, however, that investment in CBRN products may fill gaps in preparedness against EID. A prime example is the global response to monkeypox. The reason pharmaceuticals were available to address this disease was due to US Government investment in preparing for a smallpox event. Now, we must continue to maintain our capability to produce vaccines and anti-virals for such orthopox virus events domestically. Aside from the potential use for emerging infectious diseases we cannot fail to invest in MCM for CBRN threats. It is not possible to manufacture many of these products at the time of need. It is not unusual for manufacturing cycles for biologic or large molecule drugs to require lead times from raw material acquisition to filled and finished products of more than 18 months. In order to continue to assure availability of these vital products the government must continue to invest in manufacturing to include not only the products themselves, but also in specialized contract drug manufacturing organizations (CDMOs) to produce these critical drugs. We have addressed biological events in this article, but we also cannot divert attention from preparedness for Chemical, Radiological and Nuclear events at the same time. We often speak of CBRN preparedness but then focus primarily on the B—Biological. Chemical attacks have been conducted by nation-states at a mass casualty level and against individuals. We know the chemical agents are being produced, stockpiled, and used. Many nations have access to and capability to make use of nuclear weapons and radiation dispersal devices (RDD). In the event of RDD use, it would be horrific for there to be no existing response capability. Worse yet, a nuclear detonation would be catastrophic. We urge the preparedness community to continue to plan for future pandemic events while simultaneously continuing preparedness efforts for CBRN events. Adequate preparedness requires Congress to make policy and actual appropriations to investment in research and development, manufacturing, and stockpiling all these vital materials domestically. We cannot find ourselves in another situation like COVID where we had stopped investing to respond to EID events in favor of CBRN events. It is essential that we be ready for both. The American people deserve nothing less.

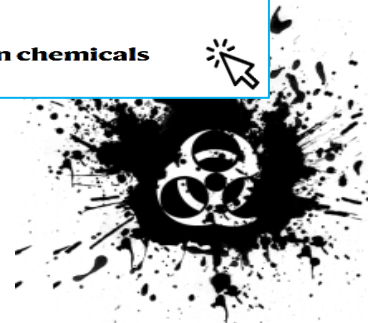
Greg Burel is the former Director of the Strategic National Stockpile.

David Lasseter is the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction.

NEWS | 17 May 2023

The world's top chemical-weapons detectives just opened a brand-new lab

The state-of-the-art centre will help to enforce a near-universal ban on certain chemicals and train analysts from around the world.



The world's chemical-weapons stockpiles are gone — but a new challenge looms

By Peter J. Hotchkiss

Nature 623, 459 (2023)

Source: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-03509-1>

Nov 14 – This year, my colleagues at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) — which implements the Chemical Weapons Convention, an arms-control treaty that entered into force in 1997 — and I reached a milestone: we verified that the last remaining declared stockpiles of chemical weapons in the world had been destroyed. Now, the OPCW is intensifying its focus on ensuring that these weapons do not re-emerge. This involves bolstering the political commitments and collective will needed to maintain the norm against the use of chemical weapons, as well as preventing the proliferation of materials, equipment and expertise. As the OPCW's science-policy adviser, I monitor the impact of advances in science and technology on the implementation of the convention and the organization's work. I now find us facing an ongoing challenge — one that collaboration from governments and the scientific community can help us to overcome.

In 2019, the OPCW's 193 member states decided unanimously, for the first time in history, to add compounds to the schedules, the lists of chemicals that are regulated under the convention. The four entries comprise toxic nerve agents with no known civilian use: three cover phosphorus-based agents (in the 'novichok family'), and the fourth is a family of carbamates, another kind of nerve agent. The convention already prohibited using these (or any chemical) to intentionally kill or harm people through toxicity. Now, their production, transfer and storage are subject to stringent verification by the OPCW, through declarations and on-site inspections.

Yet some states have been reticent to share data on these chemicals with the OPCW. The lack of information on the newly scheduled chemicals is in jarring contrast to what we have on other weapons listed in the convention and on their precursors. To ensure the health and safety of staff members during inspections, the OPCW needs the best understanding of these chemicals' properties, the types of personal protective equipment and medical countermeasures that are effective against them and the analytical methods for detecting them. These data would also help us to provide the best information and training to all member states, ensuring that they are prepared in the event that any of these chemicals are used as a weapon.

Sharing information also enhances national security. It builds trust by increasing confidence that other nations are abiding by mutually and voluntarily binding agreements. When member states can detect, treat and respond to the consequences of the use of chemical weapons, that itself acts as a deterrent and decreases the risk of their use.

The annual Conference of States Parties, which will take place in the Hague, the Netherlands, from 27 November to 1 December, is an excellent opportunity for everyone to agree that making scientific data available is important — a fundamentally apolitical aspect of the convention and the OPCW's work.

Hesitation to share information has been overcome in the past. For example, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) continuously monitors Earth for signs of nuclear explosions, in support of its namesake 1996 treaty, which bans all nuclear tests. It records extensive data through a broad network of seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide facilities. These data were initially not shared openly.

The turning point came after the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, in December 2004. The tsunami's death toll reached an estimated 230,000. Signatory states began asking: could the rapid sharing of CTBTO data have helped to save lives during this disaster? Seeing the enormous potential of these data for diverse scientific endeavours, parties to the test-ban treaty overcame their initial reluctance to share sensitive data and found a way to do so without compromising national security. Now, the wider scientific community can access CTBTO data for many research and civil applications, from tracking meteors and pinpointing lost submarines to following marine-mammal migration. Expanding member states' comfort zones has proved to be a win-win.

In the case of the newly added compounds to the Chemical Weapons Convention, information sharing could be approached in a stepwise fashion to build confidence. Initially, to ensure the fidelity of our ongoing operations, member states could provide relevant technical information on these chemicals only to the OPCW Technical Secretariat. After a period of time, when member states are comfortable with how the information is being used, the OPCW could facilitate the sharing of relevant information with all member states, strengthening their ability to prepare for and respond to any misuse of these chemicals.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is widely considered to be the world's most successful international disarmament treaty, because it has eliminated an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. The OPCW is equally successful — recognized for its efforts in 2013 with the Nobel Peace Prize. At this



landmark moment, when all global declared stockpiles of chemical weapons have been destroyed at last, let us have the tools we need to ensure ongoing success and a safer world.

[Peter J. Hotchkiss](#) is the science policy adviser and the secretary to the Scientific Advisory Board at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Breaking the Decade-Long Stagnation in the CBRN: IM76 Gas Mask secures CE Approval, Propelling Major Advancements

Source: https://www.einnews.com/pr_news/668022638/breaking-the-decade-long-stagnation-in-the-cbrn-im76-gas-mask-secures-ce-approval-propelling-major-advancements

Nov 14 – Many existing CBRN protective gear designs have remained largely unchanged for decades. The materials used often lack durability, flexibility, and comfort, hampering the efficiency and ease of use. Such outdated designs can compromise the safety and well-being of those relying on this equipment.

Innovations must prioritize the development of protective gear that offers increased shielding against CBRN threats. Advanced materials and design elements can enhance durability, allowing for prolonged use in hazardous environments. Additionally, the incorporation of self-decontamination mechanisms can significantly improve the overall effectiveness of the gear.

Innovative designs should focus on improving the comfort and usability of CBRN protective gear. Lightweight and breathable materials can help alleviate discomfort and reduce fatigue, enabling wearers to operate efficiently for extended periods. Additionally, improved ergonomics and not just stand with the required standardization, but to actually provide the durability and the solutions.

In a world where the safety and well-being of individuals are paramount, Supergum Group recognized the significance of collaborating with the Israeli Defense Force to gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs, requests, and desires of soldiers, who face potentially life-threatening situations regularly, Supergum Group has taken a commendable step forward in developing a groundbreaking CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear) mask which named and recognized as the [IM76 CBRN mask](#).

The IM76 mask is not just another product in the market, it is a result of the company's dedication to providing the best possible protection for its troops, first responders, and the sanctity of life. Through a close partnership with the Israeli Defense Force and the invaluable input from soldiers who are the actual constant users of CBRN gear, Supergum Group has created a game-changing solution. By working closely with these brave individuals, Supergum Group was able to recognize the gaps in existing CBRN protective gear and address them effectively. This user-centric approach ensured that the IM76 mask was designed to meet the exact requirements of those who depend on it.

The IM76 CBRN Mask stands out as a game-changer. This article explores the groundbreaking features of the IM76, including its integrated communication system, innovative liquid discharge drainage system, and [patented visor technology](#). Moreover, we will delve into its unique filter connection options, making it a highly versatile and user-oriented solution.

Recognizing the importance of comfort and usability, Supergum Group has incorporated ergonomic design elements into the IM76 mask, so not just the sizes will be fit, but to make sure that the medium size will fit to 80% of the population, that will be a high ground advantage for the end user.

Enhanced Communication System

The IM76 CBRN Mask takes communication capabilities to the next level. With its built-in communication system, users can effortlessly stay connected with their team members in hazardous environments. This feature eliminates the need for shortcut any communication devices, just by connecting the end users plug, and start playing.





Unmatched Comfort and Dryness

One of the standout features of the IM76 is its liquid discharge drainage system. Designed to keep users dry at all times, this system effectively wicks away moisture, preventing discomfort and enhancing overall user experience. No longer will wearers have to endure the unpleasant feeling of moisture build-up, as the IM76 ensures optimal comfort even during extended periods of use.

Innovative Patented Visor Technology

The IM76's visor sets it apart from other masks on the market. Protected by a patented design, the visor offers a wide dynamic range, providing users with clear vision even in challenging conditions. What truly sets the IM76 apart is the fact that users don't need to discard the entire mask in case of a broken visor. This cost-saving feature ensures that users can continue their operations without interruption, minimizing downtime and maximizing efficiency.

Thus as well as providing a super durable visor, that stands completely with the standards and checking as Protected as a splash collector and shooting.

Versatile Filter Connection Options

Flexibility is at the core of the IM76 CBRN Mask's design. With three filter connection possibilities - left, right, or center - users have the freedom to choose the configuration that best suits their needs. Whether it's a single filter or a combination of all three, the IM76 allows for customization, ensuring optimal protection against a wide range of harmful substances.

Conclusion

The IM76 CBRN Mask redefines personal protection equipment by offering a comprehensive range of features that cater to the end user's needs. After achieving another milestone with the receipt of the CE certificate for their groundbreaking CBRN mask, the IM76. This certification marks the beginning of the IM76 mask's entry into the market, and by all means ripe for the start of activity and being used successfully by the end users.





Emergency Response Guidebook 2024

Source: <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/training/hazmat/erg/emergency-response-guidebook-erg>



The 2024 Emergency Response Guidebook and mobile application will be available in Spring 2024. Stay tuned!

PHMSA's 2020 Emergency Response Guidebook provides first responders with a go-to manual to help deal with hazmat transportation accidents during the critical first 30 minutes.

DOT's goal is to place an ERG in every public emergency service vehicle nationwide. To date, more than 16 million free copies have been distributed to the emergency response community through state emergency management coordinators. Members of the public may purchase a copy of the ERG through the GPO Bookstore and other commercial suppliers.

Related Links

- [ERG 2020 Data Files](#)
- [ERG 2020 Mobile App](#)
- [Corrections to the ERG2020](#)
- [National Library of Medicine's WISER Software](#)
- [How to Use the ERG video](#)
- [Emergency Response Guidebook \(ERG\) 2020 Updates](#)
- [ERG2020 Windows software](#)

Related Documents

- [ERG2020 \(English\)](#)
- [ERG2020 \(French\)](#)
- [ERG2020 \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Summary of Changes from ERG2016](#)
- [Commercial Suppliers List](#)
- [State Coordinators List](#)
- [Argonne National Laboratory Report](#)

United States: Addressing CBRN Threats And Promoting Responsible AI In Healthcare: Insights From President Biden's AI Executive Order

By Mahnu V. Davar , Abeba Habtemariam , James W. Kim , Daniel Kracov and Allison Shuren

Source: <https://www.mondaq.com/unitedstates/healthcare/1389094/addressing-cbrn-threats-and-promoting-responsible-ai-in-healthcare-insights-from-president-bidens-ai-executive-order>

Nov 14 – In an increasingly interconnected world, the convergence of cutting-edge technologies and emerging security threats pose unique challenges that demand proactive solutions. Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons have long been a cause for concern in the realm of national security. However, as technology evolves, so too does the potential for these threats to be amplified and exploited. President Biden's artificial intelligence (AI) executive order (EO) addresses these issues head-on, taking a significant step towards mitigating the risks at the intersection of AI and CBRN threats. This directive calls for a comprehensive evaluation of the potential misuse of AI for CBRN development but also champions responsible AI development and usage. Furthermore, as the healthcare sector increasingly incorporates AI into its operations, federal agencies are showing a heightened focus on ensuring the responsible integration of AI in this critical field. Organizations involved in healthcare products and services delivery are urged to remain vigilant as these changes unfold.

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, or Nuclear Weapons

Section 4.4 of the EO addresses methods to reduce risks at the "Intersection of AI and CBRN Threats." In furtherance of this goal, the EO directs the Secretary of DHS to evaluate the potential for AI to be misused to enable the development of CBRN threats and submit a report on these efforts within 180 days of the date of the EO. Similarly, the Secretary of DoD is directed to prepare a study assessing potential national security risks related to biosecurity and synthetic biology, including recommendations on how to coordinate data and



resources. The EO focuses particularly on the use and potential misuse of synthetic nucleic acids, and requests that, within 180 days of the EO, life sciences organizations that receive federal funding for research certify, as a condition of funding, that synthetic nucleic acid procurement is conducted in compliance with a framework established by the Secretary of Commerce. Organizations that utilize synthetic biology/nucleic acids in products should be cautious to keep aware of these changes and the manner in which these obligations will be proposed for implementation by funding agencies through inclusion in applicable agreements.

Responsible AI Development and Use

Section 5.2(e) of the EO directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS Secretary) to prioritize grantmaking and other awards to support responsible AI development and use. Specifically, the EO directs the HHS Secretary to: (1) collaborate with appropriate private sector actors through HHS programs that may support the advancement of AI-enabled tools that develop personalized immune-response profiles for patients; (2) prioritize allocation of the 2024 Leading Edge Acceleration Project cooperative agreement awards to initiatives that explore ways to improve healthcare-data quality to support the responsible development of AI tools for clinical care, real world evidence programs, population health, public health, and related research; and (3) accelerate grants awarded through the National Institutes of Health Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning Consortium to Advance Health Equity and Researcher Diversity (AIM-AHEAD) program and showcasing current AIM-AHEAD activities in underserved communities.

To help ensure the safe and responsible use of AI in healthcare, section 8(b) of the EO directs the HHS Secretary to take the following actions:

- **Establish an AI Task Force and Strategic Plan on Responsible Use of AI in the Health Sector:** The EO directs the HHS Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, to establish an HHS AI Task Force charged with developing a strategic plan on responsible deployment and use of AI and AI-enabled technologies in the health and human services sector. The EO specifies that such sectors include research and discovery, drug and device safety, healthcare delivery and financing, and public health. The plan would include policies and frameworks, as well as regulatory action where appropriate. The EO lists several areas to be addressed in the AI Task Force plan, including development and use of predictive and generative AI-enabled technologies in healthcare delivery and financing, long-term safety and real-world performance monitoring of AI-enabled technologies used in the health sector, incorporation of equity principles in AI-enabled technologies used in the health sector, and incorporation of privacy and security standards into the software development lifecycle for protection of personally identifiable information.
- **Ensure Quality of AI Technologies in the Health Sector:** The EO directs the HHS Secretary, in consultation with relevant agencies, to determine whether AI-enabled technologies in the health and human services sector maintain appropriate levels of quality. The EO provides that this work shall include development of an AI assurance policy and infrastructure needs for enabling premarket assessment and postmarket oversight of AI-enabled healthcare technology algorithm system performance against real-world data.
- **Advance Compliance With Nondiscrimination Laws:** The EO requires the HHS Secretary to, in consultation with relevant agencies, consider appropriate actions to advance the prompt understanding of and compliance with federal nondiscrimination laws by health and human services providers that receive federal financial assistance, as well as how those laws relate to AI. Such actions may include providing technical assistance to providers and payers about their obligations under federal nondiscrimination and privacy laws as they relate to AI and potential consequences of noncompliance, and issuing guidance or taking other action in response to complaints or reports of noncompliance with federal nondiscrimination and privacy laws as they relate to AI.
- **Establish an AI Safety Program:** The EO directs the HHS Secretary to, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Veterans Affairs, establish an AI safety program in partnership with voluntary federally listed patient safety organizations. The AI safety program would establish a common framework for approaches to identify and capture clinical errors resulting from AI deployed in healthcare settings, as well as specifications for a central tracking repository for associated incidents that cause harm, and analyze captured data to generate evidence to develop recommendations or guidelines for avoiding those harms.
- **Develop a Strategy for Regulation of AI in Drug Development:** The EO directs the HHS Secretary to develop a strategy for regulating the use of AI or AI-enabled tools in drug-development processes. At a minimum, the strategy would define principles required for appropriate regulation throughout each phase of drug development, identify areas where rulemaking, guidance, or additional statutory authority may be necessary to implement such a regulatory system, and identify existing budgetary and other resources for such a regulatory system.



The administration's focus on AI in the healthcare sector in the EO is also reflected in recent activity from federal agencies. For example:

- In 2021, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an action plan titled "Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Software as a Medical Device." This followed the agency's publication in April 2019 of a discussion paper titled "Proposed Regulatory Framework for Modifications to Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML)-Based Software as a Medical Device (SaMD)." The 2019 discussion paper described the FDA's foundation for a potential approach to premarket review for artificial intelligence and machine learning-driven software modifications. The 2021 action plan incorporates feedback from interested parties on the 2019 discussion paper and confirms the FDA's view that AI/ML technologies have the potential to significantly enhance the quality of healthcare by utilizing vast amounts of data generated through healthcare delivery, reflecting real-world use and experience. FDA stated its optimism that "with appropriately tailored total product lifecycle-based regulatory oversight, AI/ML-based SaMD will deliver safe and effective software functionality that improves the quality of care that patients receive."
- In August 2022, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a proposed rule focused on health equity designed to reduce disparities in healthcare. The proposed rule, titled "Nondiscrimination in Health Programs and Activities," includes provisions prohibiting the use of clinical algorithms to make decisions that discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. In announcing the proposed rule, HHS made it clear that its intent is not to hinder the use of clinical algorithms, which have proven useful in healthcare decision-making; but rather to help ensure their use is free of bias.

Organizations that manufacture medical products or are involved in healthcare services delivery should stay aware of these changes as they are implemented.

'Ready to respond to the unknowns': Vehicle-Mounted Radiological Detection System (VMRDS) elevates CST interoperability

Source: <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/457981/ready-respond-unknowns-vehicle-mounted-radiological-detection-system-vmrds-elevates-cst-interoperability>

Nov 16 – For as long as he can remember, Tech. Sgt. James P. Hargraves wanted to work alongside the Nation's best and brightest, specifically three and four-letter agencies: High-visibility, front-line federal government departments that even children become familiar with after learning the alphabet. "The cream of the crop, the crème de la crème, the best of the best," Hargraves said. "I wanted to work with the best counter weapons of mass destruction team in the nation, and 'The President's CST' is that team." Hargraves transferred from Active Duty Emergency Management to the District of Columbia National Guard's 33rd Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team (WMD-CST). The 33rd WMD-CST supports civil authorities at a domestic Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear high-yield Explosives incident site(s) by identifying agents/substances, assessing current or potential threats and hazards, advising leaders on response measures and capabilities, and assisting a multitude of agencies across the federal and non-federal government.

"Threats change," said 1st Sgt. Christopher Miller, 33rd WMD-CST's first sergeant. "Every time the enemy comes up with a new weapon, we come up with a counter-weapon. Every time we come up with a new capability, there's a counter-capability. As the bad guys develop more and learn our tactics and procedures, we must adapt and stay ahead. This includes emergency response and prevention." In addition to supporting major events, including the 2023 United Nations Summit, Super Bowl LVII, and other high-profile sports/political events, WMD-CSTs train with their military counterparts and federal authorities continuously. Last month, the 33rd WMD-CST trained with the Department of Energy (DOE) and the 22nd WMD-CST, Puerto Rico, as part of a mandatory Radiological Assistance Program (RAP) Training for Emergency Response (RAPTER).

"We're required to be able to respond to threats, and when it comes to the radiation threat, we have a whole suite of capabilities and partners," Miller said. "We primarily focused on real-world scenarios and interoperability training."

Earlier this year, the 33rd WMD-CST acquired a Vehicle-Mounted Radiological Detection System (VMRDS). Miller believes it elevates the National Guard's capabilities to a broader scale.

"We were one of the first teams to get the VMRDS, instead of having to use handheld equipment to look for radiation at a more limited scale; this boosts safety and efficiency," he said.

On Nov. 6, National Guard Bureau (NGB) J39 hosted a WMD-CST Capabilities Symposium at the D.C. Armory, offering federal partners, state/local agencies, and civilian first responders an up-close look at the

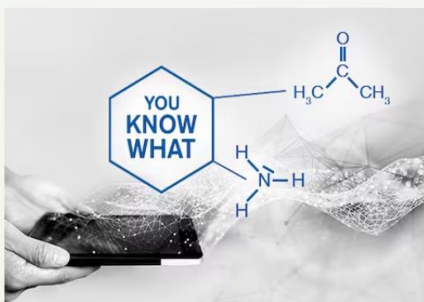


33rd WMD-CST capabilities, equipment, and team members (CBRN, search and extraction, decontamination, medical, and FSRT). “We’ve had everyone here from D.C. Fire to the FBI and U.S. Secret Service,” Miller said. Hargraves recognizes the importance of getting more than acquainted with these friendly neighborhood responders; at any moment, the 33rd WMD-CST could be called upon to identify, assess, advise, and assist. “We’re ready to deploy, 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, 365-days a year, at a moment’s notice,” he said. “No matter the incident, no matter the hour, we are always ready to respond to the unknowns.”

Dräger VOICE - your hazmat-based safety product finder

Dräger VOICE is an essential tool for the safe handling of hazmats. One click and you’ll receive relevant information and specific recommendations of safety equipment for more than 1,500 hazardous substances in its database. Give it a try – it is so simple.

Please enter Substance, CAS Number or Chemical Formula



You know what

You know best which hazardous substance you deal with. Just type it in – and Dräger VOICE informs you about its physiochemical characteristics and limit values right away.



We know how

The Dräger VOICE online-tool recommends suitable respiratory and personal protection equipment as well as appropriate gas detection solutions in real time.



Expert knowledge to go

Dräger VOICE database provides a quick navigation through hazardous substances and our safety portfolio. It works with almost any device and is an essential tool to handle hazmats safely.

Israeli Officials Uncover Disturbing Evidence of Hamas Terrorists Planning Chemical Attacks

Source: <https://www.worldreportnow.com/news/hamas-terrorists-found-carrying-instructions-for-cyanide-based-chemical-weapons/26888/#gsc.tab=0>

Nov 17 – Israeli officials have recently uncovered alarming evidence of Hamas terrorists planning **cyanide-based** chemical attacks. In a shocking revelation, instructions on how to deploy cyanide dispersion devices were found on USBs recovered from the bodies of Hamas operatives involved in the tragic attack on Kibbutz Be’eri. Israeli intelligence reviewed by Axios revealed detailed diagrams and directions for these deadly weapons.

The discovery of these instructions has raised serious concerns about Hamas’ intentions to use chemical weapons in their terror attacks targeting innocent civilians. Israel has sent a cable to its embassies, warning them of this new threat posed by Hamas and urging them to inform their diplomats accordingly. The cable draws a parallel between Hamas and the tactic that ISIS had attempted to employ previously.



Israeli President Isaac Herzog confirmed the authenticity of the instructions, revealing that they were based on Al Qaeda material dating back to 2003. This revelation underscores the grave nature of the situation, as it highlights the connections between terrorist organizations such as ISIS, Al Qaeda, and Hamas.

The possession of these cyanide bomb instructions further reveals the extent to which Hamas is willing to go in its quest for violence and terror. President Herzog expressed his shock at the discovery, emphasizing that the instructions outline how to create a non-professional chemical weapon using cyanide.

In recent weeks, Israeli officials have drawn comparisons between Hamas and groups like ISIS, known for their use of horrifying violence in their pursuit of extremist Islamic law worldwide. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the atrocities committed by Hamas, stating that they were unparalleled since the crimes committed by ISIS. The Prime Minister referenced the brutal killings, including the execution of children and entire families, to underscore the gravity of Hamas' actions.

In addition to the cyanide bomb directions, other intelligence found on the bodies of Hamas agents reveals their sinister plans. These include battle plans aimed at maximizing casualties and taking hostages, as well as explicit instructions to target schools for the mass kidnapping of children. Locations likely to have large groups of people, such as supermarkets and dining halls, were also highlighted as potential targets.

As Israeli forces continue to uncover new evidence, it becomes increasingly evident that Hamas poses a grave threat not only to Israel but to the stability and safety of the entire region. The use of chemical weapons represents a new and dangerous escalation in their campaign of terror. The international community must remain vigilant and united in condemning such actions and working towards a peaceful resolution to this ongoing conflict.

Monitoring chemical threats during major events

Source: <https://www.bertin-technologies.com/chemical-detection/application-center/monitoring-chemical-threats-during-major-events/>

Over the last ten years or so, we have seen a steady increase in Nuclear, Radiological, Biological and Chemical (NRBC) threats, which have reached their highest level since the end of the Cold War. Today, we are witnessing a spate in CBRN risks, a worrying phenomenon caused by the return of high-intensity conflicts, but also by the diversification of enemies and employment frameworks.

Faced with this growing instability, **safety and security represent an essential building block in the organization of major events**. State services and private companies must ensure the safety of people in the public space, particularly during large-scale cultural, political and sporting events such as the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which will shortly be taking place in Paris.

Of all the risks involved, the use of chemical substances represents a real threat to people's health and to the sovereignty of states, with the potential to seriously undermine the political and economic stability of the countries concerned. In the context of major events, chemical threat detection solutions fulfil a vital function, which is to ensure the monitoring of critical sites to better organize the health response in the event of a terrorist attack.

Bertin Technologies Solution

To monitor chemical threats effectively, Bertin Technologies offers **Second Sight MS**, a camera that can **detect** and **identify** chemical gases **remotely** using **infrared multispectral technology**.

In a maximum of 10 seconds, Second Sight MS detects, visualizes and identifies one or several clouds of chemical gas, that it displays in real time on its human-machine interface. This gives operators precise information on the **location of the source**, the **point of contamination**, the **name of the gas** and an estimate of its **surface concentration**, to help them implement the appropriate countermeasures. In addition, Second Sight MS has the **widest field of view** of any remote chemical detector on the market, significantly increasing its detection capabilities. Able to identify Chemical Warfare Agents (**CWA**) and Toxic Industrial Compounds (**TIC**), Second Sight MS also features an **'X-Gas'** function, for the detection of **mixed, impure or unlisted gases**.



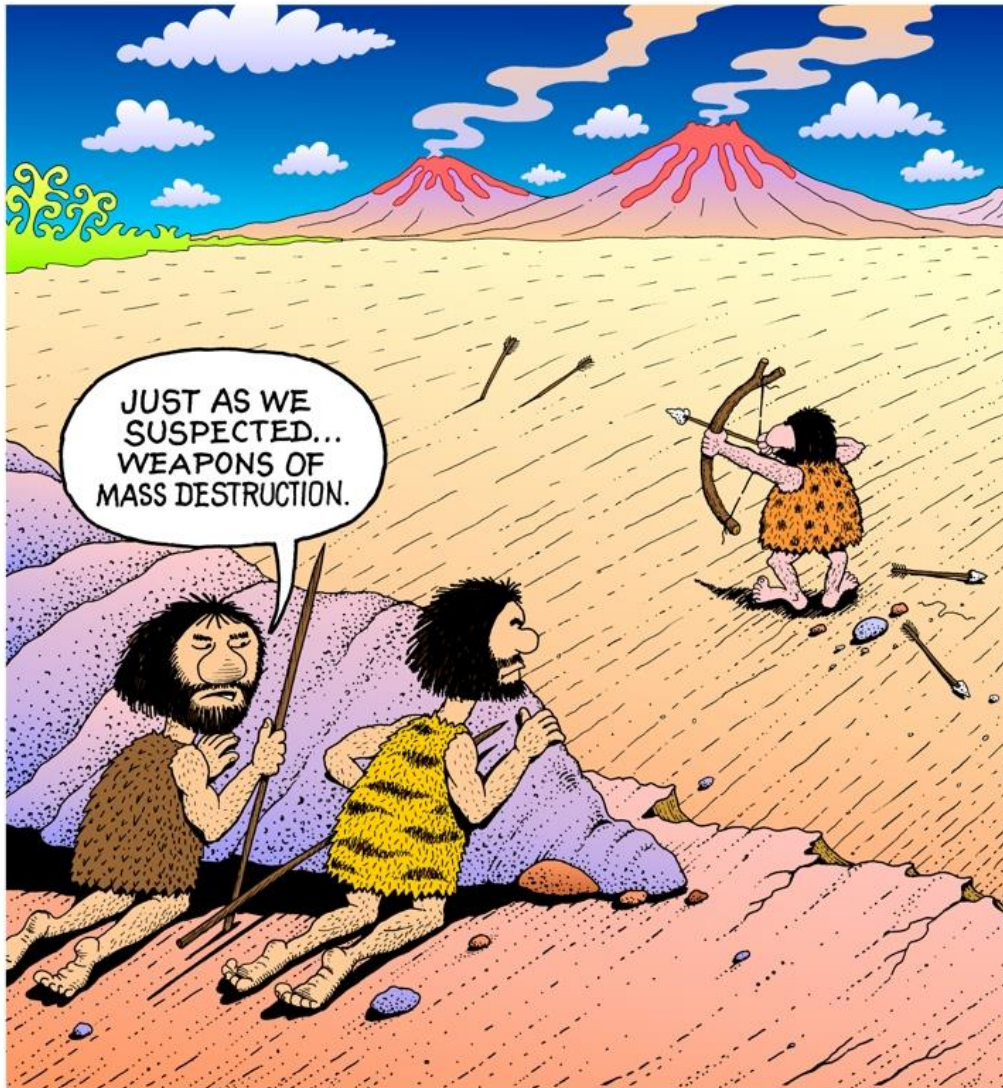


Easy to use, versatile and remotely operable, Second Sight MS can be mounted on tripods and vehicles, with an optional Pan&Tilt system, for 360° viewing of chemical threats from a sensitive site or its surroundings. Its low weight also makes it a mobile solution, easy to transport and deploy in the field.

Conclusion

More than ever, chemical threats are a major threat to public safety and national sovereignty. To ensure the safety of people, it is essential to be equipped with tried-and-tested, high-performance instruments such as **Second Sight MS**.

Easy to use, this **versatile camera** monitors a **large area remotely** and **in real time**, **detects and identifies one or more gas clouds**, and **optimizes the response of first responders** in the event of a real attack. It is the ideal solution for monitoring major events, sensitive sites and critical infrastructures against Chemical Warfare Agents and Toxic Industrial Compounds.



COPYRIGHT JOHN S. PRITCHETT



2023 CBRNE-RELATED CONFERENCES



<https://nct-events.com/event>



<https://ciprna-expo.com/>

There are 16 critical infrastructure sectors whose assets, systems, and networks, whether physical or virtual, are considered so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, national economic security, national public health or safety. Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21): Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience advances a national policy to strengthen and maintain secure, functioning, and resilient critical infrastructure. This directive supersedes Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7.

We must be prepared!

The Nation's critical infrastructure provides the essential services that underpin American society. Proactive and coordinated efforts are necessary to strengthen and maintain secure, functioning, and resilient critical infrastructure – including assets, networks, and systems – that are vital to public confidence and the Nation's safety, prosperity, and well-being.

Critical infrastructure must be secure and able to withstand and rapidly recover from all hazards. Achieving this will require integration with the national preparedness system across prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.

This directive establishes national policy on critical infrastructure security and resilience. This endeavor is a shared responsibility among the Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) entities, and public and private owners and operators of critical infrastructure (herein referred to as "critical infrastructure owners and operators"). This directive also refines and clarifies the critical infrastructure-related functions, roles, and responsibilities across the Federal Government, as well as enhances overall coordination and collaboration. The Federal Government also has a responsibility to strengthen the security and resilience of its own critical infrastructure, for the continuity of national essential functions, and to organize itself to partner effectively with and add value to the security and resilience efforts of critical infrastructure owners and operators.

The Critical Infrastructure Protection and Resilience North America conference will again bring together leading stakeholders from industry, operators, agencies and governments to collaborate on securing North America.

The conference will look at developing on the theme of previous events in helping to create better understanding of the issues and the threats, to help facilitate the work to develop frameworks, good risk management, strategic planning and implementation.





**EGYPT
DEFENCE
EXPO**

4-7 DECEMBER 2023
EGYPT INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION CENTRE



IBMATA
INTERNATIONAL BORDER MANAGEMENT
AND TECHNOLOGIES ASSOCIATION

**BORDER
MANAGEMENT &
TECHNOLOGIES SUMMIT**
MIDDLE EAST 2023

Dubai, UAE | 14 - 16 November 2023



IBMATA
INTERNATIONAL BORDER MANAGEMENT
AND TECHNOLOGIES ASSOCIATION

**BORDER
MANAGEMENT &
TECHNOLOGIES SUMMIT**
EUROPE 2024

Dublin, Ireland | 27-29 February 2024

<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.

Upcoming.....

CBRNe Asia CONVERGENCE

23rd - 25th January 2024



<https://cbrneworld.com/events/asia-24>

Singapore was one of the first places we held a CBRN conference when we started CBRNe World in 2006, and it continues to excel, not just in South East Asia but the world. There are multiple agencies that allow it to have such a position, but pre-eminent among these is the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF). SCDF initiatives have brought CBRN excellence to every aspect of the field, from collecting evidence through to initiatives to allow the public to create safe spaces for themselves should the worst happen. We have done

multiple interviews and articles with them over the years that explain these projects, but now after 15 years we thought it was time for you to see them yourself! For three days in January we will host an event in the heart of the SCDF's CBRNE defence capability, the Civil Defence Academy (CDA). The CDA has recently [benefited](#) from a multi-million dollar improvement to a facility that already managed to pack a great deal into a relatively small space. Due to Covid it will have only recently finished the third, and final stage, of its improvement, and we will be hosting the event at the facility! Delegates will get an opportunity to visit the new facility and gain an increased understanding of the investment in first responder training that the SCDF has made. In addition to this there will be an exhibition of leading companies interested in SE Asia.

COUNTER TERRORISM
CERTIFICATION BOARD

intersec 25th

January 18, 2024
Dubai World Trade Centre
UAE

DRONE THREATS
AND COUNTERMEASURES

ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023



**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

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 coltto 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.

March 13-14, 2024 | National Housing Center | Washington, D.C.

**JOINT CIVIL
& DOD CBRN**

Symposium and Technology Showcase

Advancing CBRN Defense & Response Through Readiness, Technology & Collaboration



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



BIO NEWS



The pandemic
is OVER!

Pandemic by numbers (as of November 24, 2023)

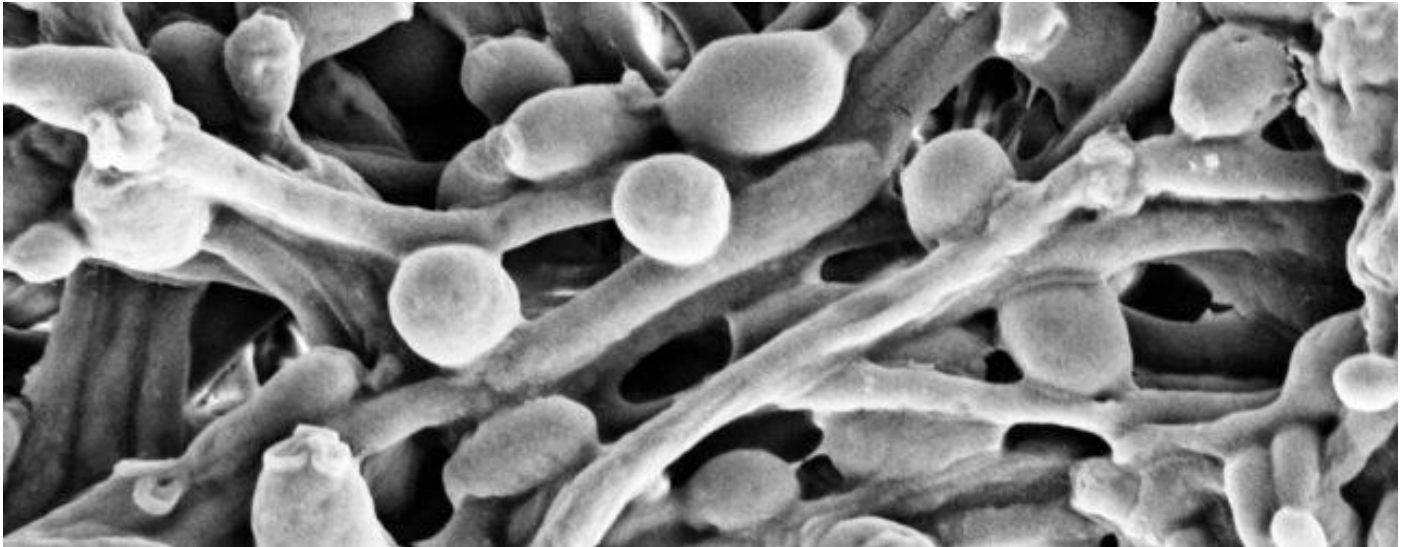
	CASES	DEATHS	COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES	MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES*
COVID-19	(689,124,038) 698,148,421	(6,881,401) 6,941,953	229	USA, India, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, S. Korea

* over 30 million cases | numbers in parenthesis are patients of previous month

New Link Between Fungal Organisms And Severe COVID Discovered

By Paul Griffin

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/new-link-between-fungal-organisms-and-severe-covid-discovered>



Candida albicans

Oct 24 – Many tiny organisms including bacteria, fungi and [viruses](#) normally live on our bodies, and even inside us. These are called the microbiome. The large number of these organisms living in the gastrointestinal tract are collectively known as the [gut microbiome](#). Increasingly the gut microbiome is recognised as playing a large part in [health and disease](#), particularly relating to human physiology, metabolism and immune function.

There are now more than [700 published papers](#) looking at the interaction between COVID and the gut microbiome. Many of these studies demonstrate the possible contribution of gut bacteria to COVID infection and severity, as well as the effect COVID (and its treatment) potentially has on our gut bacteria.

Now, a [new study](#) has found severe COVID may be related to fungal bugs in our gut microbiome. This could be through a variety of changes to the immune system in response to specific fungal species.

What the study did

Fungal organisms in the microbiome are referred to as the fungal microbiota, or mycobiota. While it's normal to have a range of fungal organisms in the gut, changes in the types or amount can be linked to disease, just like with variations in gut bacteria.

In the study published in [Nature Immunology](#), the researchers investigated the possible relationship between mycobiota and COVID in a few different ways.

First, they compared patients with and without COVID, looking at the levels of certain fungal organisms in samples from their gastrointestinal tracts. This included 66 people with severe COVID, 25 with moderate COVID and 36 without COVID.

The researchers also measured [antibodies](#) in the participants' blood against these same organisms, which lets us know that they triggered an immune response. To investigate further, the researchers conducted experiments in mice.

They gave the mice some of the fungal organisms taken from COVID patients and measured some of the



same outcomes, including antibodies in the blood. They also looked to see if certain treatments, such as antifungals, would make a difference.

While this isn't the first study looking at [gut mycobiota and COVID](#), it's very comprehensive and reports some interesting findings.

What the study found

The researchers detected a greater amount of fungal organisms in patients who had COVID compared with controls who did not. Antibodies to certain fungi were also heightened in the blood of COVID patients. In other words, the presence of these fungal organisms and an associated immune response seems to be linked to a more severe COVID infection. In particular, two *Candida* species and *S. cerevisiae* were linked to disease severity.

When the researchers isolated live fungi from fecal samples of COVID patients, [Candida albicans](#) was common in the gut of patients with COVID, and its growth correlated with more severe disease.

To look at the impact of these fungal species on immune responses, mice were colonised with *Candida* strains isolated from the COVID patients.

The researchers found older mice who were colonised with *C. albicans* and then infected with COVID showed a very different immune response compared to mice that weren't given the *Candida* fungus. This included having more immune cells called neutrophils in the blood and increases in other markers of inflammation including in the lungs.

Some of these changes were partially resolved with anti-fungal treatment or other specific anti-inflammatory medications that have shown benefit in COVID patients.

Some limitations

All of this suggests variations in the mycobiota may contribute to the excessive inflammatory immune response seen in severe cases of COVID. A link between the fungal microbiome and inflammation isn't completely new – [other studies](#) have shown an impact on inflammatory conditions linked to similar changes in the mycobiota.

As with all studies, there are some limitations to consider here. First, the number of human participants was relatively low, with only 91 patients with COVID included, and 36 in the control group. Many parts of the study analysed even smaller groups of patients or patient samples.

Second, the study was conducted in 2020 during the first wave of COVID infections. A lot has changed since then including the [virus](#) itself. And most people have now not only been vaccinated but also previously exposed to the virus.

Nonetheless, this study raises many possibilities including perhaps being able to look at who might be a greater risk of more severe COVID based on their mycobiota. There may even be a possibility of trying to change the mycobiota to reduce the risks from COVID infection. But to get to these points we need a lot more research.

There are multiple factors that determine the make-up of our microbiome, including mycobiota. These are likely to include diet and lifestyle factors alongside other factors like medical conditions and treatments, such as antibiotics.

At this stage there are fewer proposed interventions for influencing mycobiota than for gut bacteria. But studies such as this one demonstrating the importance of the fungal bugs in our gut will hopefully lead to more research in the area.

[Paul Griffin an Associate Professor, Infectious Diseases and Microbiology, The University of Queensland.](#)

Safeguard the world's worst pathogens

By Piers Millett | Science | 19 Oct 2023; Vol 382, Issue 6668, p. 243

Source: <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adl3600>

Oct 19 – More people in more places are researching the world's most dangerous pathogens. This work helps prepare against future pandemics, but it's not without danger. Pathogens could escape from research facilities, so it is vital for countries to assess potential hazards and have procedures in place to manage the risks. This doesn't happen enough.

Earlier this year, the [Global Biolabs](#) initiative released a report tracking the growth of maximum containment labs. These facilities provide extremely high levels of protection when there are very high risks to lab personnel, the wider community, or the environment. The report reveals that in 2000, there were only 13 such labs in the world. The number of labs in operation, under construction, or planned has risen steadily: to 59 labs in 23 countries in 2021, and 69 labs in 27 countries in 2023. This boom in labs has not been sufficiently accompanied by strengthened safety and security.



At the international level, there is guidance to help prevent harm from maximum containment labs, including guidance from the World Health Organization on lab biosafety (2020) and responsible conduct (2022), and from the World Organization for Animal Health on lab biosafety and biosecurity (2023) and responsible conduct (2019). Compliance, however, remains voluntary, and keeping pace with technical developments remains a challenge. A stronger evidence base for assessing risks and the efficacy of responses is needed. For example, the 2022 White House lab biorisk science & technology roadmap needs to move forward, in particular the recommendation to create a globally distributed research agenda.

Although maximum containment–based research is intended to provide benefits, it could be misapplied to do harm. The risks of such “dual use” research deserve more international attention. There has been a need for a global organization—such as the [International Biosecurity and Biosafety Initiative for Science](#), whose primary focus is on the emerging risks from biotechnology—that can help to “de-risk” tool development and implementation, and help to bring together policy, academic, and public sectors. At the national level, every country with a maximum containment lab must have relevant rules and regulations in place. It should be clear what research can (and cannot) be done, who is responsible, and what standards are to be followed. Every country with such a lab needs a plan to prevent accidents and deliberate harm. Very few countries have dedicated biosecurity strategies, such as the National Biological Security Strategy released by the UK in June. Every country with a maximum containment lab should be cultivating a strong culture of responsibility, such as is found in the [International Genetically Engineered Machine competition](#). Responsible oversight and strengthening cultures of responsibility should also be integrated into national bioeconomy strategies—which are much more widely adopted than their biosecurity counterparts.

Does the world really need so many of these labs? Equitable access will be vital to create a world where local people can solve local problems using the powers of bioscience and biotechnology. However, aside from the risks, maximum containment labs are costly and complex to run. Alternative strategies already exist for reducing the need for containment when researching dangerous pathogens. For example, sometimes parts from pathogens can be studied in less risky microbes, as is increasingly common in basic research and vaccine development for influenza viruses and coronaviruses.

Future capabilities may come online that further erode the need for these labs. Machine learning is allowing more work to be attempted on computers. This does not completely remove the need for labs, though it might reduce the number required to verify simulations with real experiments. This approach opens the door for more distributed access to research. Policy-makers are concerned that these tools could be misused to cause deliberate harm. The potential for artificial intelligence (AI) to aid the development of bioweapons will be discussed at the [AI Safety Summit](#). A more permanent forum is needed to understand the biosecurity implications of the overlap of AI and bioscience. Better and more widely adopted tools to screen for potential hazards are needed in gene synthesis companies, biofoundries, and cloud labs—which will help turn simulations into biology.

As more people in more places research dangerous pathogens, it is vital that they manage the risks. Balancing the need for critical research with measures to ensure the work is done safely, securely, and responsibly is a task for everyone.

GC Pharma seeks approval for anthrax vaccine co-developed with KDCA

Source: <https://www.koreabiomed.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=22400>

Nov 01 – GC Pharma announced Wednesday that it has submitted an application for item permission for an anthrax vaccine, GC1109, co-developed with the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA), to the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS).

GC1109 uses gene recombination technology to create the Protective Antigen (PA) protein. It is “the world's first anthrax vaccine” to utilize this technology, GC Pharma said.

GC Pharma has been developing this anthrax vaccine since 2002 through a research project with the KDCA to prepare for national crises such as bioterrorism.

As anthrax has a high fatality rate, it is difficult to conduct phase 3 clinical trials to confirm the effectiveness of vaccine against anthrax infection in a large number of people.

For this reason, GC Pharma conducted an alternative phase 3 animal test, and showed that high anthrax antibody levels were maintained six months after the fourth dose of the vaccine in an animal model.

After the vaccine was developed, GC Pharma performed clinical trials in healthy adults, and showed that the vaccinated group produced enough antibodies to neutralize the anthrax toxin, the company said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that if 50 kilograms of anthrax spores were released two kilometers in front of an area with a population of 500,000, it was estimated that 125,000 people



would become ill and 95,000 would die. In fact, it was used in bioterrorism through the mail in the United States after the September 11 attacks in 2001, infecting 22 people and killing five.

"The challenge of localizing the anthrax vaccine is very significant in terms of securing national public health security," said Heo Eun-cheol, CEO of GC Pharma. "GC Pharma has led the way in localizing essential medicines such as vaccines since its founding, and we will continue to contribute to the stable supply of basic medicines."

Lab-on-a-Chip Genetic Test Can Identify a Virus within Three Minutes

Source: <https://www.insideprecisionmedicine.com/topics/molecular-dx/lab-on-a-chip-genetic-test-can-identify-a-virus-within-three-minutes/>



Despina Moschou with LoCKAmp replaceable lab on chip printed circuit board. [University of Bath]

Nov 02 – Engineers at the University of Bath, England, have developed a lab-on-a-chip genetic diagnostic test that can provide lab-quality results to identify a virus within three minutes. The small device, called LoCKAmp, has already been proven as a low-cost method to rapidly detect [COVID-19](#) and the developers note that it can be adapted to detect bacteria, as well as diagnose health conditions such as cancer. Details of the LoCKAmp were [published today in the journal *Lab on a Chip*](#).

Using a nasal swab to collect a sample, LoCKAmp employs the same genetic based testing techniques for a PCR tests, by releasing and amplifying genetic material from the swab sample followed by a chemical reaction to identify that potential presence of a pathogen. Results of the test can then be viewed via a smartphone app.

"We started researching and developing LoCKAmp during the second wave of Covid in the U.K. We were confident we could create a portable, low-cost device that could carry out genetic identification of the virus,



like a PCR test, within 10 minutes,” said research leader Despina Moschou, PhD, from Bath’s Center for Bioengineering & Biomedical Technologies (CBio) “We have done that but found it can actually work within just three minutes.

“This is an amazing display of the possibilities of lab-on-a-chip technology and, given the low cost and adaptability of the technology to detect a range of conditions, a potentially highly valuable and unique tool for a range of healthcare settings.”

The lab-on-a-chip test device utilizes reverse transcription loop-mediated isothermal amplification (RT-LAMP) to amplify specific sequences of RNA, allowing it to quickly detect a specific virus it is looking for. The Bath team contend that the LAMP detection method is faster and has higher sensitivity and specificity than PCR-based testing methods.

A key feature of the LAMP method is that it can take place at ambient temperatures—around 65°—while PCR testing requires multiple thermal cycles to complete its amplification process. The result is a smaller, more portable method for testing the consumes less power to run.

Once a nasal swab sample is added to the device, the LoCKAmp pumps the liquid through tiny transparent “microfluidic” channels layered onto the circuit board, above copper heaters just 0.017mm thick. These heat the sample, releasing the RNA genetic material from the virus. This is then further heated and treated with RT-LAMP chemicals to encourage multiplication. If the specific virus RNA is present in the amplified sample, it fluoresces under light, denoting a positive test.

In addition to being used as a diagnostic device for individual cases, the Bath team said the device can also be used to provide community-level tracking of pathogens via testing of wastewater.

“With LoCKAmp technology providing both low cost and real time genetic target identification and quantification, we’re getting ever closer to real time pathogen tracking,” noted Barbara Kasprzyk-Hordern, a professor in Bath’s department of chemistry, who contributed to the research of LoCKAmp. “This opens exciting opportunities enabling the establishment of early warning systems utilizing wastewater for pathogen surveillance in communities.”

Sustained Human Transmission' of Mpox Has Been Happening Longer Than We Realised

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/sustained-human-transmission-of-mpox-has-been-happening-longer-than-we-realised>



Monkeypox rash. (MarioGuti/Getty Images)

Nov 03 – The [monkeypox virus](#) has been jumping from human to human since at least 2016, according to the work of an international team of scientists.

Monkeypox (mpox) causes similar symptoms to smallpox, [including fever, headaches, and lesions](#), and yet historically, humans only ever caught the virus from small mammals, like monkeys or rodents, not other humans.

Now, a study led by epidemiologist Áine O’Toole from the University of Edinburgh has [found](#) evidence of “sustained human transmission” outside the African countries with known mpox viral reservoirs. The findings present a “fundamental shift” in how experts understand the spread of this virus, O’Toole and



colleagues [say](#). They also highlight the need for new public messaging around outbreak management and control. Mpox was [first identified](#) by scientists in the 1950s when a curious illness struck a group of research monkeys in Denmark. Later, in the 1970s, the first human case was officially reported in an infant in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For many decades, human-to-human transmission was a [rare event](#). Most with human mpox were catching the virus from various mammals in central, east, and west Africa (although the original source of the virus remains unknown). Then, in 2017, an [outbreak](#) of mpox struck Nigeria and by 2022 went [international](#) for the first time. When researchers sequenced the genomes of those first global mpox cases, they identified a lineage of the virus called clade IIb, which is very rarely fatal, though the severity is much worse for those with weakened immune systems. This globally distributed lineage [looked different](#) to other endemic strains in Africa, and now, researchers have shown that that could be due to human-to-human transmission. Nearly all the mutations identified in clade IIb lineage are characteristic of a exposure to a human enzyme with an antiviral role. This immune enzyme, called APOBEC3, acts on the DNA of the monkeypox virus and tends to cause an irreversible mutation that changes the sequence of base pairs in the viral genome in a predictable way. With each human the virus encounters, more of these mutations accumulate. This doesn't necessarily mean the virus is mutating to spread among humans more easily, although that is still a possibility. Instead, it could just be that the human body is leaving its neutral signature on the virus. Either way, the mutations are rapidly accumulating, suggesting quite a lot of spread. O'Toole and colleagues predict that the human immune system has been confronting this particular lineage of mpox virus for about seven years. Although some human mpox cases still come from animals, researchers [conclude](#) that "most cases since 2016 are likely the result of human-to-human transmission" – and that this transmission "continues unabated". There may be places enduring current monkeypox epidemics that have not yet been recognized, and these could be seeding other outbreaks elsewhere in the world via travel. "It is critical that global public health affords [mpox virus] cases in countries that are historically considered to have endemic reservoir species equal attention and concern to those elsewhere," the authors [write](#). "Surveillance needs to be global if [the mpox virus] is to be eliminated from the human population and then prevented from re-emerging."

●► The study was published in [Science](#).

Killing Anthrax More Quickly with Hot Air Decontamination

Source: <https://globalbiodefense.com/2023/01/04/killing-anthrax-more-quickly-with-hot-air-decontamination/>

Jan 2023 – New method to decrease the amount of time it takes for hot air decontamination to kill bacterial spores, such as *Bacillus anthracis* (anthrax), within and on aircraft.

While hot air decontamination inactivates viruses in as few as 2 hours, it presently requires more than 72 hours to kill bacterial spores. A reduction in time and temperature to kill bacterial spores will reduce costs, improve compatibility of materials, and return the aircraft to mission faster.

Researchers at the [Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division \(NSWC-DD\)](#) set out to reduce the temperature and time requirements of the hot air decontamination process used by the military's Joint Biological Agent Decontamination System (JBADS). JBADS returns a biologically contaminated aircraft to full service without risking exposure of the biological weapons agents to aircrew members and support personnel and without corrosive or reactive decontaminants. Hot, humid air is sustained inside the enclosure for up to several days until both the interior and exterior of the aircraft are decontaminated and can be returned to operation. Although the hot air decontamination process is within materials specifications for aircraft, extended hot air exposure may affect sensitive systems, so a reduction in the required time to complete decon not only returns the aircraft to mission sooner but also improves its survivability.

Presently, the goal is to reduce the JBADS parameters for bacterial spores from greater than 167°F and 70%–90% relative humidity for at least 72 hours to lower than 140°F (60°C) for fewer than 24 hours.

[Read more: [Originally Built for Bioterrorism Agents, This Decontamination System Now Clears SARS-CoV-2 from Military Aircraft](#)]

The research by NSWC-DD tested a new bacterial spore germination method to make bacterial spores more susceptible to HAD at lower temperatures. Germination occurs when a bacterial spore develops into a growing, vegetative bacterial cell. While spores are resistant to environmental extremes



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

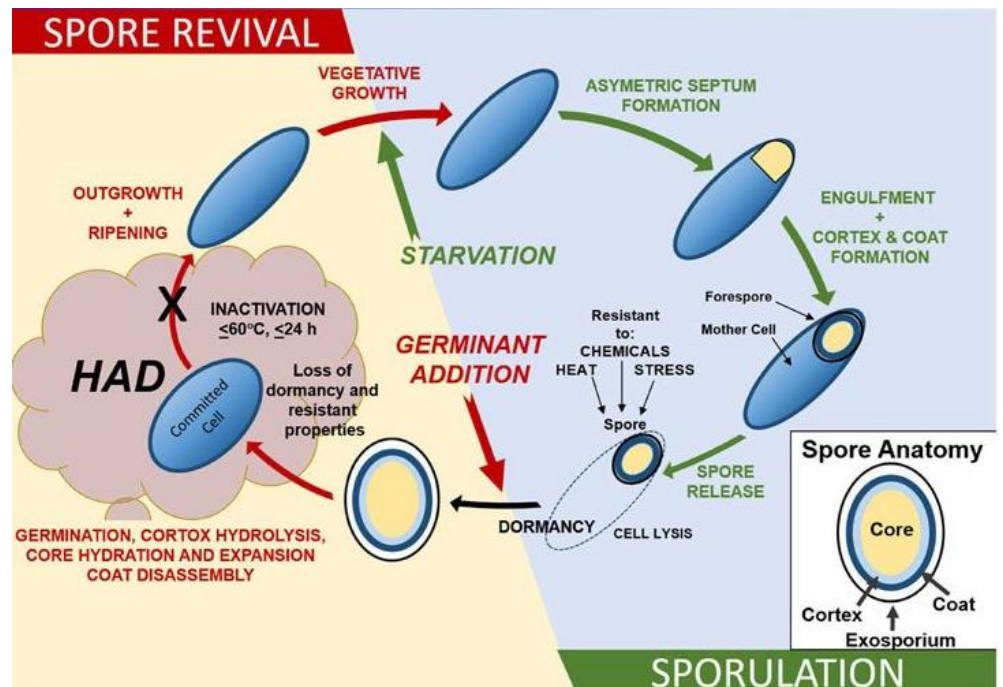
such as heat, most vegetative bacterial cells are susceptible to higher temperatures, so causing germination and raising ambient temperature is one way kill bacterial spores.



In this 2020 photo, the Joint Biological Agent Decontamination System (JBADS) is being used on a C-130 airplane interior to extinguish mold. Credit: Donna Lindner, Air Force Research Laboratory

The NSWC-DD team used a derelict C-130 aircraft and a human-safe bacterial surrogate for *Bacillus anthracis* to field test the bacterial spore germination process. **Using a fog machine, the team evenly spread over 100 million surrogate bacterial spores per square meter on the interior surfaces of the C-130.** After the spores dried, the team then applied a spore germination solution with no reactive chemicals that minimized risk to personnel and maintained aircraft materials compatibility.

Spore life cycle showing the stages of spore formation, germination, revival, and vegetative cell growth for a *Bacillus* species. The target within the cycle for HAD is the committed cell, after germinant addition and immediately after loss of dormancy but prior to outgrowth and vegetative growth. Credit: Dr. Glenn Lawson



The team applied the germination solution with a battery-powered backpack electrostatic sprayer that was designed to evenly coat surfaces with a thin layer of the solution that included soaps to improve spreading. Because germination requires wet surfaces, the team continued to spray interior aircraft surfaces with germination solution at regular intervals of 2 hours to keep surfaces wet. After a 2-hour drying interval, the team repeated the process. The team then sampled surfaces at each interval to monitor



the status of spore germination. After the final drying step, the team took samples to determine how many viable spores remained, and securely transported all samples to their laboratory for analysis.

Researchers found that the spore-germination process reduced biological spore and virus contamination by more than 99.9%. In a real situation, this would reduce risk to the Joint Forces as they pilot the contaminated aircraft to the JBADS location. In combination with JBADS, the entire process will inactivate biological contamination of aircraft to clearance levels and rapidly return the aircraft to mission. A spore-germination process will also reduce the time and temperature needed for JBADS aircraft decontamination, logistics needs, and impact to the aircraft components.

This research was sponsored by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's (DTRA) Chemical and Biological Technologies Department in its role as the Joint Science and Technology Office (JSTO) for the Chemical and Biological Defense Program.

READ ALSO:

[Hot, Humid Air Decontamination of Aircraft Confirmed that High Temperature and High Humidity are Critical for Inactivation of Infectious, Enveloped Ribonucleic Acid \(RNA\) Virus](#). *Frontiers in Bioengineering and Biotechnology*, 23 October 2020

[Hot, humid air decontamination of a C-130 aircraft contaminated with spores of two acrySTALLIFEROUS *Bacillus thuringiensis* strains, surrogates for *Bacillus anthracis*](#). *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, 20 January 2016

[Response surface modeling for hot, humid air decontamination of materials contaminated with *Bacillus anthracis* Sterne and *Bacillus thuringiensis* Al Hakam spores](#). *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, 1 May 2014

[Thermal Disinfection of SARS-CoV-2 within an Airplane](#). *Boeing*, 2021

[Estimated Surface Decay of SARS-CoV-2 \(virus that causes COVID-19\)](#) *DHS S&T*, 20 Dec 2022

Biomarkers for Detection of Exposure to Nitrogen Mustards

Source: <https://globalbiodefense.com/2023/09/20/biomarkers-for-detection-of-exposure-to-nitrogen-mustards/>

Sep 20 – Sensitive and convenient detection methods for amino alcohol are of great importance to identify nitrogen mustard exposure in forensic analysis.

As blister agents, these nitrogen mustards could cause injuries to mucous membranes by alkylating free affinity sites present in biomolecules, which can even lead to physiological abnormalities or death. The chemical synthesis of sulfur mustards or nitrogen mustards could be achieved with commercially available reagents and convenient experimental procedures, in contrast to the complex processes involved in synthesizing nerve agents.

In a new [study](#), a GC-MS/MS method for simultaneous quantification of nitrogen mustard metabolites both in plasma and urine was established and fully validated.

[Fluoride derivatization-enabled sensitive and simultaneous detection of biomarkers for nitrogen mustard in human plasma and urine via gas chromatography tandem mass spectrometry](#). *RCS Advances*, 14 September 2023.

New Material Helps Train First Responders on Biothreats

Source: <https://globalbiodefense.com/2023/01/04/new-material-helps-train-first-responders-on-biothreats/>



Jan 04 – NIST developed a new harmless surrogate threat material based on yeast, rather than inactivated pathogens, which can be used to train those responding to biothreats.

First responders who train to respond to unknown biological threat agents such as bacterial or viral pathogens need to do so in a safe and careful manner. To help meet their needs, researchers from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have developed a new reference material based on harmless yeast cells.

Biothreats vary by severity and fall into one of [three categories](#): A, B or C. Category A includes biological agents that could pose a national security risk or deliberately be released to harm people, animals, plants or other living organisms. [Anthrax](#) — a serious infectious disease caused by bacteria naturally found in soil — is one example. For all these biological agents, it can be a challenge to prepare in advance and train for an outbreak, and the use of a biothreat material could pose a risk to the first responders involved and the surrounding community.





The yeast reference material was developed to support first responder training against biothreats in a safe manner. The material is crushed into powdered form in a field exercise. Credit: N. Lin / NIST

Baker's Yeast Proves a Good Basis for New Biothreat Training Reference Material

Responders now have the option of using NIST Reference Material (RM) 8230, the new surrogate material developed by NIST researchers.

Researchers based the material on baker's yeast because it is harmless and a living biological material.



"Suspicious powder incidents occur regularly throughout the U.S., so first responders need routine training including simulated biothreat scenarios. There was a need to make this training accessible while also avoiding exposure to a real pathogen. With support from the Department of Homeland Security, we came up with this yeast reference material to support local training in a safe manner." – Sandra Da Silva, NIST researcher

But detecting baker's yeast is not a complete cakewalk. In multiple ways, yeast provides a challenge to technologies that detect genetic material similar to biothreat agents, which is what makes it a good surrogate.

The [yeast reference material](#) is modified with genomic sequences from a deep ocean organism called *Methanocaldococcus jannaschii*. The organism is a type of "extremophile," meaning it's found in extremely harsh temperature and high-pressure conditions, specifically in hydrothermal vents at the bottom of the ocean. The genomic sequence was taken from NIST SRM 2374, DNA Sequence Library for External RNA Controls, which contains a series of nucleic acid sequences from the NIST-hosted [External RNA Controls Consortium](#).

"Baker's yeast has a thick wall that is hard to crack open to extract DNA, similar to *Bacillus anthracis* spores. We needed something to challenge DNA extraction methods, and the idea of using yeast came from previous efforts on extracting DNA from yeast cells," said Da Silva.

The modified yeast strain is called *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* NE095, and this sequence was chosen because it allows for specific detection of the yeast using nucleic acid detection technologies. **This means**



first responders can detect this strain of yeast during training exercises without worrying about obtaining a false positive from other yeast found in the environment.

A unit of RM 8230 consists of 12 vials of the yeast cells plus four vials of the matrix without cells. The yeast has been freeze-dried, or lyophilized, to preserve the cells.

“The yeast is alive and surrounded by other materials to protect it during the freezing and drying processes. The four matrix-only vials contain those materials as a control. Once the yeast cells are analyzed, they’re best used to set the baseline for whichever method researchers are using to quantify or detect cells,” said Da Silva.

Field Testing with Frontline Responders and Laboratories

NIST researchers conducted interlaboratory studies with first responders and public health laboratories to assess the versatility of the yeast in existing field protocols. In one study, they were able to demonstrate that the material could be crushed into a powder and inserted into a typical workflow, where it remained viable and detectable using field protocols and technologies.



NIST researchers conducted interlaboratory studies with first responders and public health laboratories. In this field study, Jeremy Clancy, Battalion Chief of the Howard County Department of Fire Rescue Services, samples the yeast material in a powdered form using the existing field protocols. Credit: N. Lin / NIST

One field exercise demonstrated how the dried yeast material can be rehydrated and applied to surfaces. Those surfaces were swabbed by first responders as part of the field response, and the yeast cells were successfully detected in both mobile labs and public health laboratories.



Utility in Cell Counting, NAAT Workflows, and Microbiome Studies

The reference material is not only useful to the biothreat preparedness community. For instance, the yeast cells can be used to verify performance of microbial cell counting and Nucleic acid amplification testing workflows. This is relevant to the use of microbes as medicines and for the study of the microbiome. To support this work, NIST is quantifying the yeast cells using multiple measurement methods including flow cytometry, which detects and measures physical and chemical characteristics of cell populations.

“Microbes are increasingly recognized as critical contributors in many areas of our everyday life, from the environment and climate to human and animal health, agriculture and energy. The ability to count and characterize microbes is becoming increasingly important as users seek to understand and harness microbial capabilities. We need a control material to increase confidence in microbial quantification for these types of applications. Though first responders are the initial community of users, the reference material is applicable for a broader community,” said Lin.

NIST researchers are building on the lessons learned with the yeast reference material and applying them to bacterial species, specifically in developing potential bacterial cell reference materials. Bacterial cells are typically smaller than yeast cells and more diverse in terms of their shape and tendency to aggregate, so they present new measurement challenges.

The new reference material, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* NE095 for Cell Counting and DNA-based Detection (NIST RM 8230), is now available on the [NIST RM webpage](#).

12 times more people will die from zoonotic viruses by 2050, study says

Source: <https://newatlas.com/biology/12-times-killed-zoonotic-viruses-2050/>



Nov 06 – Anyone who has been on the planet for the last four years will know how viruses that evolve to jump across species, given the right conditions, can rapidly become a serious global crisis. While COVID-19 was a rare ‘perfect storm’ for a zoonotic virus to get out of control, international researchers believe we’re now in an alarming new age of vertebrate animal-to-human infections. A comprehensive study of epidemiological data dating back 60 years has turned up a worrying trend in zoonotic infections in humans, with prevalence and morbidity increasing at an “exponential rate,” according to the researchers.



“Emerging zoonotic viruses that subsequently spread from human to human are the focus of this analysis because they were the cause of most 20th century pandemics, and account for 60% of all emerging human diseases,” the researchers from US biotechnology organization Gingko Bioworks noted.

Drawing on a range of datasets, the researchers analyzed 3,150 zoonotic outbreaks and epidemics between 1963 and 2019, looking for trends in infections and mortality. They were particularly interested in the viruses that had the COVID-19-style ‘perfect storm’ potential for exponential spread – the ones posing the biggest risk to public health, economic and political stability.

They zeroed in on 75 spillover events in 24 countries, which resulted in 17,232 human deaths. Incidentally, 15,771 of those deaths, in 40 outbreaks, were caused by Filoviruses. Filoviruses, which include Ebola and Marburg, were among the four ‘bad news’ pathogens identified. The other three of interest were SARS Coronavirus 1, Nipah virus and Machupo virus.

“If these annual rates of increase continue, we would expect the analyzed pathogens to cause four times the number of spillover events and 12 times the number of deaths in 2050 than in 2020,” they estimated.

While COVID-19 is a zoonotic outlier and as such was excluded from the data, the number of spillover events and reported deaths from the four groups of viruses has increased by 4.98% and 8.7%, respectively, every year from 1963 to 2019.

“Our evaluation of the historical evidence suggests that the series of recent epidemics sparked by zoonotic spillover are not an aberration or random cluster, but follow a multi-decade trend in which spillover-driven epidemics have become both larger and more frequent,” they wrote.

Nipah virus (NiV), which has a reservoir in fruit bats or flying foxes, results in encephalitis and can cause everything from mild illness to death. Similarly, flying foxes are thought to be the natural reservoir for Ebolaviruses.

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) coronavirus is also thought to have crossed over into human populations from bats.

Machupo virus, a highly infectious hemorrhaging infection, is considered the Bolivian cousin of Ebolaviruses and jumped to humans in the 1950s due to increased interaction with the Calomys field rodent.

But while zoonotic virus outbreaks have been isolated and largely contained in the past, with a few very obvious exceptions, their increased frequency and severity now have scientists very concerned.

Adding to the worry is lax and fragmented historical data detailing viral outbreaks, which makes modeling for future epidemics or, worse, pandemics, difficult.

“The ultimate package of measures to support global prevention, preparedness, and resilience is not yet clear,” they note. “What is clear, however, from the historical trends, is that urgent action is needed to address a large and growing risk to global health.”

This comes as scientists are learning more about the extent and [evolution of mpox](#), or MPXV (formerly monkeypox, since it likely spread from rodents, not monkeys), and as [avian influenza H5N1](#) threatens to swap favored host from bird to mammal.

Zoonotic pathogens can be bacterial, viral or parasitic, and can spread to humans through direct contact or via food, water or the environment. According to the [World Health Organization](#), there are now more than 200 known zoonoses, or diseases that can be transmitted to humans from animals.

“What is clear, however, from the historical trends, is that urgent action is needed to address a large and growing risk to global health,” the researchers said.

●► The study was published in the journal [BMJ Global Health](#).

FDA Approves First Vaccine to Prevent Disease Caused by Chikungunya Virus

Source: <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-vaccine-prevent-disease-caused-chikungunya-virus>

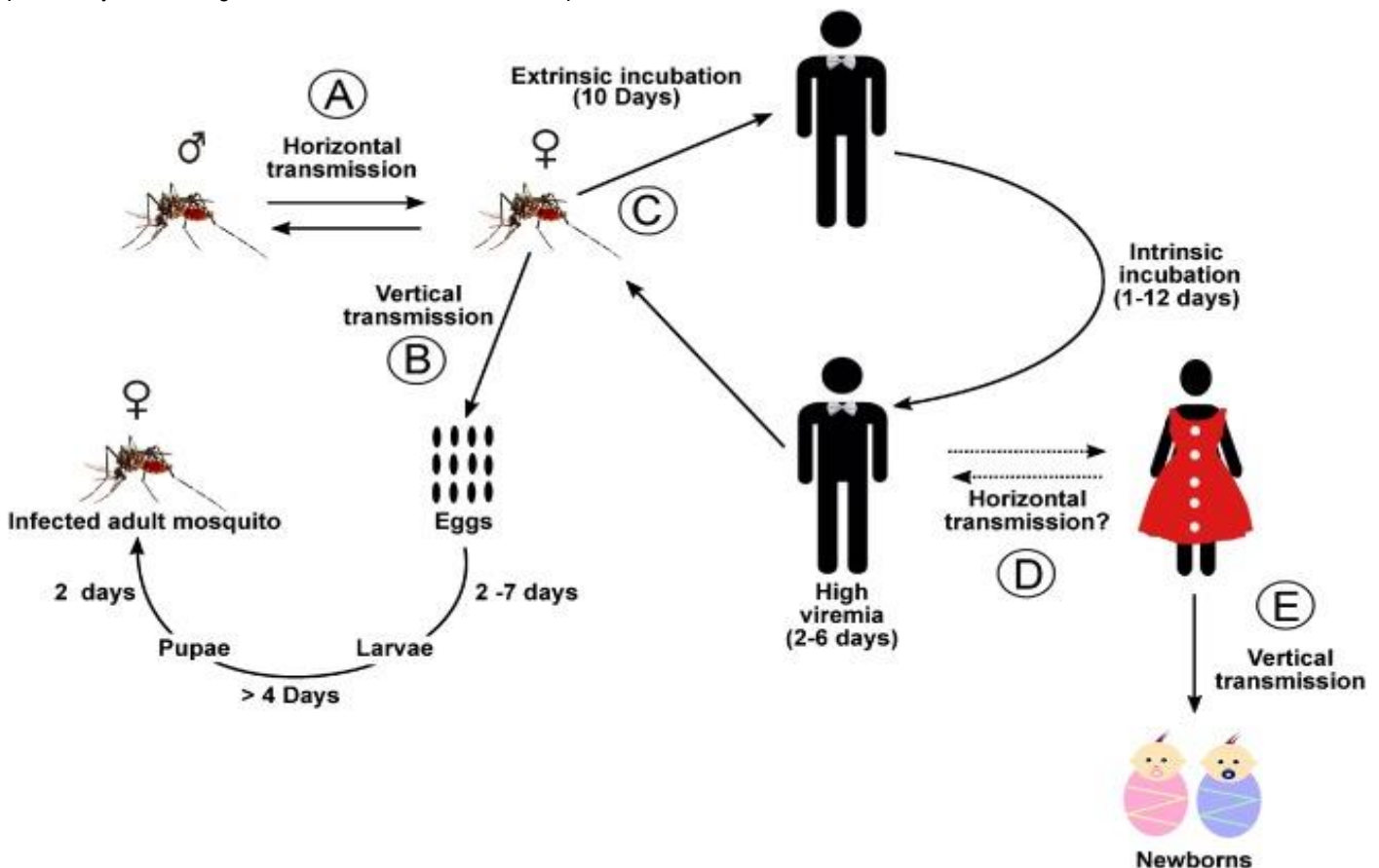
Nov 09 – Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved **Ixchiq**, the first chikungunya vaccine. Ixchiq is approved for individuals 18 years of age and older who are at increased risk of exposure to chikungunya virus.

The chikungunya virus is primarily transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Chikungunya is an emerging global health threat with at least 5 million cases of chikungunya virus infection reported during the past 15 years. The highest risk of infection is in tropical and subtropical regions of Africa, Southeast Asia, and parts of the Americas where chikungunya virus-carrying mosquitos are endemic. However, chikungunya virus has spread to new geographical areas causing a rise in global prevalence of the disease.

The most common symptoms of chikungunya include fever and joint pain. Other symptoms may include a rash, headache, and muscle pain. Some individuals may experience debilitating joint pain that persists for months or even years. Treatment includes rest, fluids, and over-the-counter medications for pain and fever.



“Infection with chikungunya virus can lead to severe disease and prolonged health problems, particularly for older adults and individuals with underlying medical conditions,” said Peter Marks, M.D., Ph.D., director of the FDA’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research. “Today’s approval addresses an unmet medical need and is an important advancement in the prevention of a potentially debilitating disease with limited treatment options.”



Ixchiq is administered as a single dose by injection into the muscle. It contains a live, weakened version of the chikungunya virus and may cause symptoms in the vaccine recipient similar to those experienced by people who have chikungunya disease. The safety of Ixchiq was evaluated in two clinical studies conducted in North America in which about 3,500 participants 18 years of age and older received a dose of the vaccine with one study including about 1,000 participants who received a placebo. The most commonly reported side effects by vaccine recipients were headache, fatigue, muscle pain, joint pain, fever, nausea and tenderness at the injection site.

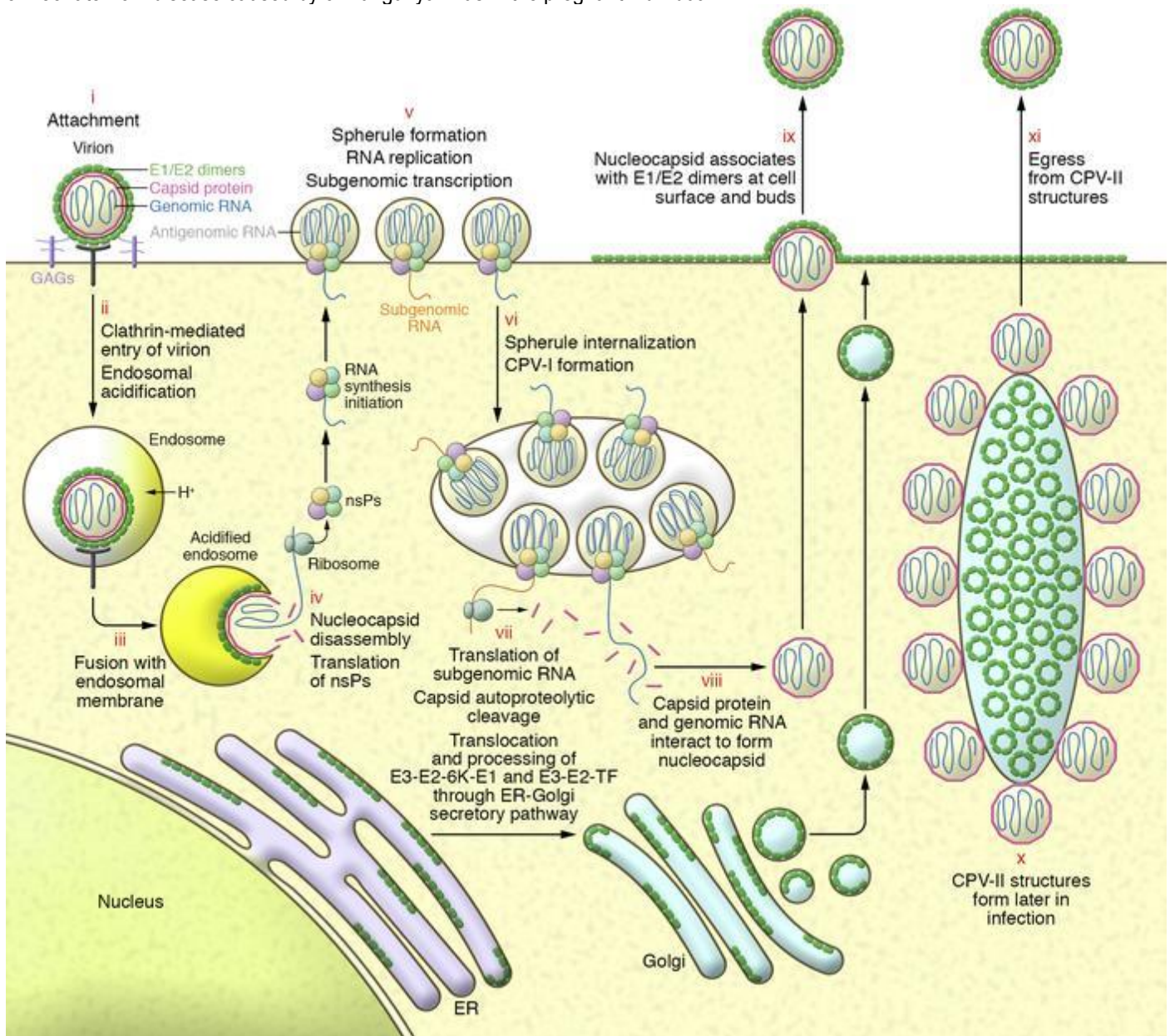
In addition, although not commonly reported, severe chikungunya-like adverse reactions that prevented daily activity and/or required medical intervention occurred in 1.6% of Ixchiq recipients and none of the placebo recipients. Two recipients with severe chikungunya-like adverse reactions were hospitalized. In addition, some recipients had prolonged chikungunya-like adverse reactions that lasted for at least 30 days. The Prescribing Information includes a warning to inform that the vaccine may cause severe or prolonged chikungunya-like adverse reactions.

The FDA is requiring the company to conduct a postmarketing study to assess the serious risk of severe chikungunya-like adverse reactions following administration of Ixchiq.

Transmission of chikungunya virus to newborn babies from pregnant individuals with viremia (virus present in the blood) at delivery has been reported and can cause severe, potentially fatal chikungunya virus disease in newborns. In one study that evaluated whether the vaccine virus was present in the blood after vaccination, most individuals had vaccine virus detected in the blood within the first week following vaccination; the vaccine virus was not detected 14 days after vaccination. The Prescribing Information includes a warning to inform that it is not known if the vaccine virus can be transmitted from pregnant individuals to newborns, nor is it known if the vaccine virus can cause any adverse effects in the newborn. The warning also conveys that when considering administration to pregnant individuals, healthcare



providers should take into consideration the individual's risk of exposure to chikungunya virus, gestational age and risks to the fetus or neonate from disease caused by chikungunya virus in the pregnant individual.



The effectiveness of Ixchiq is based on immune response data from a clinical study conducted in the United States in individuals 18 years of age and older. In this study, the immune response of 266 participants who received the vaccine was compared to the immune response of 96 participants who received placebo. The level of antibody evaluated in study participants was based on a level shown to be protective in non-human primates that had received blood from people who had been vaccinated. Almost all vaccine study participants achieved this antibody level.

Ixchiq was approved using the [Accelerated Approval pathway](#). Accelerated approval allows the FDA to approve certain products for serious or life-threatening conditions based on evidence of a product's effectiveness that is reasonably likely to predict clinical benefit. In the FDA's evaluation of Ixchiq for accelerated approval, evidence of effectiveness is based on immune response data in clinical trial participants. As a condition for approval for Ixchiq, the FDA is requiring confirmatory clinical studies to be conducted to verify clinical benefit.

Ixchiq was granted [Fast Track](#) and [Breakthrough Therapy](#) designations and the application was granted [Priority Review](#). In addition, the FDA awarded the manufacturer of Ixchiq a tropical disease priority review voucher, under a provision included in the Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act of 2007. This



provision aims to encourage the development of new drugs and biological products for the prevention and treatment of certain tropical diseases. The FDA granted approval of Ixchiq to Valneva Austria GmbH.

Long COVID and Mental Illness: New Guidance

By Alicia Ault

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/998355>

Nov 10 – Long COVID can exacerbate existing mental health disorders or cause new-onset psychiatric symptoms, but mental illness does not cause long COVID, experts say.

The [consensus guidance statement](#) on the assessment and treatment of mental health symptoms in patients with post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 infection (PASC), also known as long COVID, was published online in *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, the journal of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPM&R).

The statement was developed by a task force that included experts from physical medicine, neurology, neuropsychiatry, neuropsychology, rehabilitation psychology, and primary care. It is the eighth guidance statement on long COVID published by AAPM&R.

"Many of our patients have reported experiences in which their symptoms of long COVID have been dismissed either by loved ones in the community, or also amongst healthcare providers, and they've been told their symptoms are in their head or due to a mental health condition, but that's simply not true," [Abby Cheng, MD](#), a psychiatrist at Barnes Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, who is a co-author of the new guidance, said in a press briefing.

"Long COVID is real, and mental health conditions do not cause long COVID," Cheng added.

Millions of Americans Affected

Anxiety and [depression](#) have been reported as the second and third most common symptoms of long COVID, according to the guidance statement.

There is some evidence that the body's inflammatory response — specifically, circulating cytokines — may contribute to the worsening of mental health symptoms or may bring on new symptoms of anxiety or depression, said Cheng. Cytokines may also affect levels of brain chemicals, such as serotonin, she said.

Researchers are also exploring whether the persistence of virus in the body, miniature blood clots in the body and brain, and changes to the gut microbiome affect the mental health of people with long COVID.

Some mental health symptoms — such as fatigue, brain fog, sleep disturbances, and tachycardia — can mimic long COVID symptoms, said Cheng. The treatment is the same for someone with or without long COVID who has anxiety, depression, [posttraumatic stress disorder](#), or other mental health conditions and includes treatment of coexisting medical conditions, supportive therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy, and pharmacologic interventions, she said.

"Group therapy may have a particular role in the long COVID population because it really provides that social connection and awareness of additional resources in addition to validation of their experiences," Cheng said.

The guidance suggests that primary care practitioners — if it's within their comfort zone and they have the training — can be the first line for managing mental health symptoms.

But for patients whose symptoms are interfering with functioning and their ability to interact with the community, the guidance urges primary care clinicians to refer the patient to a specialist.

"It leaves the door open to them to practice within their scope but also gives guidance as to how, why, and who should be referred to the next level of care," said Cheng.

Co-author [Monica Verduzco-Gutierrez, MD](#), chair of rehabilitation medicine at UT Health San Antonio, Texas, said that although fewer people are now getting long COVID, "it's still an impactful number."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recently estimated that about 7%](#) of American adults (18 million) and 1.3% of children had experienced long COVID.

Gutierrez said that it's an evolving number, as some patients who have a second or third or fourth SARS-CoV-2 infection experience exacerbations of previous bouts of long COVID or develop long COVID for the first time.

"We are still getting new patients on a regular basis with long COVID," said [AAPM&R President Steven Flanagan, MD](#), a physical medicine specialist.

"This is a problem that really is not going away. It is still real and still ever-present," said Flanagan, chair of rehabilitation medicine at NYU Grossman School of Medicine.



The *Last of Us* Fungal Outbreak Is Terrifying, But Is It Realistic?

By Roxana Hadadi

Source: <https://www.vulture.com/article/the-last-of-us-fungus-infection-cordyceps-explained.html>

Thanks to the sprawling IP universe of *The Walking Dead*, post-apocalyptic narratives about social collapse, hungry hordes, and desperate communities clinging to the last vestiges of civilization are familiar on TV by this point. All that stuff is in *The Last of Us*, too — just not any zombies.

The HBO series based on the popular video-game franchise from writer Neil Druckmann (seemingly [not a fan](#) of the “zombie” descriptor) focuses on a different kind of infection: a fungal one. Unlike *The Walking Dead* or *Resident Evil*, in which the dead come back to life, or *28 Days Later*, in which a virus turns its hosts extremely violent, the *Cordyceps* fungus in *The Last of Us* takes over people’s brains, grows sponge-y masses inside bodies and tendrils out of mouths, and eventually bursts from eyes and foreheads. Humans stay alive as all this happens and spread the infection through bites, and in the course of a weekend, the global warming-enabled fungi mutation has seemingly traveled around the entire world.

In *The Last of Us* [premiere episode](#), 20 years have passed with no progress made against the fungal threat — which is because of the real-life similarities between fungi and humans as eukaryotes, or organisms with nucleated cells, explains Dr. Ilan Schwartz, an instructor with the Duke University School of Medicine who specializes in immunocompromised hosts and invasive fungal infections.

“Our cells are a lot more complex than, for example, bacteria, and fungi are more related to people than they are to bacteria that cause infections,” says Dr. Schwartz of why there are only three antifungal agents compared with “way more classes of antibacterials.” “We have this problem with our adversary being closely related, and what that means is that the cell machinery is the same as ours. There are far fewer targets for antifungals to work with, to selectively cause damage to fungal cells without causing damage to human cells.”

Those commonalities, plus that uncomfortably true-to-life climate-change framing and the grotesquerie of the infected in *The Last of Us*, got us thinking: How scared should we be of *Cordyceps* or any other wide-scale fungal infection, anyway? An investigation!



SPORES VERSUS BITES

The inciting plot point in *The Last of Us* was inspired by Druckmann’s viewing of a 2008 *Planet Earth* segment about how the fungal parasite *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis* takes over a bullet ant’s body and then grows out of the ant’s head to further spread. Narrator David Attenborough explains in the *Planet Earth* clip how there are thousands of different types of parasitic fungi, each of which focuses on a specific species — with textured spores, neon-orange puffs, and long gray tendrils emerging from dead moths and beetles. (Although *Ophiocordyceps* and *Cordyceps* are different genus, because *The Last of Us* was influenced by the latter and refers to the former in its narrative, we’re discussing both.)

In *The Last of Us* video game, the *Cordyceps* infection spreads partially via spores that travel through the air, necessitating that uninfected characters wear gas masks. As [explained](#) by Penn State University’s Dr. David P. Hughes, a *Cordyceps* specialist who was a scientific advisor on the 2013 video game, the fungus attaches as a spore to a host ant’s body, tunnels inside over the course of a day, and then creates an interior network so that nearly 50 percent of the ant’s body is fungal. ([New research](#) Hughes has published since *Planet Earth* aired clarifies that the fungi doesn’t infect the brain, but preserves it while invading and controlling musculature.) In the TV show, though, spores are abandoned — probably so the



cast didn't have to hide behind masks the whole time — in favor of mouth-tendrils, and a bite from an infected person can turn someone in as few as five minutes.

The infected's tendency to chomp at whomever is around certainly doesn't dissuade zombie comparisons, but fungus spreading through bites isn't uncommon in nature, Dr. Schwartz says. As an example, this scenario isn't dissimilar from how the fungus *Sporothrix brasiliensis* is transferred and causes the infection [sporotrichosis](#). A dimorphic fungus that can exist as both a mold and a yeast, *Sporothrix brasiliensis* can be breathed in as spores from contaminated plant matter or spread through scratches and bites from cats, and is increasingly prevalent in Brazil. "It causes thousands of infections every year. If one of those cats were to be imported somewhere else, and scratch other cats, there is the potential for this fungus to spread throughout the world," Dr. Schwartz theorizes. *Cordyceps* can't infect humans (... yet?), but spores from other fungi that live in soil and animal droppings can, and are a [legitimate danger](#) to immunocompromised people. Plus, [certain fungi](#) can spew out thousands of spores at a time that travel inches in the air. Masks, then: good for public health! Who'd have thought!

GLOBAL WARMING'S IMPACT

Fungi love warmth and moistness, but it's a delicate balance when it comes to how much heat they can handle. Of the possible millions of fungi species around the world, fewer than 500 are known to grow on mammals because "the temperature we think of as normal is the temperature warm enough to kill most fungi without killing us," according to Rob Dunn in the 2011 *New Scientist* article "[Killer Fungi Made Us Hot-Blooded.](#)"

Still, [about a dozen fungal species kill nearly 1.5 million people a year](#), and [more scientists](#) are beginning to seriously look at how much climate change is affecting those numbers. Given that, is the scenario posed in *The Last of Us* premiere — in which a warming planet helped *Cordyceps* mutate into a version that could infect humans — actually feasible?

Dr. Schwartz, while not a *Cordyceps* expert, points to [one theory](#) about the fungus *Candida auris*, a yeast that "sort of came out of nowhere" in 1996 and has since spread around the world, with an outsized effect on those with weakened immune systems. Resistant to multiple antifungal drugs, *Candida auris* can cause an invasive infection in blood, and could be an example of a mutation able to take advantage of the slimmer gap between the temperature of its environment and the temperature of our bodies, Dr. Schwartz explains.

"It's not outlandish, the argument that global warming has increased the thermal tolerance of a fungi. It hasn't been proven. It's a hypothesis, and it's happening on a fairly slow scale," he adds. "But it is possible."

THE FOOD SUPPLY AND IMMUNITY

In both *The Last of Us* video games and the TV series, *Cordyceps* was initially transmitted through food: infected South American crops in the former, and an infected flour and grain factory in Jakarta, Indonesia, in the latter. There's real-life history here: In the Middle Ages, the illness [St. Anthony's fire](#) killed tens of thousands of people and was caused by rye infected with the fungus *Claviceps purpurea*. Ergotism poisoning has continued more recently, too: [200 people sick from rye bread](#) in Manchester in 1928, [an entire French town](#) poisoned by a local baker in 1951. Former Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute professor [Linnda R. Caporael](#) has even [theorized](#) that the same fungal infection played a role in the Salem witch trials.

In *The Last of Us* TV show's 2023 storyline, years of *Cordyceps* infection tracing back to bread, cereal, and pancake mix have turned people into creatures like clickers, who have elaborate mushroom-like growths coming out of their heads and sponge-y masses inside their bodies, and are hungry to spread the fungus. The only hope for a cure is Ellie's seeming immunity, which Dr. Schwartz says is difficult to fact-check given how little we know about how so many fungi work.

"Presumably, exposure is being experienced by lots of people, but only very few people develop the disease," Dr. Schwartz says of the connection between fungi and the infections they cause. "Is that related to the amount that they're exposed to? Or does it have some other host factors? I'm not sure. There's still a lot that we don't understand."

For now, Dr. Schwartz is unfazed. There are fungi species that have become beneficial for humans, like *Cordyceps subsessilis*, which is [used in organ-transplant drugs](#), and *Cordyceps militaris* and *Ophiocordyceps sinensis*, which are considered [health supplements](#). Various fungi have potential as insecticides to slow malaria-spreading mosquitoes, and fungal-derived psilocybin has been tested as an anxiety treatment for people with end-stage cancer. [There's good](#) that can come from fungi, too, and the circumstances needed for a destructive outbreak event are beholden to myriad factors that would need to align in the exact right way.

Until then — if there ever is a then — *The Last of Us* can remain primarily in the entertainment space, Dr. Schwartz says. "I don't think we need to worry. There's lots of serious concerns in the world, but this isn't one of them."

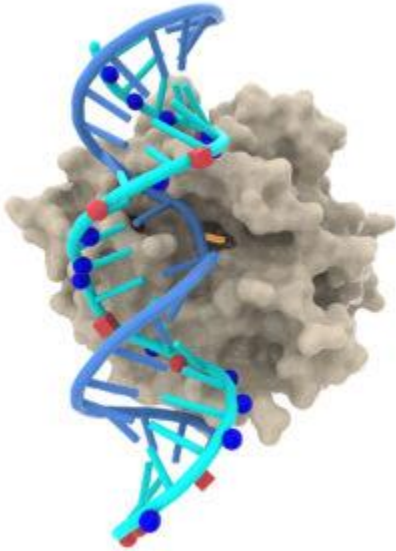


RNA Editing Is Having a Moment

By Julianna LeMieux, PhD

Source: <https://www.genengnews.com/topics/genome-editing/rna-editing-is-having-a-moment/>

Nov 14 – RNA could be considered DNA's younger sibling. From the very beginning, RNA's milestones came later and attracted less attention than DNA's milestones. For example, the discovery of DNA's structure was first published in 1953; the corresponding discovery for RNA's structure was published in 1956. The polymerase discoveries followed suit. DNA polymerase was isolated in 1956; RNA polymerase, in 1959.



Wave Life Sciences, a clinical-stage RNA medicines company, develops A-to-I RNA base editing oligonucleotides (“AIMers”). AIMers are designed to recruit endogenous adenosine deaminase acting on RNA (ADAR) enzymes to direct highly specific editing of RNA transcripts. Wave asserts that its AIMers are distinct from other ADAR-mediated approaches because they are short, chemically modified, and possess novel features, including proprietary phosphoryl guanidine backbone modifications and chiral control. This image depicts a Wave oligonucleotide/RNA complex engaging with an ADAR enzyme.

And with respect to the use of nucleic acid editing technology in therapeutic applications, DNA is in the lead yet again. Ever since the CRISPR system of gene editing was brought to the forefront by Doudna and Charpentier in 2012, it has excited the imaginations of research scientists, drug developers, and venture capitalists. For example, besides stimulating the development of therapeutic applications, the CRISPR system has been inspiring efforts to mitigate climate change and address food insecurity.

The first DNA editing technologies emerged in the 1990s, but RNA editing technologies didn't become commercialized until recently, even though evidence of RNA editing occurring in nature was first observed almost 40 years ago (Benne et

al. *Cell* 1986; 46(6): 819–826). An early advance in RNA editing technology occurred in 2012, when scientists found that by linking enzymes to engineered strands of RNA, they could change the sequences of messenger RNA molecules in cells (Stafforst T, Schneider MF. *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. Engl.* 2012; 51(44): 11166–11169.).

Over the past few years, RNA editing has been gaining momentum. According to Paul Bolno, MD, CEO of Wave Life Sciences, this trend is due, in part, to a growing recognition that RNA editing is tractable. Momentum, he suggests, follows what people see as tractable.

Older RNA companies are developing RNA editing programs, and new companies are being established on RNA editing platforms alone. (For its part, Wave Life Sciences recently submitted the first clinical trial application for an RNA editing therapy to enter clinical development.)

Bolno says that CRISPR should be credited with moving the field beyond silencing and splicing, and toward correction and editing—as well as toward translating genetic insights more broadly. Regardless of the changes wrought by CRISPR, the time, he notes, “was ripe for RNA editing.” There is this notion, he continues, that DNA editing, with its one-and-done treatments, will fix the world. But he wonders whether DNA editing's promise can distract people from RNA editing's unique advantages.

Here, we will review some of those advantages, the challenges that lie ahead, and some of the players (both established and brand-new companies) in the hot, new space that is RNA editing. Ultimately, we will see where RNA editing's momentum is coming from—and where it is leading.

Plusses and minuses

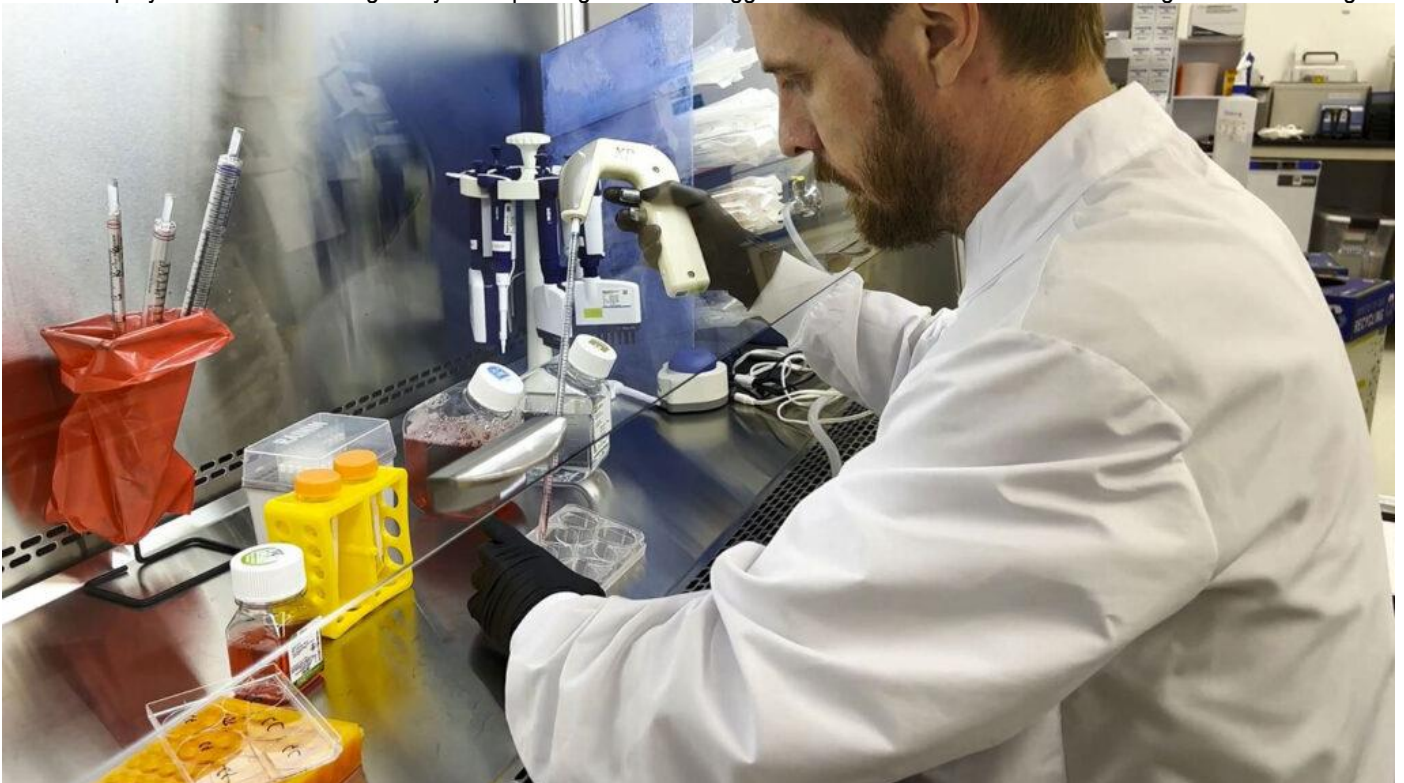
DNA editing and RNA editing share the same end goal: to alter a protein's structure or quantity. But the two processes take different routes to achieve that goal.

For example, RNA editing is transient, not permanent, because RNA is degraded in cells. Some researchers may consider this a disadvantage, as drugs based on RNA editing will have to be administered more frequently than the one-and-done drugs based on CRISPR. But Bolno says, “I think we're giving DNA editing a big pass on this because nobody has ever shown a one-and-done result from DNA editing.”



“We also have to remember,” Bolno advises, that “reversibility is not a detrimental feature of making a medicine.” There is a benefit to stopping a drug if necessary. Besides offering a measure of security to patients, reversibility is important within a regulatory and ethical context. The transient nature of RNA edits raises fewer alarm bells than the permanent nature of DNA edits. To support this point, Bolno adds that his company’s RNA editing drug, the first to go into patients, will be tested in healthy volunteers.

Gerard Platenburg, co-founder and CSO of ProQR Therapeutics, sees the durability of the RNA editing oligonucleotide as a strength. He explains that the transient nature of the technology offers flexibility and “opens therapeutic opportunities that were not accessible before.” Oligonucleotides, he continues, can be made to last several months or even longer, allowing infrequent dosing and reducing the burden of treatment for the patient. “Moreover,” he points out, “by making the oligonucleotides less stable, we can tune the effect, making that reversible within a desirable time frame.” Another potential perk is simplified delivery. RNA editing drugs, made up of modified RNA molecules, may not need to be delivered via lipid nanoparticles or viral vectors. For example, Wave Life Sciences uses short RNA-editing oligonucleotides that are chemically modified with *N*-acetylgalactosamine (GalNAc), which aids in delivery. The advantage is that GalNAc-conjugated oligonucleotides, unlike the constituents of DNA editing systems, can target the RNA to be taken up by cells. This advantage may end up being one of the biggest differentiators between RNA editing and DNA editing.



Scientists at Wave Life Sciences develop oligonucleotide therapeutics using the company’s A-to-I(G) RNA editing (AIMer) technology. One of the therapeutics is WVE-006. It is designed to treat alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency by addressing the disease’s liver and lung manifestations. To advance WVE-006, Wave is collaborating with GSK, which is contributing its expertise in genetics and genomics, as well as its development and commercial capabilities. GSK has received an exclusive global license for WVE-006, and it expects to work with Wave on targets across multiple disease areas.

Beyond base changes

A discovery made in the late 1980s showed that the enzyme adenosine deaminase acting on RNA (ADAR) was found to unwind double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) in *Xenopus*. Quickly following that initial discovery, ADAR’s RNA editing ability, through deamination of an adenosine to inosine, was uncovered as a post-transcriptional modification. In the body, ADAR-mediated editing allows the immune system to differentiate between host RNA and foreign RNA that may be pathogenic. The process also aids in the maturation of neurons. The ADAR system, which exists in all cells of the human body and targets adenosine with high specificity, is at the heart of many RNA editing companies’ platforms.

For example, in 2014, ProQR discovered an RNA editing technology that the company calls Axiomer. When ProQR uses Axiomer, the first task is to find RNAs that code for proteins involved in disease. Then the company identifies where an A-to-I edit could be beneficial. However, ADAR cannot recognize the



RNA site in single-stranded RNA (ssRNA). Therefore, Axiomer uses short editing oligonucleotides (EONs) that are engineered to bind to the disease-related RNA site, creating a duplex structure that will attract ADAR enzymes, make the A-to-I change, and modify the protein's function. To expand the number of diseases that can be altered through A-to-I point mutations, companies are exploring how these mutations can result in a broader array of effects. For example, ProQR is using Axiomer to alter the occurrence of RNA-dependent post-translational modifications such as phosphorylation.

Wave Life Sciences explains that it is also exploring new effects. One mechanism the company favors is the blocking of sites that RNA-binding proteins can exploit to degrade transcripts. According to the company, a treatment based on this mechanism could increase copy numbers and protein expression. The company has (unpublished) data indicating that this mechanism was used across seven targets to resolve protein dysfunctions or deficiencies associated with disease.

Another tool Wave Life Sciences has built is called the Edit-Verse (the editable gene-disease network, which includes coding and noncoding regions of transcripts). The company hopes the Edit-Verse will reveal more of the transcriptome that is eligible for editing. For example, the deep learning model—constructed using large expression quantitative trait loci (eQTL) databases that can predict the impact of editing on gene expression—could identify targets that impact transcriptional regulation because many diseases are associated with reduced protein expression.

Newest entrants

The end of this past summer saw a burst in the number of companies in the RNA editing space. In August, San Francisco-based Amber Bio launched with an oversubscribed \$26 million seed financing round. The company says that its RNA editing platform enables multi-kilobase edits—allowing a single drug to treat diseases with high allelic diversity.

Amber's co-founders are the current CEO, Jacob Borrajo, PhD, who did his graduate work in the laboratory headed by Paul Blainey at MIT and the Broad Institute, and Basem Al-Shayeb, PhD, Amber's current CTO, who comes to Amber Bio from the laboratory headed by Jennifer Doudna, PhD, at the University of California, Berkeley. Just a month after Amber Bio's launch, another company, AIRNA, emerged from stealth with a \$30 million initial financing led by ARCH Venture Partners. The founders, Thorsten Stafforst, PhD, professor at the University of Tübingen and Jin Billy Li, PhD, associate professor at Stanford University, have established both a European and American presence for the company with headquarters in Cambridge, MA, and research operations in Tübingen, Germany. The company will focus on ADAR-mediated RNA editing with its RNA editing platform named RESTORE+. AIRNA is advancing the development of a candidate to treat the inherited genetic disease alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency (AATD). The company indicates that its aim is to target multiple prevalent diseases with high unmet need.

A review written by Stafforst and his graduate student Laura Pfeiffer was published in September in *Nature Biotechnology*. "We expect the field to realize the first RNA base-editing drug soon, likely on a well-defined genetic disease," they wrote. "However, the long-term challenge will be to carve out the sweet spot of the technology where its unique ability is exploited to modulate signaling cues, metabolism, or other clinically relevant processes in a safe and doseable manner."

In other news, the RNA editing company Korro Bio and regenerative medicine company Frequency Therapeutics, announced that they have entered into a definitive merger agreement to combine the companies in an all-stock transaction. Korro's RNA editing platform—Oligonucleotide Promoted Editing of RNA (OPERA)—stems from research in the laboratory of Josh Rosenthal, PhD, a neurobiologist at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, MA. His research into marine organisms, and their adaptation to physical environments, led him to focus on RNA editing.

Korro's lead program focuses on a disease-modifying therapy for patients with AATD. The company's preclinical data showed an increase of normal alpha-1 antitrypsin protein to 85% of total protein in circulation.

All these companies, and multiple others working in RNA editing, exist in a newly defined field. Indeed, RNA editing companies, Bolno observes, are "kind of side invitees" to meetings that are focused on topics such as cell and gene therapy, oligonucleotides, and genome editing. But one thing remains consistent: There are many ways to develop genetic medicines. And, as Bolno adds, "A whole bunch of people have a whole bunch of really innovative ways to interrogate it."

To the clinic ... and beyond

In September, Wave Life Sciences announced that it had submitted a clinical trial application for the first RNA editing clinical candidate, WVE-006. The company indicated that it is "on track for dosing for in Q4." WVE-006 is designed to restore production and circulation of functional, wild-type alpha-1 antitrypsin protein, and to reduce levels of mutant Z-alpha-1 antitrypsin protein, thereby addressing alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency-related lung disease, liver disease, or both.

Bolno tells *GEN* that it's thrilling to be moving into the clinic. And he is looking forward to 2024, when his company will have the first data on editing—data that will unlock the proof of mechanism. But what is really exciting, he asserts, is that we are seeing "the realization of translation of genetics."



San Francisco welcomes alleged bioterrorist as conquering hero

Source: <https://www.worldtribune.com/san-francisco-welcomes-alleged-bioterrorist-as-conquering-hero/>



This is not Beijing. It is San Francisco today, Nov. 15, 2023.

Nov 15 – The city of leftists cleared out the homeless, washed off the poop-encrusted sidewalks, and rolled out the communist red carpet to welcome alleged bioterrorist Xi Jinping, the supreme leader of China.

According to The Associated Press, Xi began his first visit to the United States in six years after Joe Biden “said he aimed to restore normal communications with Beijing” despite the regime’s threatening behavior towards its neighbors, rapidly-expanding strategic military forces and horrific human rights abuses.

But the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has already made it clear that Xi will demand acceptance of the communist system from what he sees as a weakened U.S. administration.

Citing Chinese state media, [Geostrategy-Direct.com](https://www.geostategy-direct.com) [reported on Tuesday](#) that Xi is going to demand concessions from Biden on trade and exports, and more importantly the acceptance of both the CCP’s ideology and its international behavior.

Xi and Biden were slated to meet on Wednesday during the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. The Chinese leader’s “three principles” include a demand for peaceful coexistence with the U.S. and “win-win” cooperation as preconditions for improved ties with Washington.

Miles Yu, a State Department policymaker on China during the Trump administration and former [Geostrategy-Direct.com](https://www.geostategy-direct.com) contributing editor, said Xi’s principles are actually a coded demand that the United States tolerate “China’s disrespect for global order, rule of law, and belligerence toward its neighbors.”

China “will never accept losing to its competitors, for that would mean the demise of the communist dictatorship,” said Yu, now director of the Hudson Institute’s China Center. “This is what Xi Jinping means when he repeatedly says that all aspects of the U.S.-China bilateral relationship are nothing but a matter of a life-or-death struggle.”

[WorldTribune.com](https://www.worldtribune.com) [reported in July](#) that the Jerusalem Post had cited a Wuhan researcher as saying that communist China created the Covid virus as a “bioweapon.”



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – November 2023

Chao Shao asserts that the virus was deliberately engineered by China as a “bioweapon,” and that his colleagues were tasked with identifying the most effective strain for spreading, the report said.

Xi “did so by using a bioweapon and bribes to eliminate the leader who opposed him.” Xi replaced President Donald Trump with Joe Biden “who he bought off a few years earlier for a lousy few million dollars. And that is how “Red China won Cold War II,” Don Surber wrote in a July 3 substack.com column.

Now Xi, who as a fresh-faced 32-year-old had visited San Francisco (see below), is back to meet up with the politician he “bought off.”

Hidden, illegal Chinese-owned bio lab found stocking pathogens labeled ‘HIV’, ‘Ebola’ in California

Source: <https://www.wionews.com/world/hidden-illegal-chinese-owned-bio-lab-found-stocking-pathogens-labeled-hiv-ebola-in-california-659366>

Nov 16 – A secret Chinese-owned bio lab in California was found to be hiding thousands of vials of various biological substances, which included some carrying the label "HIV" and a freezer marked “Ebola” which FBI and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention had earlier refused to investigate, as per the House committee report released Wednesday (Nov 15).



The illegal lab was operational in California and the public safety risk it posed came to light in December 2022 when observant code enforcement officer Jesalyn Harper saw a green garden hose in a hole in the side of a warehouse which was believed to be vacant for more than a decade.

Inside the illegal lab, Harper found manufacturing devices, laboratory equipment, vials, medical-grade freezers and lab mice. The vials were labelled in English and Mandarin and in a code which remains undeciphered.



She further discovered several individuals wearing lab coats who identified themselves as Chinese nationals.

Bio lab investigated for nine months

The discovery of Harper started a nine-month-long investigation by the city in which eventually Rep Jim Costa was roped in after the case was ignored by the FBI and CDC.

The House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, in a 42-page report, wrote about the shocking findings in the alleged Chinese-owned research lab.

The House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party had started its own investigation in September.

"Local officials spent months repeatedly trying to obtain assistance from the CDC," the report states, adding that "the CDC refused to speak with them and, on a number of occasions, it was reported by local officials that the CDC hung up on them mid-conversation."

"Local officials were similarly unable to get any help from other federal agencies," as per congressional investigators, which included the FBI. The local officials were informed by the FBI that "it had closed its investigation because the Bureau believed that there were no weapons of mass destruction on the property."

With the help of Costa, CDC officials finally reached the Greeley bio lab and identified nearly 20 potentially infectious agents, which had many "serious or lethal human diseases."



Figure A.



Figure B.



Figure C.



Figure F.

Some of the potentially infectious agents identified by the agency are SARS-CoV-2, Chlamydia, HIV, E. coli, Streptococcus pneumoniae, Hepatitis B and C, Dengue virus, the Rubella virus and Malaria. However, the CDC decided not to test samples or examine the vials which were not labelled, even after city officials decided to pay for the testing.

Why AI-assisted bioterrorism became a top concern for OpenAI and Anthropic

By Louise Matsakis

Source: <https://news.yahoo.com/why-ai-assisted-bioterrorism-became-191020148.html>

Nov 15 – In the spring of 1995, U.S. lawmakers were becoming concerned that material uploaded to the nascent internet might pose a threat to national security. The Oklahoma City bombing had happened several weeks earlier, drawing attention to publications circulating online like , which included instructions on how to build homemade explosives.

Worried the information could be used to orchestrate another attack, then-Senator Dianne Feinstein pushed to make publishing bomb recipes on the internet illegal. The effort sparked a national debate about "Open Access vs. Censorship," as one newspaper headline put it at the time.

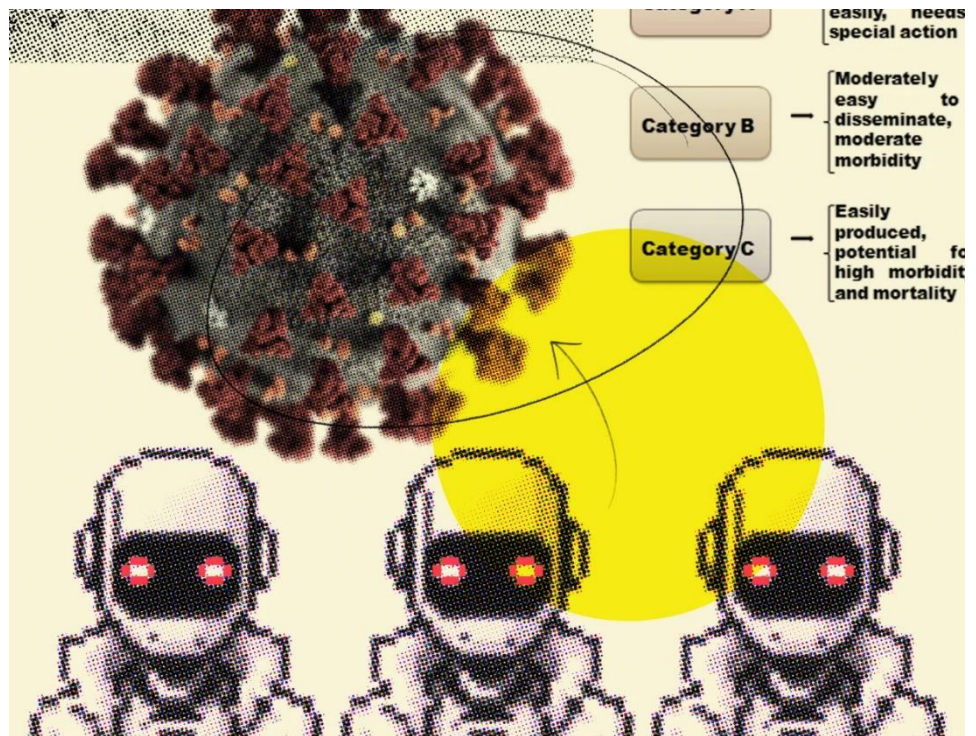
Nearly 30 years later, a similar debate is now unfolding about artificial intelligence. Rather than DIY explosives, some U.S. officials and leading AI companies say they are increasingly worried that large



language models could be used to develop biological weapons. The possibility has been repeatedly cited as one [reason to be cautious](#) about making AI systems open source.

In a speech earlier this month, Vice President Kamala Harris [invoked](#) the specter of “AI-formulated bioweapons that could endanger the lives of millions.” She made the remarks two days after the White House issued an executive order on AI that instructs the federal government to create guardrails on using the technology to engineer dangerous biological materials.

Dario Amodei, the CEO of AI startup Anthropic, similarly told Congress in July that AI [could be misused](#) in the near future to “cause large-scale destruction, particularly in the domain of biology.” His warning echoed concerns raised by OpenAI, think tanks such as the RAND Corporation, and an Oxford University researcher who claimed that [“ChatGPT could make bioterrorism horrifyingly easy.”](#)



But unlike the homemade bombs Congress was worried about in the 1990s, which had already killed hundreds of people, the idea that AI would make it easier to build a biological weapon remains a hypothetical one. Some biosecurity experts argue the complexity associated with engineering deadly pathogens is being underestimated, even if you have a powerful AI tool to help you do it.

“With new technologies, we tend to project in the future as though their development was linear and straightforward, and we never take into consideration the challenges and the contingencies of the people using them,” said Sonia Ben Ouagrham-Gormley, an associate professor at George Mason University who has interviewed former scientists in both the U.S. and Soviet Union’s now-defunct biological weapons programs.

Louise’s view

There isn’t enough evidence yet to support the argument that large language models will increase the risk of bioterrorism, especially compared to using a traditional search engine to find the same information. One promising study by researchers at RAND tried to measure whether AI tools would give bad actors a meaningful advantage, but the final results have [yet to be released](#).

But let’s say that a terrorist group did use AI to generate [thousands of new, potentially lethal pathogens](#), as one group of scientists did with chemical substances. The next step would be to individually test in a laboratory whether any of those viruses or bacteria could be synthesized in the real world, let alone remain stable enough to disseminate.

The group would then need to figure out a way to spread the weapon while ensuring it remains potent. Bacteria and viruses are highly sensitive to their environment, and something as simple as the pH level of the water they’re in can kill them or change their properties.

After the pathogen is deployed, it would still be impossible to predict ahead of time how it might interact with human populations, said Michael Montague, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. He pointed out that even though COVID-19 has been intensely studied around the world, virologists can’t reliably anticipate the impact each new strain might have.

Ben Ouagrham-Gormley said her research has shown that achieving each of these steps requires employing different, highly-trained experts, including people who specialize in the exact type of pathogen being used. An AI model might be able to replace some of their work in the future, but she argued it can’t replicate the hands-on wisdom that comes from working in a laboratory.

“This kind of tacit knowledge exists everywhere, but in the bio field, it’s really important because of the fragility of the raw material,” Ben Ouagrham-Gormley said.

When I began reading the work of AI researchers concerned about risks related to biological weapons, I found they rarely mentioned any of the arguments I just outlined, which came from people who specifically



study biosecurity. LLMs have applications in many different fields, and paying closer attention to voices from each of them will lead to a better understanding of the technology's potential downsides.

There are also lessons to be gleaned from the history of the internet, which is full of attempts to democratize information while also trying to reduce the real-world harms that could come as a result. In the late 1990s, Congress did end up making it illegal to share bomb instructions in narrow circumstances, but the law seemingly [wasn't very effective](#).

Room for Disagreement

Rocco Casagrande, managing director of the biosecurity and research firm Gryphon Scientific, said that what he and his team of biologists found when they evaluated Anthropic's chatbot Claude and other large language models made them concerned.

"These things are developing extremely, extremely fast, they're a lot more capable than I thought they would be when it comes to science," Casagrande told Semafor.

Anthropic hired Gryphon Scientific to [spend more than 150 hours](#) red teaming Claude's ability to spit out harmful biological information, according to a July blog post. Anthropic declined to comment further on the findings from those experiments.

Divyansh Kaushik, associate director for emerging technologies and national security at the think tank Federation for American Scientists, suggested that an AI tool fine-tuned for biological purposes could potentially pose a higher risk than a general purpose chatbot. But he acknowledged that the physical engineering part would still remain very difficult.

Notable

- **An anonymous tech and science blogger, who goes by the name 1a3orn, [looked at the citations](#) for one policy paper arguing large language models could potentially contribute to bioterrorism. They didn't find the evidence convincing, and their resulting post was shared by a number of AI researchers on social media.**

Scientific experts provide key recommendations on **biotoxin** analysis to the OPCW

Source: <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2023/11/scientific-experts-provide-key-recommendations-biotoxin-analysis-opcw>

Nov 21 – The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) endorsed a [report](#) outlining key recommendations on biotoxin analysis and investigations of their alleged use as weapons submitted by a SAB Temporary Working Group (TWG) earlier this year.

Biotoxins are toxic chemicals produced by living organisms, which vary widely in properties such as structure, size, and mechanisms of toxicity. Some biotoxins can be more toxic than traditional nerve agents. There are two biotoxins [subject to stringent verification measures under the Chemical Weapons Convention](#) – ricin and saxitoxin – with many others also posing safety and security concerns.

The risk of misuse of biotoxins as weapons requires the OPCW to be prepared to conduct various investigations and missions related to their alleged use. To ensure the Organisation's readiness to do so, the TWG's report makes critical recommendations to the OPCW, including:

A certification regime should be established for laboratories according to their capabilities in biotoxin analysis

A major challenge related to the analysis of biotoxins is their diversity. Laboratories around the world use different methods and technologies for the detection of toxins, and few laboratories are skilled in the analysis of both high molecular weight (HMW) biotoxins, such as ricin, and low molecular weight (LMW) biotoxins, such as saxitoxin. HMW biotoxins are more complex and require sophisticated analysis techniques. The TWG report concludes that laboratories should be certified to analyse either high or low molecular weight biotoxins, and potentially even specific families of biotoxins, according to their area of expertise to ensure the integrity of the examination results.

- abrin;
- aflatoxins;
- botulinum toxins;
- epsilon toxin;
- ricin;
- saxitoxin;
- Staphylococcus aureus* enterotoxins;
- T-2 toxin; and
- tetrodotoxin.



The OPCW should cooperate with other international organisations and laboratories around the world to develop capabilities for investigating alleged use of biotoxins

The TWG report identifies nine biotoxins – both LMW and HMW – which are most likely to be used as weapons and most relevant for an investigation of alleged use. Scientific experts identified these chemicals based on criteria such as historical use, availability,

toxicity, and stability. Given their diversity, different expertise is needed to analyse each. The TWG report recommends that the OPCW work together with laboratories beyond the OPCW designated laboratories network, for example, laboratories listed in the roster under the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. Collaboration with other international organisations, such as the United Nations, and laboratories around the globe is needed to build international capabilities for the forensic analysis of biotoxins, including developing common guidelines and best practices to be used in international investigations. A strengthened partnership would improve efficiency by minimising gaps and duplication, the report concludes.

The OPCW should adopt a comprehensive forensic approach to every investigation

Each investigation of alleged use of biotoxins as weapons could present unique circumstances, which should be addressed by the OPCW during an investigation. A comprehensive forensic analysis should consider factors such as the nature of the release (naturally occurring or deliberate release), production methods, and sample provenance or batch matching via a comprehensive molecular analysis of the sample.

The recommendations of the TWG on Analysis of Biotoxins were endorsed by the SAB and subsequently accepted by the OPCW Director-General. The group's work will help ensure the OPCW remains fully

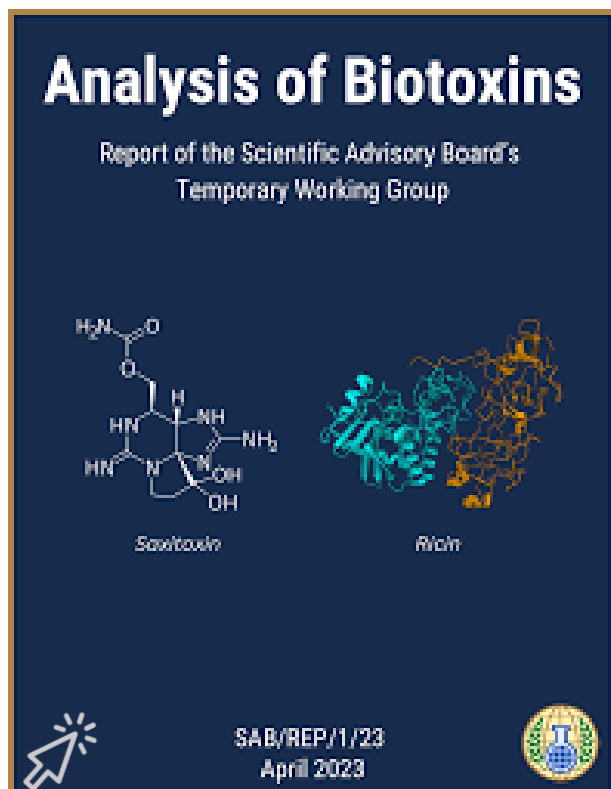
capable to investigate any alleged misuse of a biotoxin should it be called upon to do so.

Currently, taking into account the TWG's recommendations, the OPCW is moving forward with both establishing a new proficiency test focused on saxitoxin as well as strengthening its collaboration with the UNSGM and its network of laboratories. This work is funded by the United Kingdom via The Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

Background

The SAB TWG on the Analysis of Biotoxins was established by the OPCW Director-General in January 2021, implementing one of the recommendations from the previous TWG on Investigative Science and Technology. The Director-General requested that the new TWG review the science and technology relevant to the analysis of biotoxins and considerations that need to be taken into account in investigations of their alleged use. The TWG on the Analysis of Biotoxins started work in March 2021 and convened seven times during its two-year mandate. The Group comprised 16 experts, many of whom are current or former SAB members, with a broad and complementary range of expertise relating to the analysis of biotoxins. This expertise was further augmented by a total of 19 briefings from experts invited as guest speakers to the TWG meetings. To guide the TWG's review, the Director-General posed a series of questions, and these were addressed by the five subgroups. The TWG's end of mandate report provides an in-depth review of the important considerations in the analysis of biotoxins and sets out a total of 23 recommendations. Of these, nine have been marked as "strong" recommendations as the TWG considers that they warrant prioritised consideration.

The OPCW designated laboratories are a network of laboratories in Member States certified by the Organisation to perform off-site analysis of environmental and biomedical samples. 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. On 7 July 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 — have been irreversibly destroyed under the OPCW's strict verification regime. For its extensive efforts in eliminating chemical weapons, the OPCW received the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.



Scientists Discover Genes That Turn a Peaceful Fungus Into a Carnivorous Killer

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/scientists-discover-genes-that-turn-a-peaceful-fungus-into-a-carnivorous-killer>



(Hsueh Lab, Academia Sinica)

Nov 22 – A common, widespread fungus that's probably hiding in your garden soil right this moment is capable of transforming into a formidable predator when it gets too hungry.

Scientists have known about the hunting abilities of [Arthrobotrys oligospora](#) since at least the 1980s, but they're still in the process of figuring out exactly how this otherwise peaceful fungus transforms into a worm's worst nightmare.

Now, a research team from Taiwan and the US led by molecular biologist Hung-Che Lin from Academia Sinica in Taipei, has unraveled some of the strategies the fungus uses to trap and consume its prey.

Usually, *A. oligospora* survives on organic matter that's already dead. But when nitrogen supplies become scarce, it does what it must to survive.

This fungi is just one of several that can trap and kill prey when necessary.

"Different trapping devices, including adhesive nets, columns, knobs, non-constricting and constricting rings, are formed depending on the fungal species," the authors [write](#).

Predator mode is only fully activated when the fungus senses [roundworms](#) are nearby.

Previously, Lin was on a team that [identified the specific gene pathway](#) that gives *A. oligospora* its ability to 'smell' worm pheromones.

This new research tracks the molecular frenzy that follows.

They found that once the fungus detects its prey, DNA replication and ribosome production increases, which in this case, is a bit like the microbial equivalent of researching and gathering equipment in preparation for the hunt.

In the next stage, researchers saw an increase in the activity of genes involved in building and operating worm traps.

"Among all the time points sampled, we observed the greatest differential expression (both up- and down-regulation) at 10 hours post exposure, which corresponds to a period of intense trap formation and adhesion between fungal and nematode cells," [they write](#).

They identified a new class of proteins on the trap's surface they've called trap enriched proteins (TEP), which were found to be critical for trap adhesion to nematodes.

In fungi where this protein was deactivated, only 10 percent of nematodes placed on the fungi were caught after 10 minutes – a drastically lower hit rate than the 100 percent rate for intact traps measured during the experiment.

Another known protein involved in this stage syntaxin, is involved in transporting 'worm adhesive' – a kind of natural 'glue' that oozes from the trap, making it too sticky for the prey to wiggle free. When this protein was deleted from the fungi, 70 percent of nematodes were able to escape the mutant traps, compared with almost no misses for wild-type fungi.

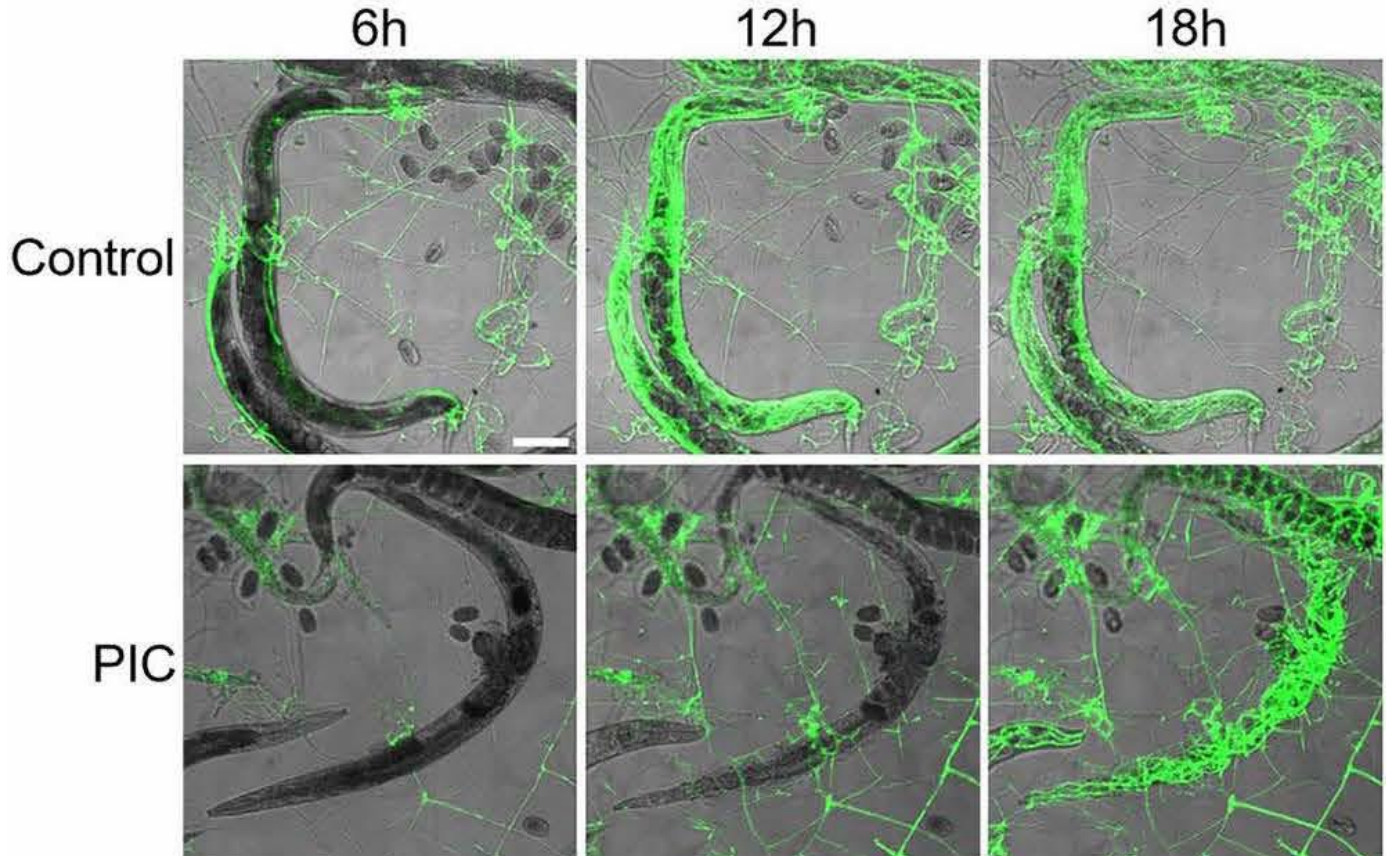
Once the fungus traps its prey, it penetrates the worm's body and digests it using filaments called hyphae. Instead of eating by chewing and swallowing like we do, this hyphae network fills the worm from the inside to break down and absorb nutrients for transport to wherever they're needed.

During this stage, the researchers saw a spike in activity of the genes that encode for protease enzymes. Proteases are crucial for digestion – in humans, they are produced in the stomach, pancreas, and small



intestine. The flurry of protease-related gene activity in *A. oligospora*'s successful traps suggests the fungus is using these enzymes to help digest their prey.

To understand the role of protease in digesting nematodes, the researchers gave some fungi a protease-inhibiting cocktail. Twelve hours after nematode exposure, it was obvious the proteases were indeed playing a significant role, particularly in how quickly and efficiently the worm was digested, which was far less for those given the cocktail.



The fungi were able to colonise their prey much faster when proteases were not inhibited. ([Hung-Che Lin et al., PLOS Biology, 2023](#))

Another experiment tested the impact of deleting the genes for certain proteases – mutant fungi were still able to trap and digest their prey, but there were minor defects in the way the hyphae colonized the worm's carcass.

"Our comprehensive transcriptomics and functional analyses highlight the role of increased DNA replication, translation, and secretion in trap development and efficacy," the authors explain.

"These results furthered our understanding of the key processes required for fungal carnivory."

●► The research is published in [PLOS Biology](#).

WHO asks China for more details on **unexplained pneumonia outbreak**

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/23/who-asks-china-for-more-details-on-unexplained-pneumonia-outbreak>

Nov 23 – The World Health Organization (WHO) has asked Beijing for more information on an outbreak of mysterious pneumonia in northern China that appears mostly to be affecting children.

The WHO made "an official request for detailed information on an increase in respiratory illnesses and reported clusters of pneumonia in children," the United Nations health agency said in a statement on Wednesday. China has been experiencing an increase in cases of influenza-like illnesses compared with the same period in the previous three years when strict measures were in force as part of its zero-COVID strategy.



That policy was abruptly abandoned in December 2022. The WHO noted that China's National Health Commission told a press conference earlier this month that there had been an increase in the incidence of respiratory diseases, attributing them to the lifting of COVID-19 measures and the spread not only of COVID-19 but pathogens such as influenza, mycoplasma pneumoniae (a common bacterial infection which typically affects younger children), and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

Earlier this week, ProMED, an online medical community that raised questions in late 2019 about an unknown illness circulating in Wuhan that later became COVID-19, noted a growing number of media reports of clusters of undiagnosed pneumonia among children in northern China. FTV News, a Taiwanese media outlet, reported that children's hospitals in Beijing, Liaoning and other places in the north were "overwhelmed with sick children" and parents were questioning whether the authorities were "covering up an epidemic". ProMED said more definitive information on the "concerning illness" was needed.

Noting that it was unclear whether the outbreak in northern China and the overall increase in respiratory infections previously reported by Chinese authorities were linked, the WHO said it had asked Beijing for more detailed information on the situation.

"WHO requested additional epidemiologic and clinical information, as well as laboratory results from these reported clusters among children, through the International Health Regulations mechanism," the statement said.

"We have also requested further information about recent trends in the circulation of known pathogens including influenza, SARS-CoV-2, RSV and mycoplasma pneumoniae, and the current burden on health care systems. WHO is also in contact with clinicians and scientists through our existing technical partnerships and networks in China."

Writing on social media platform X, Dr Krutika Kuppalli, who is part of the WHO's emergency programme, noted the illness "could be anything" and that many countries had outbreaks of respiratory illness after lifting lockdowns. "We need more information about symptoms, epidemiology and what has been tested," she added.

The [WHO](#) urged people in China to take steps to reduce their risk of contracting a respiratory infection including updating vaccinations, maintaining a distance from other people, wearing masks when necessary and staying at home when sick. Testing was also important, it said. The first cases of what turned out to be COVID-19 were reported as unexplained pneumonia in late 2019 with the first [death](#) from the disease in January 2020 the same month that China [shared](#) publicly the genetic sequence of COVID-19.

"Deeply concerned" by the rapid spread and severity of the virus as well as by "[the alarming levels of inaction](#)", the WHO declared a pandemic in March 2020.

A WHO team finally visited Wuhan to [investigate](#) the outbreak in early 2021, but the [origins of the virus](#) remain unclear.



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