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First Responders*

# DIARY

October 2023



**PART A**

**From lone wolves  
to terrorist pogrom**

**An International CBRNE Institute publication**

# C<sup>2</sup>BRNE DIARY- 2022<sup>©</sup>

October 2023

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*Topics that attracted attention!*

# **EDITOR'S CORNER**



**Editorial**

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

*Editor-in-Chief*  
ICI C<sup>2</sup>BRNE DiaryICI  
International  
**CBRNE**  
INSTITUTE**Dear Colleagues,**

The situation remains the same: two wars – (ongoing) pandemic – a return of terrorism – global stupidity.

*Don't miss the inaugural webinar from  
the WADEM European Chapter!*

Prof. John Galatas



Prof. Alain Bauer



Dr. Derrick Tin



Dr. Frank Van Trimpont



Dr. Don Donahue



Mr. Julien Marx

Counter-Terrorism and  
Medical Intelligence

**C<sup>2</sup>BRNE activity:** The Editor participated in a webinar (Oct 05) organized by the European Chapter of **WADEM** on “Counter Terrorism and Medical Intelligence”. In addition, he has been invited to participate in a 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, to be held in **Singapore** (24-25 Oct – more in November issue).

**Illegal immigration (Greece):** In August, flows increased by 235% compared to the figures recorded for the same month last year and, in addition, 7,197 arrivals have taken place in the eastern Aegean islands so far in September. Considering the big numbers recorded in Italy (despite the money given to Tunisia to control departures), it is easily understood that we are facing an invasion and armed response might be a matter of time. 10 billion euros from the EU to

Turkey to control illegal immigration – listen to what [Abba](#) says about this!

**(Italy):** The second secretary of the League, Andrea Crippa, stated that “the Germans are trying, via funding of 8 NGOs [Elon Musk] helping immigrants at sea and on land, to destabilize governments by filling us with illegal immigrants and reduce the popularity of our government. Eighty years ago, the German government decided to invade other countries with the army, but it failed. Now they are financing the invasion of illegal immigrants to destabilize governments that the Social Democrats don't like.”

**(NYC, USA):** NYC is preparing to spend an extra \$1B on hotels ALONE to shelter illegal migrants for three more years.

**Unexpected continue:** It started with lonely wolves, escalated with groups and now we are experiencing the next step, a terrorist pogrom. The doped ([Captagon](#)) terrorist organization Hamas invaded Israel spreading terror and rivers of blood by brutally murdering civilians, women, and children of all ages, scavenging their corpses. It seems that this time Gaza will become an empty estate. This war will have no rules or mercy! They say, discriminate Palestinians from Hamas. If they were against violence, they should have done something – they did not. This time Goliath is joining forces with David, and they will regret choosing terror instead of peace and prosperity. On the other hand, Hamas Leader [Ismail Haniyeh](#) orders his followers around the world to join the



## ICI C<sup>2</sup>BRNE DIARY – October 2023

violence “Each person in his/her own way.” **So, stay alert! (especially in the UK, France, Germany, Belgium, Greece, Sweden)** – I wrote before the Brussels attack (16/10) ...

**Bedbug attack.** France is under siege! Remember the airborne contaminated with plague fleas released from Unit 731 against the Chinese in Manchuria? Where are they coming from this time? – all options are open.

**Athletics:** The Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games plans to incorporate 5 new activities – baseball-softball, cricket, flag football (a limited-contact version of American football), lacrosse, and squash. It would be a good idea to make changes even more advanced and innovative by separately organizing “Olympic Sports” (former “Olympic Games”) and “Universal or Earth Games”. There is no reason to continue trivializing a historic institution just for profit. In addition, is it still wise to have the Paris2024 opening ceremony in River Seine – given the situation in Gaza?

**NGOs:** What is the reason for the existence of NGOs worldwide? Why do nations not do what they have to do instead – if they have to do it? In 2014, the French authorities requested the deportation of Mohamed Mogouchkov's family when he was residing in the city of Rennes. However, the mobilization of several associations, including Mrap, Cimade, and RESF, put a brake on its expulsion. This cost the life of the French teacher who was stabbed to death in Arras, France.

*The Editor-in-Chief*



## Israel Has One ‘Secret Weapon’ No Nation Can Match

By Maya Carlin

Source: <https://www.19fortyfive.com/2023/09/israel-has-one-secret-weapon-no-nation-can-match/>



Sep 24 – Israel and its top adversary Iran have been engaged in a [shadow war](#) for years. Recently, however, tensions have escalated amidst Tehran’s efforts to acquire a nuclear bomb.

Earlier in June, the Jewish state reaffirmed its ability to carry out a preemptive strike on Iran, which would likely result in a multifront war.

“The reality in our region is changing rapidly. We are not stagnating. We are adapting our combat doctrine and our possibilities for action in keeping with these changes,” Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at the meeting, which took place in an underground military bunker in Tel Aviv. “We are committed to acting against the Iranian nuclear program, against missile attacks ... and against ... what we call a multifront campaign.”

### Meet the F-35I Adir

If such a strike were to break out in the near future, Israel’s fleet of specialized F-35I fighters would certainly lead the effort. The Israeli Air Force reportedly operates at least 35 [F-35 “Adir”](#) variants of the American-made F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

Back in 2010, the Jewish state became the first foreign customer to procure the F-35 through the U.S. government’s Foreign Military Sales process. With a Letter of Agreement, Israel was able to purchase a uniquely modified version of the F-35, equipped with [capabilities](#) and features needed to support the country’s security needs.

The fact that Israel was given the green light to order a new version of the fifth-generation fighter was significant since in the past, the Pentagon had refused to incorporate even the slightest client-requested alterations to [F-35 export batches](#).

### What makes Israel’s F-35 “Adir” so formidable?

While the Lockheed Martin F-35 is widely touted as the most sophisticated fighter to take to the skies, Israel’s [Adir](#) (Mighty One) variant may actually have it beat. Most significantly, the Israeli Air Force can externally modify the Adirs, which includes conformal fuel tanks.



The F-35I fighter also features indigenous electronic warfare systems (EWS), including domestically-produced countermeasures and sensors, in addition to Israeli-made helmet-mounted displays and other data-gathering and processing capabilities. Based on Israel's unique defense needs, possessing [F-35s](#) with such advanced EWS is critical since the IAF can better jam the electronics and guidance systems of enemy-launched anti-aircraft weapons.

#### What about the Adirs' range issue?

Perhaps the only limitation Israel's [specialized F-35s](#) possess is range. Since Iran is the Jewish state's primary adversary, the ability to reach Iranian territory and airspace is essential. However, the F-35I required mid-air refueling initially.

[The Jerusalem Post](#), however, reported last June that the IAF had [developed](#) a new capability that enables its Adir fighters to fly from Israel to Iran's airspace without needing mid-air refueling. Additionally, the report noted that "the IAF recently integrated a new one-ton bomb into the arsenal of weapons used by the F-35s (known in the IAF as the "Adir") that can be carried inside the plane's internal weapons compartment without jeopardizing its stealth radar signature."

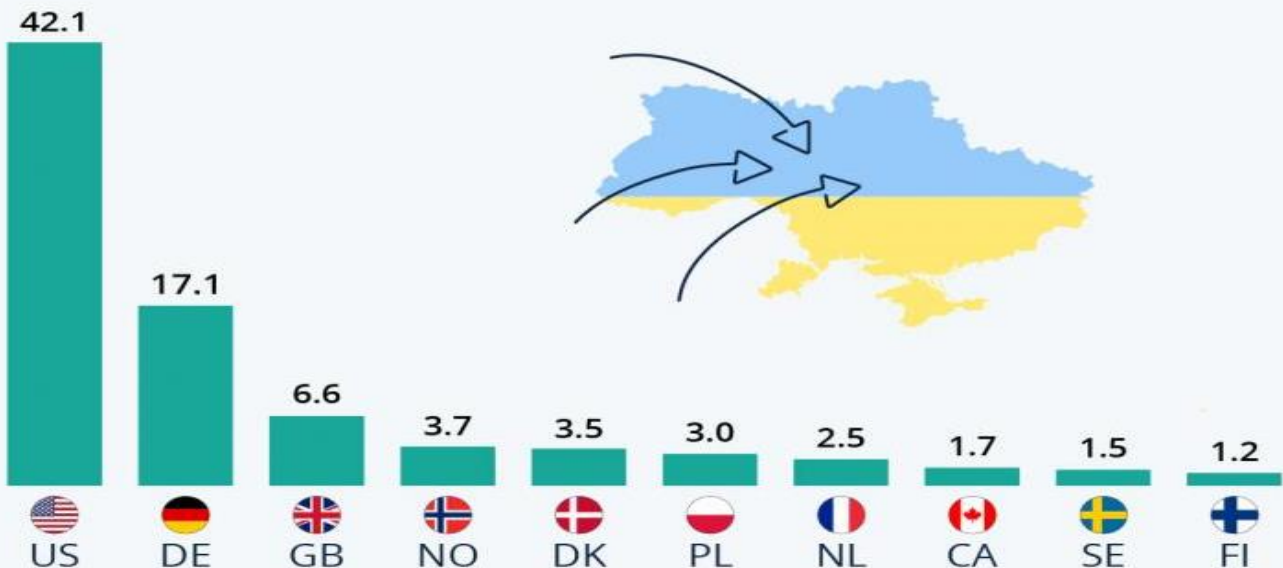
According to Israel's [Begin Doctrine](#), a preventive strike carried out to prevent enemies' capability to possess weapons of mass destruction- including nuclear weapons- is necessary. Considering Tehran's proximity to becoming a nuclear threshold state, the likelihood of such an attack has increased.

[Maya Carlin](#), a Senior Editor for 19FortyFive, 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](#).

## The peacemakers!

# The Countries Pledging the Most Military Aid to Ukraine

Countries committing the most military aid to Ukraine from Jan. 24, 2022 to Jul. 31, 2023 (in billion euros)



Source: IfW Kiel Ukraine Support Tracker



statista



## The politics behind Canada and India's diplomatic tiff

By Ramesh Thakur

Source: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/commentary/2023/09/26/world/canada-india-row/>



Sep 26 – Relations between Canada and India are trapped in a downward spiral following an explosive statement by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that alleged “potential” Indian involvement in the June killing near Vancouver of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Sikh leader in British Columbia.

Trudeau, who made the comment before the Canadian Parliament, should have let the police complete investigations, charge alleged killers, give evidence of official complicity and then request Indian assistance.

Instead, in effect, he told Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we think you are guilty; help us prove it. The depth of Indian anger at the absurd charge is evident in Foreign Ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi's describing of Canada as a “safe haven” for “terrorists, extremists and organized crime,” language normally reserved for Pakistan.

Trudeau said Indian involvement was brought to his attention by Canada's security services. Of course countries conduct intelligence gathering operations. Friendly countries inform one another of agents posted in their missions. As India's power and global interests grow, so will its intelligence capabilities. But at present the focus of its external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, is India's own neighborhood and the tools of its tradecraft are bribery and blackmail more than guns.

There is also historical baggage weighing down India-Canada relations. There has been long-simmering resentment in Ottawa at the perceived “betrayal” by India when it used Canadian-supplied reactors to conduct a nuclear test in 1974, adding insult to injury by calling it a “peaceful nuclear explosion.” Then-Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (1968-79 and 1980-84), the current Canadian leader's father, was also irritated by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's propensity to moralize. Today it is Indians who are put off by what many see as the younger Trudeau's virtue signaling, self-righteousness





that has glamorized race and gender-obsessed identity politics. He is the one who has been blind to the sensitivity of the Sikh factor in distorting bilateral relations, as I warned in 2016.

The agitation for Khalistan as a separate homeland for Sikhs had died out in India by the end of the 1980s but left a bitter legacy of terrorism, the assassination of Gandhi and an anti-Sikh pogrom in which 3,000 Sikhs were butchered.

Canadian-based Sikh extremists blew up an Air India passenger jet in 1985 killing 329 people, mostly Canadian citizens and residents. It was the biggest mass murder in Canadian history.

In 1982, India's request to extradite Talwinder Singh Parmar was reportedly rebuffed by Canada. He was one of the architects of the Air India bombing.

Numbering 770,00, Sikhs account for nearly 2% of Canada's population and under half of Indo-Canadians. They are one of the most politically organized and engaged ethnic communities. Their geographical concentration in Ontario and British Columbia suburbs gives them an outsize role in determining the outcome of close elections.

Omer Aziz, a former foreign policy adviser to Trudeau, wrote in the Globe and Mail on Sep. 22 that in government he witnessed how, as politicians played up ethnic grievances to win votes, "Canada's ethnic domestic battles were distorting our long-term foreign policy priorities." An editorial in The Indian Express concluded, "Trudeau appears to be engaging in toxic domestic politics by playing to the extremist fringe of the Sikh diaspora."

Amarinder Singh was the Sikh chief minister of Punjab 2002-07 and 2017-21. He wrote on Sep. 23 that during Trudeau's 2018 trip to the state of Punjab, he gave the Canadian leader the names of "nine category-A terrorists" on India's most wanted list, including Nijjar. Nothing happened. He dismisses Trudeau's allegations of Indian involvement in the killing and noncooperation in the investigation as a classic case of "the pot calling the kettle black." He adds: "It is common knowledge that Nijjar was killed because of rivalry over local *gurdwara* (Sikh temple) politics."

Trudeau's minority government is reliant on New Democratic Party support to stay in power. Its Sikh leader, Jagmeet Singh, is viewed in India, with some justification, as a known Khalistan promoter and supporter.

Modi has cultivated a strongman persona as a muscular nationalist. Should it be confirmed that India executed a successful hit on a wanted alleged terrorist in Canada, international reputational costs notwithstanding, it would give a massive boost to his popularity.

In the context of how Western-based diaspora communities can encourage covert operations and military interventions, as in Iraq in 2003, it could also cement India's reputation in the Global South as a country able to stand up for its interests.

If the allegations are not substantiated, Trudeau will damage his standing in Canada and internationally and worsen already strained relations with India. Attention will focus on the foreign policy risks of diaspora communities and Canada's lukewarm efforts to rein in their excesses. Another example from South Asia is the presence of significant numbers of Sri Lankans and their role in financing the Tamil Tigers in that country's civil war. Many Canadians feel growing unease at migrant communities importing the troubles of their homelands into Canada.

Allies will not be happy at being put in the middle of a bilateral spat to which Trudeau has contributed by failing to recognize the complexities and magnitude of India's internal security challenges and not taking its concerns seriously. David Cohen, the U.S. ambassador to Canada, confirmed that "shared intelligence among Five Eyes partners" had informed Trudeau of possible Indian involvement. Yet, allies have issued only boilerplate statements in support.

Canada is a dependable but also a dependent ally and not a first tier global power. Its soft-power credentials are a liability when the world has pivoted into a hard-power moment. India is the anchor of the West's Indo-Pacific strategy. Canada is outside both "the Quad" and Aukus as the main bulwarks of resistance to China. More than putting India in the dock, Christopher Sands, director of the Canada Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington, told the BBC, Trudeau's allegations have exposed Canada's "moment of weakness."

Trudeau's star power has faded over the course of the year. He has been buffeted by allegations of Chinese interference in Canadian elections to help him stay in power and criticized for the tardiness and softness of his response. Payment on the COVID-19-era economic shutdowns and subsidies has come due in the form of inflationary pressures. The opposition Conservative Party has even pulled ahead in the polls with the election by rank-and-file members of a new leader who has overtaken Trudeau in popularity, even among young Canadians.

Carson Jerema, a National Post editor, writes that causing a scene by creating an international incident with allegations India's government "is behind the murder of a Canadian citizen could be exactly the point." At a time of sinking popularity, almost "everything this government does is calculated for political gain."

**Ramesh Thakur**, a former U.N. assistant secretary-general, is emeritus professor at the Australian National University. A Canadian citizen, he has studied and taught at Canadian universities.





## GAO Report on F-35 Sustainment

Source (full report): <https://news.usni.org/2023/09/22/gao-report-on-f-35-sustainment>

Sep 22 – Maintenance challenges negatively affect F-35 aircraft readiness. The F-35 fleet mission capable rate—the percentage of time the aircraft can perform one of its tasked missions—was about 55 percent in March 2023, far below program goals. This performance was due in part to challenges with depot and organizational maintenance (see fig.). The program was behind schedule in establishing depot maintenance activities to conduct repairs. As a result, component repair times remained slow with over 10,000 waiting to be repaired—above desired levels. At the same time, organizational-level maintenance has been affected by a number of issues, including a lack of technical data and training.

The Department of Defense (DOD) relies heavily on its contractor to lead and manage F-35 sustainment (see fig.). However, as DOD seeks expanded government control, it has neither (1) determined the desired mix of government and contractor roles, nor (2) identified and obtained the technical data needed to support its desired mix. The military services must take over management of F-35 sustainment by October 2027 and have an opportunity to make adjustments—specifically to the contractor-managed elements. Reassessing its approach could help DOD address its maintenance challenges and reduce costs.

### F-35 Maintenance Challenges Negatively Affecting Aircraft Readiness



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information; U.S. Air Force/R. Nial Bradshaw. | GAO-23-105341

#### Why GAO Did This Study

The F-35 aircraft, with its advanced capabilities, represents a growing portion of DOD's tactical aviation fleet—with about 450 of the aircraft fielded. DOD plans to procure nearly 2,500 F-35s at an estimated life cycle cost of the program exceeding \$1.7 trillion. Of this amount, \$1.3 trillion are associated with operating and sustaining the aircraft.

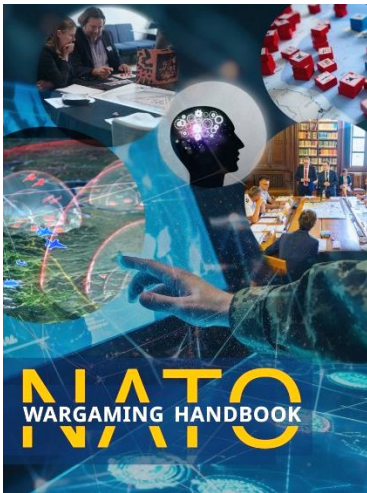
The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 included a provision for GAO to review F-35 sustainment efforts. This report, among other things, assesses the extent to which (1) challenges exist with F-35 depot and organizational-level maintenance, and (2) DOD has determined its desired mix of government and contractor sustainment support for the future.

GAO reviewed F-35 program documentation, reviewed readiness and performance data, visited two F-35 depots and three operational installations, conducted a survey of all 15 F-35 installations, and interviewed officials.

#### What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations to DOD, including reassessing F-35 sustainment elements to determine government and contractor responsibility and any required technical data, and making final





decisions on changes to F-35 sustainment to address performance and affordability. DOD concurred with all of GAO's recommendations.

## NATO Wargaming Handbook

Source: <https://paxsims.wordpress.com/2023/09/14/nato-wargaming-handbook/>

### From the Preface:

“Scope: The NATO Wargaming Handbook applies to professional wargames across all domains at various levels: international strategic, national strategic, strategic, operational and tactical. It is not limited to military games; in fact, we hope that this handbook will dispel some misperceptions that tactical military wargaming is the only type of wargame. While there is some overlap between hobby wargaming, scenario-based discussions, red teaming, exercises, and simulation-based analysis, as well as a host of other disciplines, this handbook will only cover professional wargaming as applicable to NATO and its political and military interests.”

## Ukraine's “Neo-Nazi Summer Camp”. Military Training for Young Children, Para-military Recruits

Recruitment of Ukraine's "Child Soldiers" Financed by US "Nonlethal" Military Aid?



MICHEL CHOSSUDOVSKY  
SEP 28, 2023



## 'Idiots' in NATO countries pushing world to WWII, says Medvedev

Source: <https://english.almayadeen.net/news/politics/idiots-in-nato-countries-pushing-world-to-wwiii-says-medvedev>

Oct 01 – Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev wrote on Telegram on Sunday that provocative statements issued by leaders in Europe are contributing to heightened tensions in Ukraine amid the crisis.

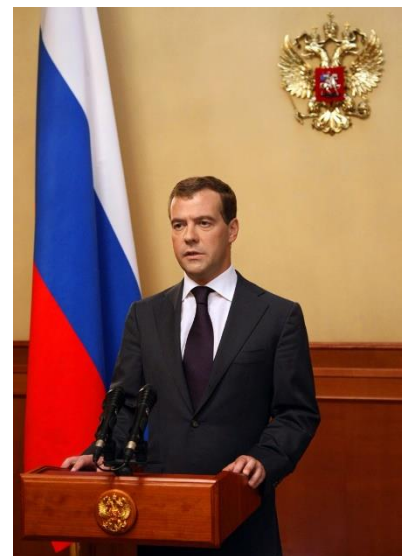
**"The number of leading idiots in NATO countries is growing," he wrote.**

The **British** Defense Minister's decision to [move English training courses to Ukraine](#) exposes instructors to potential attacks by Ukrainian Armed Forces, he said, noting that they will be fully aware that they have become legitimate targets to Russia, he said.

"One newly minted cretin - the British Minister of Defense - decided to transfer English training courses for Ukrainian soldiers to the territory of Ukraine itself," Medvedev underlined.

"That is turn your instructors into legal targets for our Armed Forces. Knowing full well that they will be mercilessly destroyed. And no longer as mercenaries, but precisely as British NATO specialists," he explained.

On another note, the **German** Defense Committee leader, which he labeled as "another fool," has issued calls for [supplying Taurus missiles to Ukraine](#), suggesting it will help Kiev target Russian territory legally. This stance raises the possibility of attacks on German missile factories in line with international law, Medvedev noted. "Another fool - the head of the German Defense Committee with an unpronounceable surname - demands that Taurus missiles be immediately supplied to [Kiev's forces] so that the Kiev regime can strike at Russian territory to weaken the supply of our army," he underlined.



-- GEROMAN -- time will tell - - - --  
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Dmitry Medvedev: "The number of idiot leaders in the NATO countries is growing."



"They say this is in accordance with international law. Well, in this case, attacks on German factories where these missiles are made will be fully consistent with international law," the National Security Council's deputy chief threatened. Medvedev ended his commentary with the following, warning that the prospects for a third world war are not far ahead due to the foolishness of European leaders.

"Still, these idiots are actively pushing us towards a third world war..." he concludes.

## If you plan to visit NYC keep this in mind



New York City's migrant crisis is expected to cost the city \$4.7billion this year. Above is a list of some of the landmarks that have been turned into emergency shelters as officials struggle to house nearly 60,000 migrants in the city's care.

## Why Can't We Stop Unauthorized Immigration? Because It Works.

By Marcela Valdes

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/01/magazine/economy-illegal-immigration.html>

Oct 01 – 'We're getting no support on this national crisis,' Mayor Eric Adams said in September at a town-hall-style gathering on Manhattan's Upper West Side. He was talking about the influx of transnational migrants who have landed in the city's shelter system: more than 118,000 since the spring of last year, with about 10,000 more arriving each month. There are now about 115,000 people in the city's care, and more than half of them are migrants. In August, the city projected that it would spend \$5 billion caring for migrants during this fiscal year.

"This issue will destroy New York City," Adams told his audience. "Every service in this city is going to be impacted."

Responding to the sense of crisis in New York and around the nation, the Department of Homeland Security recently announced that it would grant temporary protected status to about 472,000 Venezuelans, allowing them 18 months to live and work in the United States. This measure may help New York because many of the migrants there have traveled to the state from Venezuela (via Texas). But as Adams pointed out on the Upper West Side, New York now also shelters migrants from "all over the globe," including Ecuador, Eastern Europe and West Africa — so the Biden administration's decision on temporary protected status is, at best, a partial and fleeting solution.

The three most recent presidents have tried and failed to fix the problem of mass unauthorized migration into the United States. President Obama tried to balance empathy with enforcement, deferring the



deportation of those who arrived as minors and instructing immigration officers to prioritize the arrest of serious criminals, even as he connected every jail in the nation to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). President Trump emphasized enforcement at all costs: revoking deferred action for minors, declaring the arrest of every undocumented person a priority, separating migrant families and trying to terminate temporary protected status for about 400,000 people — though Trump also extended deferred action to about 200,000 Venezuelans during his last full day in office.

So far, President Biden has revived the empathy-and-enforcement strategy: resuming deferred action for minors and helping Venezuelans while also making it more difficult to qualify for asylum.

But these variations in policy have had almost no effect on the number of migrants trying to enter the United States through the Southern border. Obama and Trump chose mostly opposing strategies, but each prioritized the arrest of unauthorized migrants in the Rio Grande Valley. Yet in 2019, before the pandemic gave Trump legal standing to force asylum seekers back into Mexico, Customs and Border Protection (C.B.P.) arrested about 82,000 more migrants there than they had at the peak of migrations in the Obama years.

Already, a new group of presidential candidates promises that things will be different if they're elected. But barring a major reorganization of America's immigration system, these problems are unlikely to improve over the long term. That's because the "solutions" rarely address the root cause: Unauthorized immigration, for all the obstacles America throws at it, remains a boon for countless U.S. employers and a reasonable bet for migrants who seek a better life.

To begin with, it's important to recognize that our world is simply a more mobile place than it ever has been before. The number of people who leave their homes to seek better lives in foreign nations has been rising, in absolute and proportional terms, for decades. According to the United Nations, 281 million people were living outside their birth countries in 2020. That's 3.5 percent more than in 2019 — despite the travel restrictions imposed in response to Covid-19 and before Russia invaded Ukraine.

The U.N.'s report lumps together all kinds of international migrants. It includes professionals with visas working abroad, asylum applicants seeking to permanently change residence and undocumented laborers doing seasonal work. But its figures are useful, nevertheless. They demonstrate both the world's increasing fluidity and America's unique status as a favored destination. Though only about a fifth of international migrants head to North America, the United States has attracted more migrants than any other nation for the past 50 years. In 2020, the U.N. notes, the United States held about 51 million international migrants. The Migrants dream of America because they are an entrenched part of our economy. This is nothing new; America's economy has always relied upon a mass of disempowered, foreign-born laborers, whether it was enslaved Africans picking cotton, Chinese building railroads, Irish digging coal, Italians sewing garments or Mexicans harvesting fruit. Even today, some sectors in the U.S. economy seem almost reserved for workers who have been deliberately kept vulnerable. When Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, establishing a minimum wage, they excluded most farmworkers and domestic workers from its protections. These workers were largely excluded again when Congress passed the Occupational Health and Safety Act in 1970. "These spaces that were once filled by slaves are now filled by immigrants," Anita Sinha, a professor of law at American University told me. "They are exploitative by design."

Other sectors use foreign-born labor as a more recent strategy. When the anthropologist Angela Stuesse investigated the history of the poultry industry in Mississippi, for example, she found that when African American workers organized for better wages and working conditions in the 1970s, businessmen cultivated an alternative work force of Latin Americans, whom they found in Texas and Florida. As they recruited and transported these migrants, she demonstrates, they catalyzed the demographic transformation of central Mississippi and the poultry industry across the South.

Today migrants are routinely employed in almost every blue- and pink-collar industry in America. Recent Times investigations by Hannah Dreier found [unaccompanied minors packing Cheerios, washing hotel sheets](#) and [sanitizing chicken-processing plants](#). The United States has laws banning these and other abusive labor practices, but many companies have found a workaround: staffing agencies. "They're all designed to skirt litigations," Kevin Herrera, the legal director of Raise the Floor Alliance, in Chicago, once explained to me. Many of these agencies specialize in hiring people who will suffer any number of degrading or dangerous conditions because they are desperate for work. Their offices are sometimes inside the company factories. But if one of their employees files a complaint, is injured on the job or is caught working illegally, the agency runs interference so that the company avoids legal responsibility.

American consumers benefit from these systems every time they find exceptionally inexpensive ways to get their lawns cut, their bathrooms cleaned, their houses built, their apples picked, their nails painted and their young and old cared for. The prices we pay for these services have been subsidized for generations by transnational migrants. In 2015, economists at Texas A&M concluded that if immigrant labor were eliminated from the dairy industry, the retail price of milk would nearly double. More recently, in Florida, construction projects stalled and their costs rose after



the state passed new laws targeting undocumented residents. Economists say that recent migrants have also blunted the worst effects of post-pandemic inflation.

In the United States, versions of these economic dynamics have always been in play, but what has changed over the past 100 years is the way that immigration policy has created a permanent class of disenfranchised “illegal” workers.

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Until the 1920s, America received migrants with an almost open border. Our policies emphasized regulation, not restriction. A few general categories were barred from entry — polygamists and convicted criminals, for example — but almost everyone else was permitted to enter the United States and reside indefinitely. The move toward restriction began in 1882 with laws that targeted the Chinese then evolved to exclude almost every other national group as well.

Legal immigration today is close to impossible for most people. David J. Bier of the Cato Institute recently estimated that around 3 percent of the people who tried to move permanently to the United States were able to do so legally. “Legal immigration is less like waiting in line and more like winning the lottery: It happens, but it is so rare that it is irrational to expect it in any individual case,” he wrote in a comprehensive review of the current regulations. He concludes that “trying the legal immigration system as an alternative to immigrating illegally is like playing Powerball as an alternative to saving for retirement.”

In other words, illegal immigration is the natural consequence of the conflict between America’s thirst for foreign labor and its strict immigration laws. The world’s increasing connectedness and fluidity have just supercharged this dynamic. There are now more than 11 million undocumented immigrants inside the United States, three times the number that lived here in 1990. And during the last fiscal year, the number of C.B.P. arrests in the Rio Grande Valley hit a record: more than half a million.

Periodically, American presidents have tried to release pressure from these systems by granting amnesty or temporary protection from deportation to large groups of migrants, as Biden recently did for Venezuelans. But these are short-term Band-Aids that do little to affect the ongoing causes of illegal immigration and still leave millions of workers vulnerable to abuse.

Congress, for its part, has proved itself incapable of passing the kind of legislation necessary to recalibrate the economic incentives. Though five major immigration reform bills have been brought to a vote since 2006, none of them made it through both the House and the Senate. To be fair, perhaps no single legislative act or executive order could ever change these dynamics. But some people have suggested targeted measures that could make unauthorized migration less chaotic, less exploitative and less profitable to unscrupulous actors.

The National Association of Immigration Judges has made a strong case for increasing the funding for immigration courts. There are now more than 2.5 million cases pending in these courts, and their average processing time is four years. To handle this backlog, the nation has fewer than 700 immigration-court judges. According to Mimi Tsankov, president of the association, this disparity between manpower and caseload is the primary reason many immigration cases, especially complex asylum cases, take years to resolve. To speed processing times, Tsankov explained, the courts need more judges but also more interpreters, legal assistants and law clerks. Improved efficiency would benefit those who merit asylum. Others say that it would also decrease the incentive to submit frivolous asylum claims in order to reside legally in the United States while waiting for an application to be denied.

Among academics, another idea keeps resurfacing: a deadline for deportations. Most crimes in America have a statute of limitations, Mae Ngai, a professor of history at Columbia University, noted in an opinion column for The Washington Post. The statute of limitations for noncapital terrorism offenses, for example, is eight years. Before the 1924 Immigration Act, Ngai wrote in her book about the history of immigration policy, the statute of limitations for deportations was at most five years. Returning to this general principle, at least for migrants who have no significant criminal record, would allow ICE officers and immigration judges to focus on the recent influx of unauthorized migrants. A deadline could also improve labor conditions for all Americans because, as Ngai wrote, “it would go a long way toward stemming the accretion of a caste population that is easily exploitable and lives forever outside the polity.”

One of the most curious aspects of American immigration politics is that Congress tends to invest heavily in immigration enforcement but not in the enforcement of labor laws that could dissuade businesses from exploiting unauthorized workers in the first place. Congress more than doubled the annual budgets for ICE and C.B.P. from 2006 to 2021. At the same time, it kept the budgets for the three federal agencies most responsible for preventing workplace abuse — OSHA, the Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor and the National Labor Relations Board — essentially flat. There are now only 750 Department of Labor investigators responsible for the country’s 11 million workplaces. “As absurd as it sounds, the enforcement of labor standards is a very controversial thing to do in this country,” David Weil, the former administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, told me earlier this year. The laws needed to protect the interests of workers are already on the books, he said; the Department of Labor just needs funding adequate to enforce them.



There is one more reason the problem of unauthorized immigration has become so intractable. Over the past 20 years, incendiary rhetoric about migrants has become a powerful and popular political tool, and many elected officials now or recently in office have built their careers by wooing voters with such rhetoric. This path to power makes it difficult for them to compromise on any issue related to immigration, no matter how rational such flexibility might be given the facts of global migration and the demands of American businesses and consumers. For many of these politicians, blocking all or nearly all immigration to the United States is a top priority. And though the Biden administration and congressional Democrats have cast themselves as more realistic on matters of global migration, they are also unlikely to spearhead much significant reform. Over the past three years, they have prioritized objectives that affect a larger portion of the electorate, like infrastructure and education bills. This also makes sense. Most voters, even Latino voters, rank immigration below the economy, education, gun policy and health care as a top concern. By definition, voters are already citizens. For most of them, rationalizing our immigration system is not a bread-and-butter issue.

Democrats like to blame Republicans for their own inaction on reform, but that's only part of the story. The day Biden took the oath of office, his administration introduced a plan for comprehensive immigration reform, one designed to secure the borders, keep communities safe and "better manage migration across the Hemisphere." Legislation based on that plan was introduced in the House weeks later as the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021, with 80 co-sponsors. The Oval Office, the Senate and the House were all under Democratic control. But the act died in subcommittee, along with several more modest immigration bills.

The only immigration policies that Congress can bring itself to enact, it seems, are funding more border security and ICE raids. But these actions alone will never fix America's immigration problems. No matter what anyone says on Capitol Hill, migrants know that if they can just make it inside the United States, they will find relative safety — and plenty of work.

Marcela Valdes is a staff writer for The New York Times Magazine. She specializes in writing about Latino and Latin American politics and culture.

## Europe's Latest Migrant Crisis Threatens the European Union Itself

By Soeren Kern

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/64928/europe-latest-migrant-crisis-threatens>

Oct 02 – Europe's migrant crisis has returned with a vengeance, and disputes between EU member states over how to confront the challenge are plunging the bloc into an existential crisis. In a single week in September, more than 10,000 young males from Africa and the Middle East arrived on the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa, which has a population of 6,000 and a migrant-reception capacity of only 400. Hundreds of thousands more migrants are poised to cross the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa in hopes of reaching European shores before winter arrives.

The migrant flows to Europe in 2023 have intensified in ways not seen since 2015, when German chancellor Angela Merkel [invited](#) in more than a million migrants from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) is expecting 350,000 illegal migrant arrivals in 2023, on top of the 330,000 migrants who [illegally entered](#) the European Union in 2022. The actual numbers are far higher because

untold thousands of migrants [reach](#) Europe every year undetected. (These figures do not include the 6 million Ukrainian refugees who legally entered the EU since the Ukraine War began in February 2022.) Italy is bearing the brunt of Europe's migration crisis. During the first nine months of 2023, at least 150,000 migrants reached



Italian shores, more than double the number of arrivals during the same period in 2022. Tens of thousands more migrants have reached other EU front-line states, including Cyprus, Greece, Malta, and Spain.

The renewed surge in migration is being fueled by several factors, including political chaos in Libya, armed conflict in Sudan, and economic crisis in Tunisia. In Libya, at least 700,000 migrants are on their way to Europe, according to Italian intelligence estimates. In Sudan, a key transit country for migration routes between sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, approximately 800,000 people have been displaced by the fighting there, according to the U.N. Refugee Agency. Many of these will eventually make their way to Europe.

Tunisia is now the main hub in North Africa for migrants seeking to reach Europe. A key departure point is the port city of Sfax, situated just 140 miles from Lampedusa, Italy's most southerly point. Tens of thousands of migrants are amassed there and waiting to cross the Mediterranean.

Once in Lampedusa, migrants are taken to mainland Italy, where their asylum claims are processed according to the [Dublin Regulation](#), an EU law that requires asylum applications to be handled by the country through which the asylum seeker first entered Europe.

The asylum process often takes years to conclude because asylum seekers, seeking to avoid deportation, routinely conceal their identity by destroying passports and birth certificates. Many migrants surreptitiously depart Italy for other European destinations, including France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, where they submit additional asylum applications. Even if their applications are rejected, most migrants are allowed to stay in Europe because deporting them is nearly impossible under European human-rights laws.

The migrant crisis threatens to unravel the [Schengen Agreement](#), which guarantees free movement within the bloc. The recent surge in migrant arrivals to Lampedusa has led Austria, France, and Germany to reintroduce controls along their borders with Italy. "We cannot embrace all of the world's misery," French president Emmanuel Macron explained. "France will not take in a single migrant from Lampedusa," France's interior minister, Gérard Darmanin, vowed.

The EU continues to try to outsource its border controls to non-EU countries. In July, European officials signed a 1 billion-euro agreement with Tunisia aimed at bribing the government there to halt illegal immigration. So far Tunis has not received one cent, owing to intra-EU disputes about whether the agreement, which is modeled on similar deals with Turkey and Libya, is compatible with European human-rights laws.

The EU's failure to honor the EU-Tunisia agreement has led to a surge in the number of illegal arrivals to Italy from Tunisia. On September 22, after an emergency meeting, the European Commission hastily [announced](#) that it would "quickly" deliver 127 million euros to help the Tunisian government fight migrant-trafficking networks. This will not be enough to deter Tunis from keeping open the floodgates to mass migration until the EU pays what it promised.

The EU is also struggling to revamp the way it processes and relocates asylum seekers. In June, after four years of arduous negotiations, the EU announced the so-called [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), which imposes "mandatory solidarity" by forcing EU member states to accept migrants or require them to pay 20,000 euros for each person they refuse to take in.

It remains far from certain that the agreement will ever take effect, because it must first be approved by the European Parliament, where Euroskeptic parties opposed to mass migration are expected to win big in elections set for June 2024. If current polls prove to be accurate, populists may gain enough seats in the parliament to impose restrictions on the EU's notoriously lenient migration policies.

A key factor in the rise of populism in Europe is that most of the migrants arriving in Europe are military-aged males from Africa and the Middle East who are not legitimate asylum seekers but economic migrants. For a variety of reasons, including education, culture, and Islam, many of them are unable or unwilling to integrate into their host countries.

Mass migration has made Islam omnipresent in Europe, where Islamist-inspired parallel societies are proliferating along with sharia courts, polygamy, child marriages, and honor violence. It is also stoking social chaos and rampant crime, including runaway antisemitism and mass sexual violence against European women.

The Islamization of European society is fueling support for populist parties across Europe. In Germany, where the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany is now the second-most popular party, half of voter support comes from Germans who are not right-wing but are angry about mass migration, [according](#) to a recent survey by the Allensbach Institute.

Despite this anger, migrants continue to arrive in Europe unabated, in large measure because many political leaders, especially in Germany, believe that mass migration is the only way to sustain European social-welfare systems amid a demographic crisis in which fertility rates have fallen far below replacement levels in all 27 EU countries.

British home secretary Suella Braverman has [noted](#) that Europe's migration crisis is being sustained by outdated international asylum laws — including the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and the 1950 European Convention of Human Rights — that are being systematically abused to allow virtually





anyone to claim asylum for any reason, and to prevent any illegal immigrants, even criminals, from ever being deported. Braverman has said that mass migration poses an "existential challenge for the political and cultural institutions of the West," adding that "uncontrolled immigration, inadequate integration, and a misguided dogma of multiculturalism have proven a toxic combination for Europe over the last few decades."

**Matteo Salvini, deputy prime minister of Italy, described the latest influx of migrants as unsustainable. "What is happening in Lampedusa is the death of Europe." Polish prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki agreed: "The whole of Europe may become Lampedusa if we continue to commit the same old mistakes."**

Soeren Kern is a research fellow for the Middle East Forum.

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Europe is facing an invasion. The following governments are mainly responsible for this: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Eritrea, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh for doing nothing to improve the lives of their citizens or to control illegal immigration. They spend their money on defense equipment and geopolitical games instead of providing clean water, electricity, sewage systems, agriculture/livestock, healthcare, and education among others. Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, and Greece) is facing the problem while Central/Northern Europe is pushing for more immigrants (i.e., Germany) for their economies and they choose who is suitable for them. EU is a financial union (?) not a State with many country members. It is time for each country to choose its policy and what is best for the nation, not the EU. The problem is that we usually stop in the recognition of the problem without providing viable solutions. History has shown that there are no peaceful solutions for the problem but civilized Europeans are afraid even to examine the possibility of a solution employing force. Because if you know that your boat will sink in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea you will not take the chance for a sure death. And you will stop using children, babies, boys, and girls as human shields and blackmailing rescue via "112". This is the only way to halt illegal immigration and force the above countries to seriously deal with the prosperity of their citizens to keep them in place and peace. Multiculturalism failed dearly in Europe (i.e., France, Sweden, UK) and there is no point in persisting in altering the Europeans, their culture, and their civilization. We did not invite them to our land; we do not want people unwilling to incorporate and work within our societies; we do not like their customs and ethics; we have our own problems to solve and we do not need additional ones. The only antithesis is that although we have the means to stop illegal immigration we do not have the leaders to decide what it takes to return to normal...

## Paris 2024: Unveiling France's targeted attack against Muslim women athletes

Source: <https://dohanews.co/paris-2024-unveiling-frances-targeted-attack-against-muslim-women-athletes/>

Oct 03 – [The ban on hijabs for French athletes at the 2024 Olympic Games](#) is the latest attack in France's decades-long war against Islamic-related garments, and the decision has once again placed Paris in the line of fire for its relentless targeting of Muslim women in particular.

"The France team will not wear the headscarf," Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera said during her televised address, pointing towards upholding the principles of secularism as the main reason for the decision.

Despite the shocking move, the move comes as no surprise.

Experts say the French state's obsession with controlling what Muslim women wear is not new, as the country has prohibited several Islamic garments – from burqas to hijabs and even the burkinis – citing secularism as the motive in all cases.

Upholders of French civil affairs like Castera or President Emmanuel Macron have claimed that *'Laïcité'* or secularism is vital to the French political and social fabric.

However, for decades, concerns have been raised that such principles have unfairly targeted and alienated Muslims in France, which ironically houses the largest Muslim population in Europe.

Responding to the ban, Sports journalist Shireen Ahmed told *Doha News* that France has an "unparalleled commitment to hating Muslim women."

Speaking at a panel conference on Islamophobia in Doha, Ahmed said, "I don't actually think it was radical. I think it was actually predictable of France. They have an unparalleled commitment to hating Muslim women and to really being draconian in such a specific and very terrible way."

"They're threatened by the power and possibility of sport, which is so problematic. And I mean, I think that we'll see conversations more and more about it because I still don't see enough," Ahmed added.



The award-winning sports journalist suggested France's focus on French women in particular exposes cracks in its own reasonings. "If you think about it, they weren't able to ban all Muslim women, so they banned their own. How is that egalite? How is that liberte? How is that fraternite?" she questioned. "There's an insecurity in their own national identity," Ahmed added.



### Liberté, égalité, fraternité

France's national motto is "liberté, égalité, fraternité" a proclamation intended on embracing all citizens regardless of their faith. However, the expression has appeared to take its grip on Muslims in recent decades, particularly after the North African decolonisation in the 1960s. The increase of migrants from North Africa to France, led primarily by French officials keen on producing a desperately needed workforce, led to a new generation of French-born Muslims of Arab and African descent.

By 1989, murmurs on the hijab formed into full blown conversations on the national level after one particular incident.

According to an [archived report](#) by The New York Times, the debate over Islamic women's rights was initiated after a school principal told three Muslim teenagers that they could not attend school if they wore the hijab.

Ultimately, the discussion led to then-Education Minister Lionel Jospin, who eventually became France's Prime Minister, deciding that Muslim students should be "persuaded" to take off their hijabs, as any force would violate religious discrimination laws.

However, nearly a decade later, the French Senate approved a bill prohibiting the wearing of "conspicuous" religious symbols in state schools, paving the way for the 2010 ban on full-face veils, or niqabs.

"This year marks the 20th anniversary of the initial hijab bans in French schools, and it's troubling to see the Olympics becoming the latest battleground. The recent ban on the 'abaya' in public schools, which is now been claimed as a religious emblem, serves as an example of the targeted character of these moves against Islam," acclaimed British-Iraqi Filmmaker Saoud Khalaf told *Doha News*. He said definitions of religious symbols should not be governed by the French government but by relevant religious authorities.

"The determination of what constitutes a religious sign should rightfully remain in the custody of the relevant religious authority; it is not within the scope of the state to impose such guidelines. The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) has unequivocally stated that the abaya is not a religious symbol," Khalaf adds. Addressing the Olympic ban, the British-Iraqi filmmaker said recent measures could pave the way for more anti-Muslim racism in Europe or even the world.

"What if the next phase of France's marginalisation mission involves banning the hijab for all athletes at the Olympics? Would this lead to a stronger, more coordinated global push to persuade them to reverse their xenophobic policies?

"It shouldn't require such extreme measures for a strong and concerted global movement to dismantle this authoritarian control over women's bodies," Khalaf told *Doha News*.

"We Muslims have long been conscious of the institutionalised discrimination we can experience in any public setting. This ban doesn't come as a shock to many Muslims; it's simply the next part of the



progression of anti-Muslim racism in Europe. It will be up to us to stand up for our honour and rights, and no gold medal will ever be worth more to us than our faith,” the filmmaker added.

### Condemning without action?

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), along with the United Nations (UN), have both condemned the decision of Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera, but no actual intervention has yet been taken.

Just days after the sports minister’s decision was publicised, the IOC clarified that athletes at the Olympic games would be allowed to wear the hijab in the athletes’ village. Despite this, French athletes must adhere to the ban from their government while playing the games. “For the Olympic Village, the IOC rules apply. There are no restrictions on wearing the hijab or any other religious or cultural attire,” an IOC spokesperson clarified. UN Human Rights Office official, Marta Hurtado also weighed in on the issue stating: “According to international human right standards, restrictions of expressions of religions or beliefs such as attire choices are only acceptable under really specific circumstances that address legitimate concerns for public safety, public order or public health or morals in a necessary and proportionate fashion.” While the UN Human Rights Committee has long criticized France’s attacks on Muslim women, it has fallen short of taking action to hold the government responsible for its islamophobic policies.

Hajer Naili, a vocal French Muslim commentator on global issues, including racial and religious discrimination, said every prohibition set by French officials is “sought to erase Muslim women from public life.” “With each ban and ruling, France’s elected officials have sought to erase Muslim women from public life, first by removing them from public classrooms and now by keeping them away from fields and pitches,” Naili told *Doha News*. Citing [research](#) from the University of Standford which concluded France’s bans on headscarves in public schools hindered Muslim girls’ ability to finish school, Naili also pointed to the weaponisation of secularism as a method for the French to punish followers of the religion. “France has weaponised its principle of laicite (secularism) to punish Muslims for who they choose to be and wear. And we, Muslim women in France, are used as cannon fodder,” Naili told *Doha News*. “From the ban on hijab in public schools and offices to the ban of niqab in all places and the ban of burkinis and abayas, to name only a few, the list of attacks against Muslim women, under the guise of secularism, is long,” Naili adds.

The former journalist says there needs to be more international pressure from global institutions, specifically the IOC.

“For the Olympic International Committee (IOC) it claims on its [website](#) and its charter that non-discrimination has been at the core of the Games. Besides, an IOC representative [interviewed](#) last year assured that there will no discrimination at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games and that all athletes will be allowed to compete “whatever their backgrounds or beliefs are and free from fear of any form of discrimination,” Naili stated. “IOC should immediately urge France to abandon its decision to ban French athletes wearing the hijab and guarantee a safe environment for all Muslim athletes during the 2024 Games in Paris.”

Simon Chadwick, Professor of Sport and Geopolitical Economy at Skema Business School, expressed similar sentiments, stating the French government must explain and be accountable for its actions. “Outside the specific context of France, this episode does raise issues about how global mega-events and local laws, norms, and customs interact within one another and, notably, whether differences between the two can ever be effectively reconciled,” Chadwick told *Doha News*.

“The French government must explain and be accountable for its actions, but equally the IOC and other such governors of global sport need to be more proactive and decisive in dealing with such matters.

“After all, the IOC makes the legislative protection of its sponsors a requirement when its awards Olympics hosting rights, so why doesn’t it take a similarly clear and assertive position on the wearing of religious items,” Chadwick added.

**EDITOR’S COMMENT:** I am sure that Ancient Greeks would have been very disappointed finding out that their Olympic Games progressed in a field of political and religious confrontation opposing Olympic Ideals.

## US public support declines for arming Ukraine, Reuters/Ipsos poll shows

By Jason Lange and Patricia Zengerle

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-public-support-declines-arming-ukraine-reutersipsos-2023-10-05/>

Oct 5 – Support is falling among Americans of both major political parties for supplying Ukraine with weapons, a warning sign for Kyiv, which relies heavily on U.S. arms to fight against a Russian invasion, according to a new Reuters/Ipsos poll.

The two-day poll, which closed on Wednesday, showed only **41% of respondents** agreed with a statement that Washington “should provide weapons to Ukraine,” compared to 35% who disagreed and the rest unsure.



Support for U.S. weapon shipments is down from May, when a Reuters/Ipsos poll showed **46% of Americans** backed sending arms, while 29% were opposed and the rest unsure.

The poll was taken as U.S. congressional leaders debate Democratic [President Joe Biden's request](#) for \$24 billion in additional funding for Ukraine, of which about \$17 billion would be defense aid.



Washington has provided \$44 billion to supply Kyiv with dozens of tanks, thousands of rockets and millions of rounds of ammunition that Ukraine has used to defend itself since Russia invaded in February 2022. Ukrainian forces have retaken a series of villages and settlements in the counteroffensive that began in June, but its soldiers have been hampered by vast Russian minefields and trenches.

Some Republicans, particularly those with the closest ties to former President Donald Trump as he seeks re-election next year, oppose the aid. It was left out of a stopgap funding bill Congress passed on Saturday to keep the government open, although the White House and some congressional leaders pledged to

vote separately on a package for Kyiv. House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy's ouster on Tuesday [added to the uncertainty](#), with some of his potential successors skeptical about the value to U.S. taxpayers of assisting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's government. "The declining support is having a negative effect on congressional support, and eventually, prospects for additional aid packages," said Elizabeth Hoffman, director of congressional and government affairs at the Center for Strategic & International Studies. She said better messaging would help, including making it clear to Americans that much of the money allocated for Ukraine stays in the United States, including in jobs at U.S. weapons producers. Biden said on Wednesday [he would make a major speech](#) soon on why it is necessary to continue helping Ukraine.

While U.S. public backing for the arms shipments has persistently been stronger among Democrats since Russian troops invaded, the recent decline in overall support was driven by changing views among Biden's Democrats.

Some 52% of Democrats backed arming Ukraine in the most recent poll, down from 61% in May. Among Republicans, support for sending weapons to Kyiv fell to 35% from 39% in May.

Some 34% of Democrats in the poll agreed with a statement that Ukraine's problems "are none of our business and we should not interfere," compared to 56% of Republicans. The Reuters/Ipsos poll was conducted online and nationwide, surveying 1,005 U.S. adults. It had a credibility interval, a measure of precision, of about 4 percentage points in either direction.

## EU Warns About the Weaponization of These 4 Technologies

Source: <https://i-hls.com/archives/121191>

Oct 07 – The European Commission will reportedly investigate the risks associated with the possible weaponization of four crucial technologies by adversaries.

**These "potentially dangerous" technologies are semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), quantum technologies, and biotechnologies, all of which, under the right circumstances, can be weaponized.**

According to Interesting Engineering, dual-use technologies that employ semiconductors include radar systems, navigational gadgets, and communication equipment, all of which could be weaponized if applied in a military setting.

Furthermore, there are some direct energy weapons used by the military that produce high-energy beams using sophisticated semiconductors. Other relatively prevalent examples are drones and unmanned



ground vehicles, both autonomous weapon systems that can be equipped with AI to function without direct human direction. Such devices can and are employed for target identification, surveillance, reconnaissance, as well as lethal operations.

Another example that can already be seen worldwide is the use of AI to improve cyberattacks- malware with AI capabilities can attack computer systems, damage vital infrastructure, steal confidential information, and even conduct espionage.

The danger with quantum computers is they have the potential to break classical encryption methods by solving complex mathematical problems much faster than classical computers, meaning they could be used for decryption or codebreaking by maliciously intentioned nations.

Finally, the fear of biotechnology weaponization is worrying because of the potential creation and use of biological weapons, which often include the development of organisms that cause disease and can be modified to become more lethal, infectious, or resistant to treatment. The European Commission is aware of these risks and is acting to avoid worst-case scenarios. An involved EU official anonymously told Reuters that the Commission will do risk assessments of these four technologies with member states, adding that "The deadline is by the end of the year. The next step is to mitigate the risks next year."

In conclusion, the weaponization of these four technologies both poses significant challenges and also raises opportunities. These technologies on the one hand can enhance security and defense capabilities, but on the other hand, can also introduce new vulnerabilities in the hands of adversaries.

It is crucial to continue the ongoing efforts to establish norms and regulations regarding the responsible use of these technologies in military and security contexts to prevent escalation and maintain stability.

## **Terrorism in the Middle East – Hamas**



My humans were murdered by Hamas terrorists.





Not chicken but Israeli babies kept hostages in cages!

## Hamas Could Have Used US Weapons From Afghanistan or Ukraine - House Rep

Source: <https://sputnikglobe.com/20231008/hamas-could-have-used-us-weapons-from-afghanistan-or-ukraine-house-rep-1114022186.html>

Sep 10 – On October 7, Hamas militants launched a coordinated series of incursions into Israeli territory in an escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

US Republican House Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene has publicly raised concerns about the [weaponry](#) Hamas militants used in their attack on Israeli territories that started this weekend.

Voicing her concerns in a social media post on Sunday, Greene suggested that the United States and Israel should jointly “track serial numbers on any US weapons used by Hamas against Israel.”

“Did they come from Afghanistan? Did they come from Ukraine? Highly likely the answer is both,” the congresswoman mused, without providing any evidence to back up her claims.

In August 2021, the Biden administration pulled out all US military forces stationed in Afghanistan, effectively putting an end to the military intervention in the country started by the United States two decades ago.

The pullout, executed so hastily that it resembled a rout rather than an organized withdrawal, resulted in US forces abandoning large quantities of weapons and military hardware that were promptly seized by the Taliban.

A few months later, amid the escalation of the Ukrainian conflict in February 2022, the United States started funneling vast quantities of weapons, military hardware and ammunition to the regime in Kiev.



As the White House seemed eager to ramp up these weapon shipments, gradually supplying Kiev with more and more potent implements of war, reports started to emerge that at least some of the armaments shipped to Ukraine surfacing on the black market.

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Guess who controls Kabul's airport? And who is providing weapons (drones) to Ukraine? "T" is the first letter!

## Dozens of cats left to die in Abu Dhabi desert, prompting outcry

Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/06/middleeast/cats-dumped-in-desert-abu-dhabi-uae-mime-intl/index.html>



A cat is given a wash after more than 140 others were found dumped in a desert lot in Abu Dhabi, UAE - Courtesy Chiku Singh

Oct 06 – A group of United Arab Emirates residents has found more than 140 cats dumped in a desert lot in the capital Abu Dhabi, in a phenomenon that has drawn criticism from international animal rights organizations and prompted a government investigation.

Cats of all breeds, including non-native varieties like Persians, were left to die trapped in their carriers or have been wandering the desert without food, shelter or water, according to Chiku Shergill, an Abu Dhabi resident who took part in the rescue.

The animals were abandoned across the highway from the government-run Abu Dhabi Animal Shelter in al Falah, a residential area in Abu Dhabi. The shelter told CNN it was unaware of the incident and refused to comment further.

Rescuers have counted 50 dead cats in the lot and have saved 95 since September 28. A golden retriever dog was also saved, and a husky was found dead. Some of the animals had been microchipped, suggesting that they weren't strays. September temperatures reach a high of 40.5C (105F) in Abu Dhabi city. Desert temperatures could be higher during the day. The



episode has drawn criticism from international animal rights organizations and activists.

The animal rights organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is offering a \$5,000 reward for information on “whoever dumped these cats in the desert,” PETA Asia Vice-President Jason Baker told CNN in a statement.

“This act of cruelty must not be swept under the rug ... The solution to the homeless-animal crisis is spaying and neutering and adopting from overworked and understaffed shelters, which PETA Asia has been asking the UAE to require for years,” Baker said. Abu Dhabi’s Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT) said on Wednesday that it would [investigate the incident](#). It encouraged the public to report details on the incident and is taking measures to find those responsible for it. Dr. Katherine Polak, Humane Society International vice president of companion animals told CNN she was pleased to see the authorities taking the matter seriously. The volunteer rescue team is working around the clock, with many taking time off work, to continue saving the abandoned cats, getting them microchipped and finding them homes, according to Shergill.

Ten pet cats from Dubai, an hour’s drive from Abu Dhabi, were identified by microchips and returned to their homes.

Abu Dhabi initiated a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) [program in 2008](#) to control feral and stray cats, primarily through the Abu Dhabi Animal Shelter.

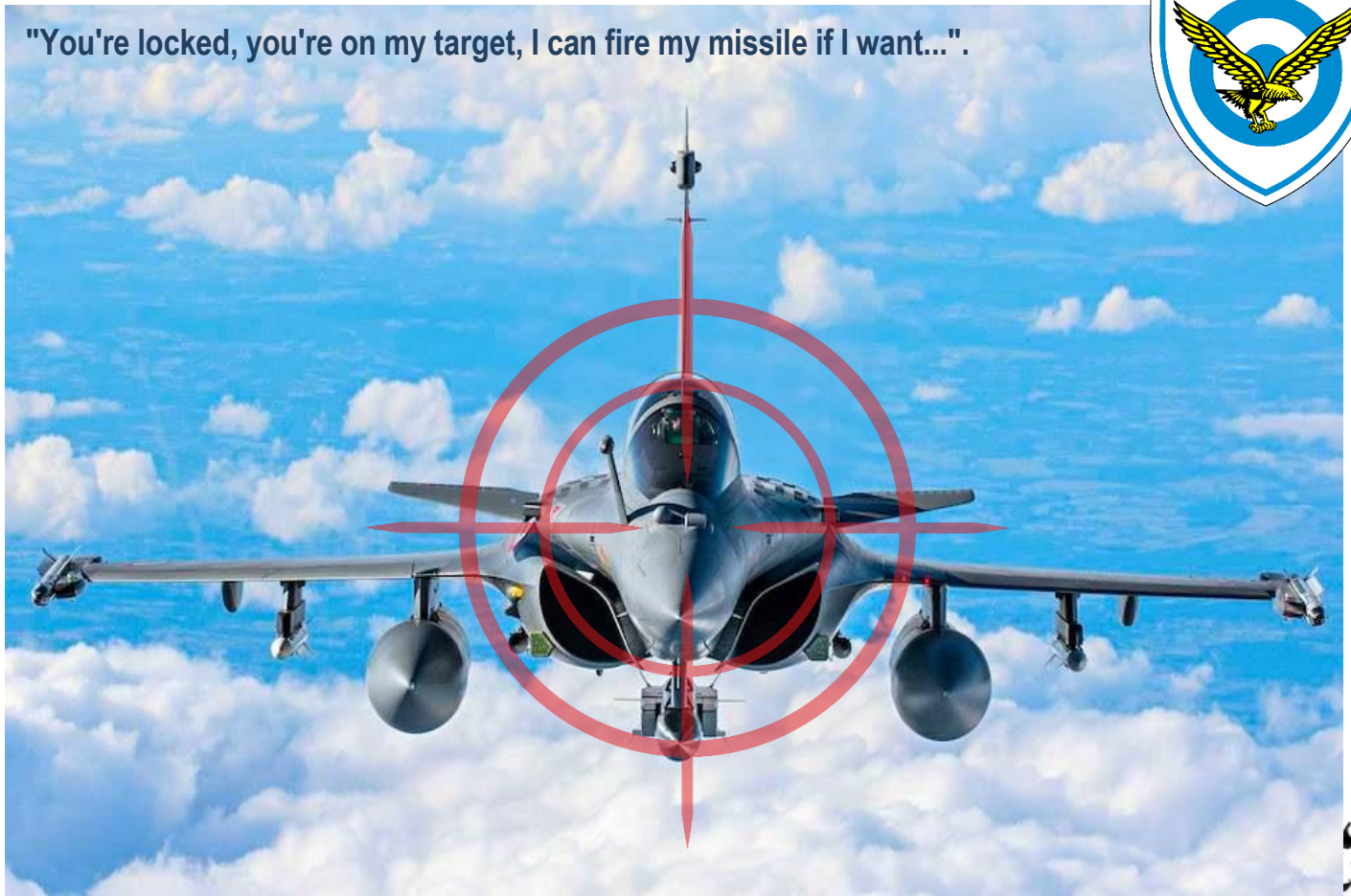
The TNR program says it is in accordance with “international animal welfare guidelines” and claims to release the animals back where they were trapped.

“Dumping sites” for animals are widespread across Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and this was not an isolated incident, the International Organization for Animal Protection (OIPA) said in a statement, adding that it has been campaigning on behalf of stray animals in the UAE for years.

**EDITOR’S COMMENT:** Imagine cats ruling the world. Would you like to abandon humans in the desert to die? All creatures have souls and deserve respect regardless of religion and ethics.

## Airforce PsyOps

"You're locked, you're on my target, I can fire my missile if I want..."





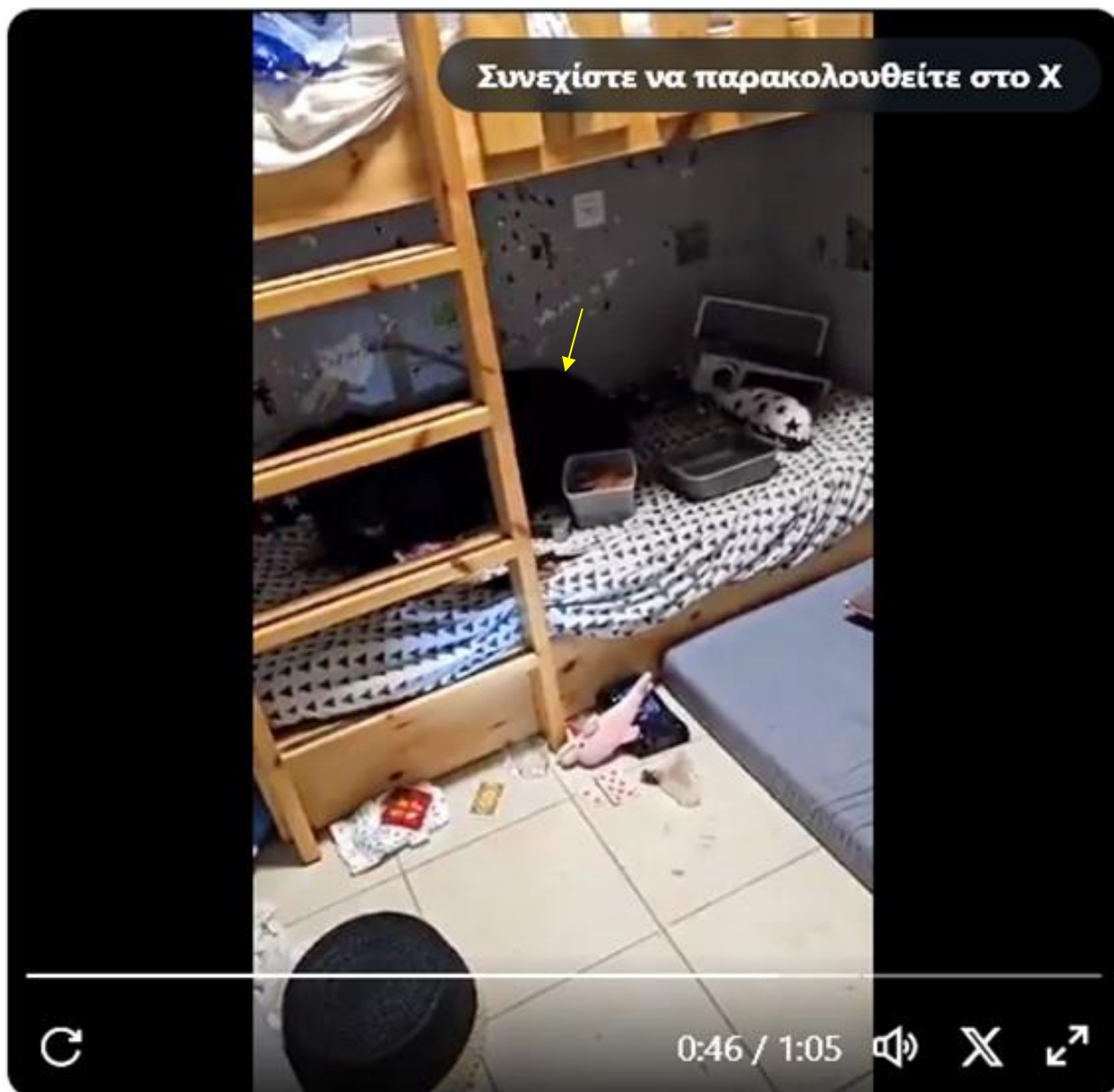


Israel יִשְׂרָאֵל  
@Israel · Ακολουθήστε



This is the home of an entire family in Kfar Aza slaughtered by Hamas terrorists.

The family dog refuses to leave the bed where the family's children used to sleep before they were butchered.



2:50 μ.μ. · 14 Οκτ 2023



## The Death of the Two-State Solution

By Efraim Karsh

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/64947/the-death-of-the-two-state-solution>

Oct 03 – Hamas has achieved something that no Arab army has done since the 1948 war: captured several Israeli localities and held them for hours. Yet the magnitude of this initial success, in which they took Israel by complete surprise having lulled its famed intelligence services into false complacency, may prove a double-edged sword.



Yes, they have a huge bargaining chip, with as many as 50 civilians and soldiers believed to have been captured and taken to Gaza, many of them women and children. But it is likely now that Israel will end its decade-long policy of containment in favour of an attempt to totally destroy Hamas's military capabilities, despite the possible escalation of such a move to a wider regional conflagration.

Hamas's latest aggression may well have driven the final nail in the coffin of the two-state solution. For one thing, while most Israelis have been disabused of the idea by Yasser Arafat's war of terror (euphemized as 'al-Aqsa Intifada') and the subsequent confrontations with Hamas, Saturday's horrendous

massacres may convince other international players of the mortal dangers that would follow if Israel withdraws from key West Bank areas (which would be needed for a viable Palestinian state to exist).

After all, were such an invasion to ensue from a West Bank state, hordes of terrorists would be able to roam the more populous streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in no time. What do two-state solution campaigners believe would happen then? What sovereign state could possibly allow a situation that would arise in which their citizens could be indiscriminately slaughtered on its streets?

What's more, the grim brutality of Hamas's recent atrocities may also draw international attention to the corrupt and oppressive nature of its regime. And just as the creation of free and democratic societies in Germany and Japan after World War II necessitated a comprehensive sociopolitical and educational transformation, so long as the West Bank and Gaza continue to be governed by Hamas' (and the PLO's) rule of the jungle, no Palestinian civil society, let alone a viable state, can possibly develop there.

The eminent British historian AJP Taylor quipped that 'Wars are much like road accidents. They have a general cause and particular causes at the same time'. As far as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is concerned, the general cause stretches back to the century-long rejection of the Jewish right to statehood. At a more immediate level, the origin of the latest confrontation can be traced to the Oslo Accords of 1993-95, which the Rabin-Peres government viewed as a pathway to peace but the Palestinian leadership considered a 'Trojan Horse' (to use the words of prominent PLO official Faisal Husseini) designed to bring about Israel's demise.

Rather than use the end of Israel's 'occupation' as a springboard for bringing the Oslo process to fruition (control of the Gaza and West Bank Palestinian population was transferred to the PLO-dominated Palestinian Authority in May 1994 and January 1996 respectively), terrorism in these territories spiralled to its highest level since their capture by Israel in the 1967 war.

By the time of Yasser Arafat's death in November 2004, his war of terror – the bloodiest and most destructive confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians since 1948 – had exacted 1,028 Israeli lives: nine times the average terrorist death toll in the pre-Oslo era.

Yet, while Israel destroyed the West Bank's terror infrastructure in a sustained four-year counterterrorism campaign, Hamas managed to keep its Gaza infrastructure largely intact despite the targeted killing of many of its top leaders. Reverting to massive rocket attacks on Israeli cities and villages, especially after its violent takeover of the Strip in the summer of 2007, Hamas drove Israel into four inconclusive wars in an attempt to stop these relentless attacks: in December 2008-January 2009, November 2012, July-August 2014, and May 2021. But the latest conflagration may prove one war too many.

Shortly after the September 1993 signing of the first PLO-Israeli accord, Oslo's chief architect Yossi Beilin arrogantly prophesied that 'the greatest test of the accord will not be in the intellectual sphere, but will rather be a test of blood'. Should there be no significant drop in the level of violence and terrorism 'within



a reasonable period of time' after the formation of the Palestinian Authority, he argued, the process would be considered a failure, 'and should there be no choice, the IDF will return to those places which it is about to leave in the coming months'.

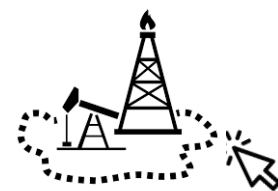
Thirty years and thousands of deaths later, with Saturday's 400 (though some estimates suggest it could be as high as 600) fatalities four times as large as the 9/11 death toll in relative terms, Israel seems to be finally coming to terms with the abysmal failure of Oslo's 'test of blood'.

**Efraim Karsh**, a Middle East Forum writing fellow, is an emeritus professor of Middle East and Mediterranean studies at King's College London and former director of the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies.

## War and Natural Gas: The Israeli Invasion and Gaza's Offshore Gas Fields



MICHEL CHOSSUDOVSKY  
OCT 10, 2023



## Israel and Hamas: The worst-case scenario wasn't an intelligence failure

By Glen Segell

Source: <https://www.rieas.gr/researchareas/editorial/4827-israel-and-hamas-the-worst-case-scenario-wasn-t-an-intelligence-failure>

Glen Segell is a Professor at the University of Cambridge, and a Visiting Professor and Research Fellow in the Department of Political Studies and Governance at the University of the Free State, South Africa. He is also a Research Fellow at the Ezri Center for Iran & Gulf States Research, University of Haifa, Israel, and Editor of The Middle East Tracker and The London Security Policy Study. He is a Member of the Board of Directors of the Western Galilee College and serves as an Executive Advisory Board Member of the International Political Studies Association Research Committee on Armed Forces and Society. He holds the rank of Brigadier-General (Reserves) and is an expert for NATO STO).



**Oct 11** – One of the biggest dilemmas facing any army in the defense of a sovereign state is the difference between forecasting and prediction. Prediction involves estimating an outcome with a high

level of certainty, usually based on historical data and statistical modeling. Forecasting involves projecting future developments but with a certain level of uncertainty due to external factors that may impact the outcome. It is like the difference between climate and weather.... [Read more](#)

## Turkey's Behavior in Light of Hamas Attacks Is Appalling

By Gregg Roman

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/64978/turkey-behavior-in-light-of-hamas-attacks-is>

Oct 13 – Turkey, an ally of the United States and a member of NATO, has conducted itself appallingly in the aftermath of Hamas's terroristic, genocidal invasion of Israel this past weekend. One despicable example: Its deputy education minister, Nazif Yilmaz, [threatened](#) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's life on social media, writing, "One day they will shoot you" and "You will die." Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [said](#) on Wednesday that Israel's bombardment of Gaza in response to the weekend's horrific terrorist attacks was disproportionate and a "massacre" of the Palestinians, "devoid of any ethical foundation." He previously had [stated](#), in response to the United States' [dispatch](#) of an aircraft carrier strike group to the eastern Mediterranean, "What will the aircraft carrier of the U.S. do near Israel; why do they come? What will boats around and aircraft on it will do [sic]? They will hit Gaza and around, and take steps



for serious massacres there." Erdoğan also [said](#) on Wednesday, "Israel should not forget that if it acts more like an organization, rather than a state, it'll finish by being treated as such," calling Israeli strikes on Gaza "shameful."



Turkish officials' nastiness toward Israel is nothing new. In 2018, Erdoğan said that Israel "is the world's most Zionist, fascist and racist state."

Erdoğan has [indicated](#) that he is interested in serving as a mediator between Israel and Hamas. But in this fight, there is nothing to mediate. Israel has just experienced the proportional equivalent of more than fourteen 9/11s. Hamas terrorists showed the world who they are when they murdered thousands ([including babies](#)), [raped women](#), and [abducted children](#) and the [elderly](#) and took them to God knows what fate in Gaza.

But the Turkish leader enjoys close relations with the Hamas leadership. Just a couple of months ago, Erdoğan [hosted](#) Hamas's leader, Ismail Haniyeh, who splits his time between Qatar and Turkey. Erdoğan's immediate reaction after the Oct. 7 terrorist invasion was

[to say](#), "It is our responsibility to stand with the oppressed," atrocities committed by Hamas. A partner in Erdoğan's governing coalition, Huda-par, [held](#) a rally outside of the Israeli consulate in Istanbul, shouting, "Israel be damned!"

Saleh al-Arouri, who leads Hamas in the West Bank, has met with Erdoğan several times. Arouri himself celebrated the attack. The U.S. State Department [condemned](#) Erdoğan's 2020 meeting with Arouri, who has a [\\$5 million](#) bounty on his head, as well as Haniyeh, noting that this was the second meeting with Hamas that Erdoğan had that year.

Turkish officials' nastiness toward Israel is nothing new. In 2018, Erdoğan [said](#) that Israel "is the world's most Zionist, fascist and racist state." For those who despise Israel, "Zionist" is an epithet akin to "Nazi," rather than a neutral descriptor.

Erdoğan continued on that occasion, "There is no difference between Hitler's obsession with the Aryan race and Israel's understanding that these ancient lands are meant only for Jews. The spirit of Hitler ... has found its resurgence among some of Israel's leaders." The same year, Turkey's foreign minister [called](#) Netanyahu a "baby killer." In 2009, Erdoğan [stormed out](#) of a debate in Davos, Switzerland, after he ranted to Israel's then-president Shimon Peres, "When it comes to killing, you know very well how to kill. I know very well how you killed children on the beaches."

This is unacceptable behavior for a state that is an American ally and a member of NATO. The United States should leverage all of its political, military and economic capability to bring Turkey in line. As a member of NATO, and as a state that has suffered its own terrorist attacks, Turkey should be standing alongside the United States and European states, which have strongly condemned Hamas's terrorist attack and expressed moral support for Israel — and, in the case of the U.S., intelligence and military support as well. Turkey's behavior, on the other hand, has been shameful. Unfortunately, as discussed, this is far from the first contemptible position Erdoğan and his government have adopted over the past several years.

Before Erdoğan and his Islamist Justice and Development Party came into power in 2002, Turkey was an avowedly secular state with strong strategic ties with Washington and Jerusalem, a linchpin of NATO. Turkey's downward trajectory into a supporter of Hamas is truly appalling.

●► Read also: [The Savage Nihilism of 'Free Palestine'](#) (by Hussein Aboubakr Mansour)

[Gregg Roman](#) is the director of the Middle East Forum

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** When the Hamas problem is over, it is time to settle the Turkey issue once and for good. No more blackmailing; no more riding on two boats. We must choose!



## It's not about Jews versus Muslims. It's about Good versus Evil.



### Fenced In By Denial - The Key Tool of Hamas Terrorism

By Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, Ph.D. | War Blog #4

Source: [https://www.academia.edu/108242351/Fenced\\_In\\_By\\_Denial?email\\_work\\_card=thumbnail](https://www.academia.edu/108242351/Fenced_In_By_Denial?email_work_card=thumbnail)

*Israeli forensic experts have revealed that 80% of all bodies among the murdered were victims of rape and torture.*

Israel War Room, Intelligence Brief 16 October 2023

In life, we are not alone. We are as human beings interconnected like it or not. Unfortunately, we are forced into being “coupled” with Hamas. Yes, you read that right – this is an Abrahamic couples’ affair. It’s no different than what we see in domestic violence but much, much, worse, more lethal and as the above



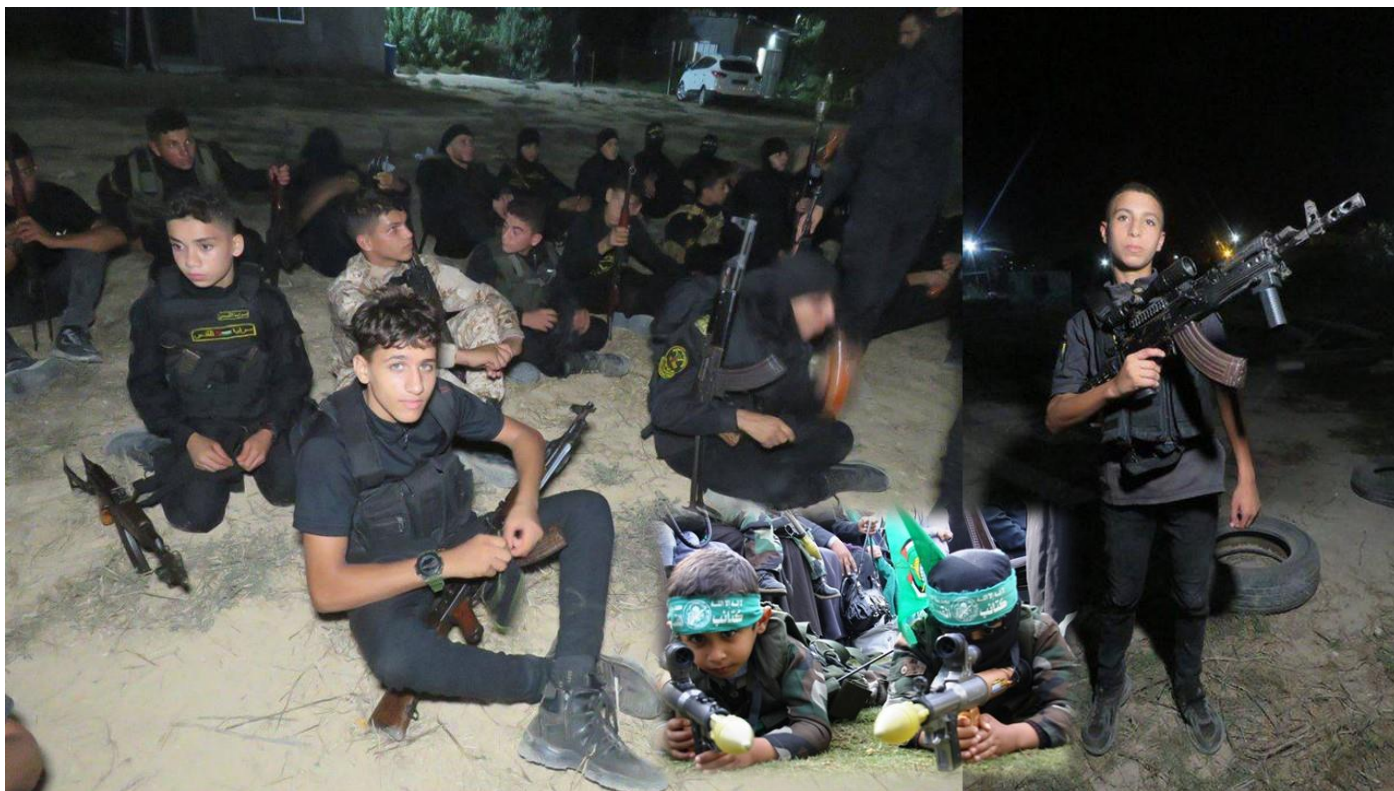
quote from the Israel War Room's Intelligence Brief, Hamas will not stop at anything. Like serial killers they have to mutilate and torture their "partner" – the Jew who is a stand in for their Ummi, i.e. mother. This is our 1st denial that Hamas, like it or not, is our annihilating "partner." We have been wedded to them for far too long and the Gaza war is a war for a final divorce.

Hamas needs to annihilate us because we are the first Abrahamic faith and they feel themselves to be fraudulent. They must externally impose their mortality on us. Theodor Reik, a famous psychoanalyst, I believe used this phrase or maybe it was Wilfred Bion, who was a British tank commander during WWII and then turning out to be one of the best psychoanalysts on – of course – group dynamics. If you were ever in a tank, you would know why he understood the psychodynamics in profound detail.

Also, and while it is not politically correct to say this as we seek normalization of relations with Islam, we have long been Islam's dumping ground as the target of antisemitism and annihilation. In my first book *The Banality of Suicide Terrorism*, I demonstrated how suicide bombing was a form of murder-suicide or political domestic violence. One of the most prominent Israeli counter terrorist experts who will remain anonymous called my work "sh\*t". Another asked me if suicide bombers had borderline personalities, revealing to me that this alleged expert knew virtual nothing about psychology. Then there was the expert who remarked that focusing on early childhood development of the jihadi was too labor intensive and not worth it. How tragic as we now watch the numbers of the murdered and maimed and hostages rise. I knew then that I had touched the third rail and that this was the 2nd denial of – unconscious psychodynamics stemming from early childhood. The experts turned away from their unconscious because they were too terrified. One wondered too what they did behind closed doors in his family – but we put that issue aside for the moment. . .

●► [Read the full article at the source's URL.](#)

#### Hamas children army



## What Israel Will Face in Gaza

By Daniel Byman and Seth G. Jones

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/what-israel-will-face-gaza>

Oct 14 – Israel is on the verge of launching a major invasion. Over the last three days, the government has called up over 300,000 military reservists. It is massing forces near the Gaza Strip, and it has started



bombarding the territory. In the early morning of October 13, it asked the United Nations to evacuate 1.1 million people from the north of Gaza, and later that day, it dropped leaflets in the territory telling people to move south. The question is no longer whether Israel will send its military into Gaza but rather how deep Israeli forces will go into the enclave and how long they will stay there.

On one level, an Israeli attack on Gaza is not entirely unprecedented. Israel and Hamas have clashed repeatedly in the strip since the militant group seized power there in 2007. But these battles were fairly limited. Israel hit Hamas hard with airstrikes on personnel and key infrastructure in Gaza, but it only ventured sporadic raids on the ground. The reason for this restraint was straightforward: Israeli ground offensives in Gaza are exceedingly bloody and difficult. During the last major one in 2014, approximately 66 Israeli soldiers, six Israeli civilians, and well over 2,000 Palestinians died, even though the military penetrated only a few miles deep into the enclave. Most of the Palestinian deaths were civilians; a quarter were children. To the Israelis, then, it has never seemed worth trying to retake the territory, especially because the Israeli government believed it could control and deter Hamas without ordering major assaults.

Today, however, the calculus is vastly different. The 2014 operation, which seemed massive at the time, was responding to Hamas rocket attacks. Those strikes posed a threat to Israel, but they were largely intercepted by the country's Iron Dome missile system and resulted in minimal damage. Hamas's recent attack on Israel, by contrast, was much more deadly. The toll—more than 1,300 Israelis killed in one day—may represent the single worst loss of life in the country's history. The brutal, indiscriminate nature of the killings (whose victims included many children and elderly people) shocked Israel and the wider world. Israelis are out for blood, and no credible Israeli leader will be able to call for a return to the status quo ante or just marginal gains against Hamas. A return to the status quo ante would leave Hamas fully in charge of Gaza, again able to build up its strength.

As a result, Israel's immediate military objective will now be to destroy Hamas or at least cripple it severely. Israel will look to kill, capture, or drive underground Hamas's political and military leadership, and it will try to demolish Hamas's infrastructure and caches of weapons. These aims, in turn, will likely require at least a temporary occupation of all or part of Gaza. Hamas is simply too entrenched, in too many places, to be rooted out with bombs and raids alone.

But seizing Gaza will prove very costly to Israel. Israeli forces will need to engage in house-to-house urban combat against an enemy that is well prepared and committed to making invaders pay for each inch. Progress will be slow, and the fighting will be brutal. Israel will need to use overwhelming firepower to make serious gains and achieve its objectives. In the process, it may kill enormous numbers of civilians.

And the battle will not end when Israel has reoccupied the territory. There is no Palestinian entity that Israel trusts to govern Gaza in Hamas's stead. As a result, a military victory could mean Israel has to administer the territory for the foreseeable future. Israeli officials, in other words, will have to govern an immiserated people who see them as their enemy and who may wage a guerrilla war. The prospect of such resistance makes a new occupation of Gaza rather unpalatable for Israeli planners. The best scenario for Israel might be to hit Hamas hard and significantly strengthen Israel's border with Gaza but not stay too long.

### **Door to door**

To take Gaza, Israel will have to fight in deeply inhospitable terrain. The enclave has over 20,000 people per square mile, one of the highest population densities in the world, and these residents are no friends of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Much of the strip is built up, with narrow alleys, warrens, and concrete buildings of various heights—a landscape that Hamas and other Gazan groups know intimately. They will use this geography and knowledge to entrap and slow down Israeli forces.

Relative to most militaries, the IDF is extremely competent in urban combat, thanks to years of operations in the West Bank. But urban warfare is difficult even for the very best militaries. Defenders almost always have the tactical advantage in cities, at least initially, and IDF soldiers will face threats from snipers, improvised explosive devices, suicide bombers, antitank missiles, rocket-propelled grenades, and drones. Operating openly in Gaza's streets will expose soldiers to direct and indirect fire, so they will instead move house to house wherever possible by creating "mouse holes"—a cumbersome process in which soldiers blow holes in walls to advance.

Israel's urban struggles will be compounded by Hamas's proficiency in tunnel warfare. The group has successfully used tunnels to smuggle goods and fighters into, out of, and around Gaza for years. The IDF has destroyed some of Hamas's tunnel infrastructure, but never all of it, and it has typically focused on destroying tunnels near its border. This time, Israel will have to worry more about vast networks of tunnels within Gaza itself. If past is prelude, Hamas fighters will use these tunnels to hide leaders and to emerge suddenly behind IDF forces, possibly allowing Hamas to ambush, kidnap, and kill Israeli troops.

When conducting operations in difficult terrain, Israeli forces typically rely on tactical surprise to gain an advantage, attacking from unexpected directions, trying to deceive adversaries, and otherwise seeking to catch its foes unaware. Hamas, however, has the initiative in this war: it surprised Israel with its attack, and it is surely expecting a devastating response. Its forces are mobilized and almost certainly well



prepared. Hamas will also be supplemented by fighters from other groups, such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and civilians who join the fight.

Israel's usual tactics will be further complicated by the large numbers of hostages Hamas has taken. Israel is highly sensitive to the capture of its soldiers and civilians. In 2011, for example, it swapped over 1,000 prisoners in exchange for one Israeli soldier captured by Hamas. The country also freed a Palestinian terrorist and four others in exchange for Hezbollah releasing the bodies of two Israeli soldiers. But these exchanges are impossible templates for today. Hamas captured approximately 150 hostages in its last operation, including U.S. and Thai citizens. It will be extremely difficult for Israeli officials to save them.

Tactically, Israel will worry that its forces could accidentally kill hostages when they shoot at or bomb suspected Hamas targets (something that Hamas claims has already happened). Strategically, however, the country is worried that Hamas will kill these hostages no matter what. The group has warned that it will execute hostages in response to Israeli military operations. No one thinks Hamas is kidding, and the more successful Israel is in its offensive, the more likely Hamas is to carry out executions.

The hostages are far from the only innocent people at risk of dying in Israel's offensive. The war will likely kill thousands of Palestinian civilians. Although Israeli military planners will try to limit these deaths, Hamas has a history of turning humans into shields. It also likes to place its strategic locations, such as command-and-control buildings, weapons depots, and fighting positions, near or within civilian residential areas. It has smuggled fighters and weapons in ambulances and has used mosques and schools as locations for military operations. It will likely engage in these practices again.

Even if Hamas were not using civilians as protection, it would be difficult for the IDF to limit civilian deaths. Gaza's dense urban environment makes it extremely hard to exclusively hit militants. The environment also makes it difficult to distinguish terrorists and their support network from civilians. IDF soldiers, taking fire from Hamas, will be under extraordinary stress and will have to make quick decisions with imperfect information about where to attack. Israel has great human, signals, and other intelligence capabilities, along with an ability to quickly move intelligence collected from sensors and spies to operators, and it will use these tools for targeting. But Israel's failure to anticipate the October 7 attack suggests that its intelligence capabilities in the Gaza Strip may not be as strong as they seemed, raising the odds of deadly errors.

In past operations, Israel has helped deliver humanitarian assistance to Palestinian citizens, even as it conducted military offensives. During fighting in 2008 and 2009, for example, the IDF set up a "humanitarian operation room" to manage the transfer of humanitarian aid to Gaza and to respond to Palestinian needs. It may again try to bring in assistance as it moves forward.

But given the scale and scope of the forthcoming operation, such deliveries will be much more difficult. Israel is no longer simply trying to degrade Hamas's capabilities. It is seeking to restore deterrence, and given the losses Israel has taken, this process will require inflicting a very high price. Such a price will inevitably result in widespread destruction, including of civilian infrastructure. Strikes and ground combat will likely damage health care, food distribution, and other basic systems in the long term. Gaza is in a crisis that will only become far worse.

### **Step by step**

So how will Israel attempt to take Gaza? It will begin, as it already has, by blanketing the strip with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets, including drones and surveillance aircraft with advanced sensor capabilities. These assets, Israel hopes, can provide the IDF with an inside look at the houses and floors soldiers will need to cross as they advance. The IDF will supplement this information with intelligence from human assets, satellites, and other sources, giving the military overall guidance as it goes in on the ground and helping it identify Hamas positions and avoid ambushes.

Israeli forces are already striking Hamas with artillery and fixed-wing aircraft, such as F-15s and F-16s. The IDF will make similar attacks with military drones, such as the Hermes 450 and Heron 900. Israel has sent some special operations forces deeper into Gaza, where they are likely conducting raids to kill Hamas leaders and rescue prisoners. Israeli special operations are highly skilled, but Hamas has likely prepared for such attacks, so these raids are risky.

Eventually, after Hamas's military assets are weakened, Israeli forces will slowly move into Gaza using infantry transported by armored personnel carriers and supported by Merkava main battle tanks and bulldozers. IDF forces will travel carefully to avoid casualties on their own side. They will try not to fire indiscriminately, but their primary purpose will be to weaken Hamas, an objective that will require substantial firepower. And ultimately, the IDF's goal will be to minimize its own casualties, and its forces will not hesitate to shoot first when they perceive a threat.

Making this attack all the more difficult to predict is the uncertainty regarding Hamas's capabilities. Past assessments of Hamas suggested that the group had only limited strength and skill. But the well-planned attack on Israel, which involved secrecy, operational deception, and tactical innovation, suggests that the organization is far more talented than it is often thought to be. And even as Israeli forces face off with Hamas in Gaza, they may be in for additional surprises outside the territory. Hamas, for example, tried to foment civil strife inside





Israel and the West Bank during a flare-up of fighting in 2021. It could do so again, particularly in towns home to many Arab Israelis and in mixed Jewish-Arab cities.

Fortunately for Israel, Hamas is trapped. Gaza is surrounded by Egypt, Israel, and the Mediterranean Sea; there is nowhere for Hamas fighters to go. Some of them might hide, but many of its fighters and members of its political network will be killed or captured. If Israel reoccupies all of Gaza, it can slowly find, isolate, and arrest or kill the Hamas leadership, although weeding them out from the civilian population will be a difficult task even with control of the territory.

But even then, Israel will have to contend with the challenge of who will establish law and order in Gaza. Israel cannot hand control back to Hamas or other terrorist groups, such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, but there are no easy alternatives. The Palestinian Authority, evicted from Gaza in 2007, has little legitimacy there, and it has demonstrated little competence as a governing agency in the West Bank. Israel's only solution may be to occupy Gaza for the foreseeable future by setting up checkpoints to monitor population movement, conducting occasional raids, and building a more robust and heavily mined border between Gaza and Israel.

Yet a protracted Israeli military occupation of Gaza is not ideal for Israel or for people in Gaza. As difficult as the military campaign will be for Israel, finding even a temporary political and governance solution for Gaza will be the most challenging part of the conflict. As a result, Israel may find its best option is to hit Hamas hard but eventually withdraw to avoid an indefinite and grinding occupation.

**Daniel Byman** is a Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

**Seth G. Jones** is Senior Vice President and Director of the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

## Daniel Pipes: Gazans' Unique Experience

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/64987/daniel-pipes-gazans-unique-experience>



Oct 13 – This is a translation of an interview conducted by Niram Ferretti and published originally in Italian under the title "[Israele preso alla sprovvista](#)."

**L'Informale:** As someone who for many years criticized the Israeli management – rather than seeking victory – of its conflict with the Palestinians, did the attack on Oct. 7 take you by surprise?

**Daniel Pipes:** Yes, completely. The audacity, size, and success of the operation appear to have taken everyone by surprise, including even Hamas and its Iranian sponsors. Who knew that the Israel Defense Forces were so badly informed, poorly prepared, and unable to respond for hours? Management is one thing, incompetence is another.

**Theodor Herzl promoted the policy of enrichment in his novel "Altneuland."**

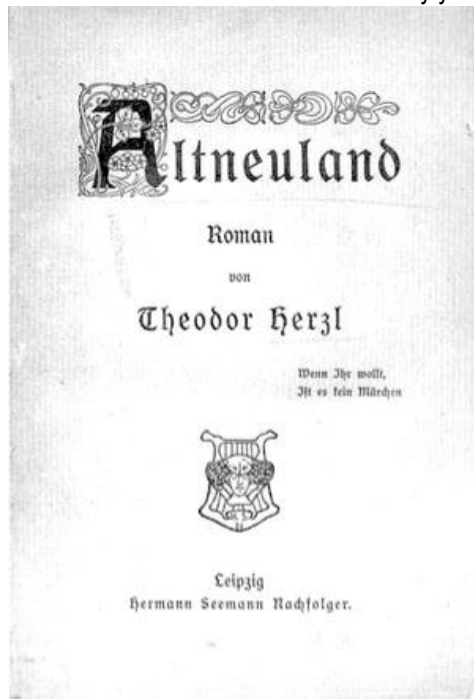
**L'Informale:** What were Israel's main failures?

**Daniel Pipes:** I see two main ones. First, the illusion that Hamas could be diverted from its genocidal goals through economic benefits, such as the employment of Gazans in Israel. This repeats an error that Zionists and Israelis have made throughout their history. Theodor Herzl made it in his 1902 book, David Ben-Gurion made it in the 1920s, Moshe Dayan did so after 1967, and Shimon Peres in the 1993 Oslo Accords. Second, the Israeli military essentially gave up on offensive operations other than from the air, settling into defensive positions. From the Maginot Line to the Bar Lev Line, that approach also has a long history of failure.

**L'Informale:** In a [recent article of yours](#) you wrote that Israel now has the opportunity to destroy Hamas. This presumably implies Israeli control of Gaza. What next?

**Daniel Pipes:** The population of Gaza has undergone a unique experience since

2008: used as cannon fodder not to win a war but to be victims that Hamas can exploit for international sympathy. This miserable experience, which has included repeated bombings from the air, finds a significant portion of Gazans wanting to live normal lives, i.e., not make war on Israel. I hope the Israelis



will turn Gaza over to such people and let them administer the territory. Think of this as a miniature version of what the Allies did in Italy after 1945. Israel needs to find Gaza's Alcide De Gasperi.\*

**L'Informale:** The Iranian regime backs Hamas and many other enemies of Israel, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and the Assad government. Will Israel take action against Tehran, its principal foe?

**Daniel Pipes:** It already has: computer viruses, stealing an archive, executing scientists, bombing installations in Syria, and more. But all these are skirmishes in comparison to a possible attack on Iran's nuclear infrastructure. I certainly hope that takes place sooner rather than later.

**L'Informale:** Do you think that Russia has given its backing to Hamas?

**Daniel Pipes:** I do not know of such support. I suspect Putin does not seek additional enemies at present, so will do little more than say nasty things about Western democracies.

**L'Informale:** Does Hezbollah represent a serious threat for Israel in this moment?

**Daniel Pipes:** Hezbollah's huge arsenal of rockets and missiles makes it a much more powerful threat to Israel than Hamas.

**L'Informale:** Is the slaughter of Jews perpetrated by Hamas in Israel – beheadings, rapes, hostages and women captured as sex slaves – an expression of Islamic brutality in its most unadulterated form?

**Daniel Pipes:** Yes, and it is similar to the brutality of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in its 2014-15 heyday. ISIS made a point of providing meticulous [Islamic justifications](#) for its barbarism. Their example points, once again, to the urgent need for Islam to be modernized.

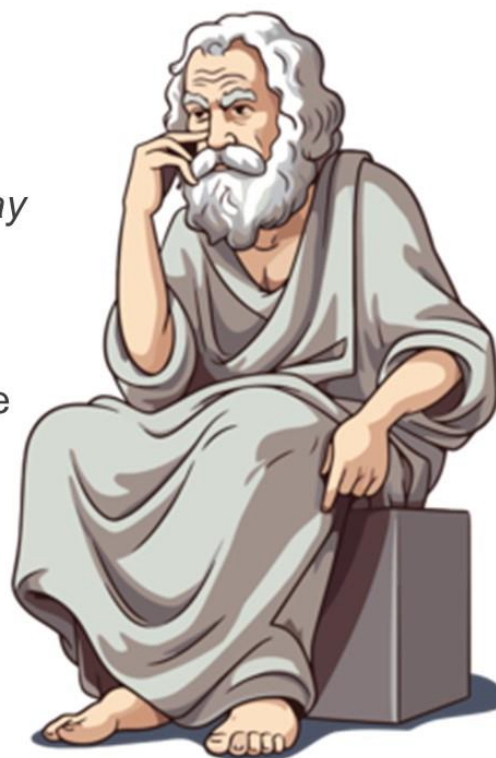
**L'Informale:** If Israel acts alone against Hamas, will the world not turn against Israel?

**Daniel Pipes:** Yes, I expect that will happen. "Standing with Israel" is much easier when Jews are slaughtered than when Israeli forces go on the attack. Israel must be very careful here, for it cannot afford to alienate the Western democracies.

\* *DP note:* A non-Italian reader will likely find the example of Germany's Konrad Adenauer more familiar.

**Socrates**, who has been described as  
*“one of the few individuals whom one could say  
 has so-shaped the cultural and intellectual  
 development of the world that, without him,  
 history would be profoundly different”*

**warned** that we, humans, must become aware  
 of our own *absence of knowledge*  
 before attempting to interpret, understand,  
 and apply supposedly “correct” and worthy  
 rules of terrestrial existence.





# T - NEWS

## Like Obama before him, Biden funds Islamic terrorism

By Tom Basile

Source: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2023/sep/22/like-obama-before-him-biden-funds-islamic-terroris/>



Sep 22 – As the nation marked 22 years since the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, President [Biden](#) used the occasion to again lie about his personal story, sparking outrage.

That wasn't the worst of it, though. His foreign policy team used the solemn day to announce a deal with the world's deadliest and most prolific state sponsor of terrorism.

Five Americans held hostage by [Iran](#) traded for five unidentified high-value Iranian prisoners and \$6 billion.

What do the liberal foreign policy think tankers believe this money will be used for? Women's empowerment programs? Climate change initiatives? Electric vehicle charging stations? Maybe they'll plant trees with it, Mr. President.

It will fund terrorism. It will fund weapons production that will be used against Ukraine and threaten Israel. It will free up more resources to feed a network of Islamic terrorist groups that stretch into Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Of course, the administration will say the money is a Qatari restricted bank account so it can be monitored, but everyone knows money is fungible. More money means more money for terror operations.

Pallets of cash to the mullahs was President Barack Obama's foreign policy legacy. After eight years of President George W. Bush killing terrorists in dozens of countries, the Obama administration's reversal of posture created greater instability in the Middle East and North Africa.

Mr. Obama abandoned Iraq to the influence of [Iran](#) and Islamic terror groups. He embraced the Arab Spring as a victory over Islamism while running into the arms of the Muslim Brotherhood. He negotiated a sweetheart deal with the mullahs that would provide an easy on-ramp for them to obtain nuclear capabilities, even as they were pledging death to America and Israel.

Mr. Obama's other desperate [Iran](#) deal in the waning days of his presidency exchanged four prisoners for \$400 million. He would ultimately allow access to \$1.7 billion entirely in cash to the regime, much of it interest on money we've held since the Islamic Revolution.

When pressed about the massive cash payments, one Obama Treasury official, who should get some kind of spin doctor award, said the payments were necessary because U.S. sanctions were so effective, we



couldn't transfer the money. The Obama payments were also made in non-U.S. currency so the money couldn't be tracked. Enter President [Biden](#), whose team has given us the largest ground war in Europe since World War II, and he says, "hold my Bud Light."

In Mr. Biden's time in office, the Iraqis have released \$10 billion in formerly frozen assets to [Iran](#). The United States could have stopped that transaction, but it didn't.

Mr. Biden handed Afghanistan to an Islamic terrorist organization. He even gave them \$7 billion of U.S. military equipment on the way out.

According to Mr. Biden, we couldn't deter Russia's invasion of Ukraine because it would have started World War III. Now, after tens of thousands have been killed, we're giving billions to one of Russia's closest allies, which will use that money to build military equipment to kill more civilians and destroy U.S. military hardware.

Mr. Biden's latest [Iran](#) deal is also another slap in the face for the only functioning liberal democracy and our greatest ally in the region. Israel now continues its standoff with the mullahs who have billions more to leverage against them.

To put the \$6 billion in perspective, Mr. Biden's military assistance to Israel for fiscal 2023 was \$3.3 billion plus \$500 million for Iron Dome defense systems. This year, he transferred more resources to Tehran than to Jerusalem.

The left will explain this away by saying that it isn't our money. We prevented the terrorist regime from accessing frozen assets. But cash is king. The Iranian leaders are brutal criminals who have waged war not only on their own people but also against people in dozens of countries. They're not stopping.

Hamas, Hezbollah, al Qaeda, remnants of the Islamic State, and other groups will benefit from this deal. Mr. Biden's help in funding their operations is akin to being an accessory to mass murder.

To make it even more idiotic, the administration is now offering a security guarantee to Saudi Arabia while dumping cash into that nation's biggest security threat: a nuclear [Iran](#).

The Middle East Media Research Institute reported that \$15.7 billion has been paid to [Iran](#) since the 1979 revolution in exchange for prisoners.

No American hostage's freedom is worth funding terrorism.

President [Biden](#)'s [Iran](#) deal imperils not only national security but also the safety of every American living abroad and the cause of defeating Islamic terrorism in all its forms.

No more ransom. We don't negotiate with terrorists. We eliminate them.

**Tom Basile** is the host of "America Right Now" on Newsmax and the author of "Tough Sell: Fighting the Media War in Iraq."

## The Biden Administration Is Dangerously Downplaying the Global Terrorism Threat

Today, there are more terror groups in existence, in more countries around the world, and with more territory under their control than ever before.

By **Charles Lister**, a senior fellow and director of the Syria and Counterterrorism and Extremism programs at the Middle East Institute.

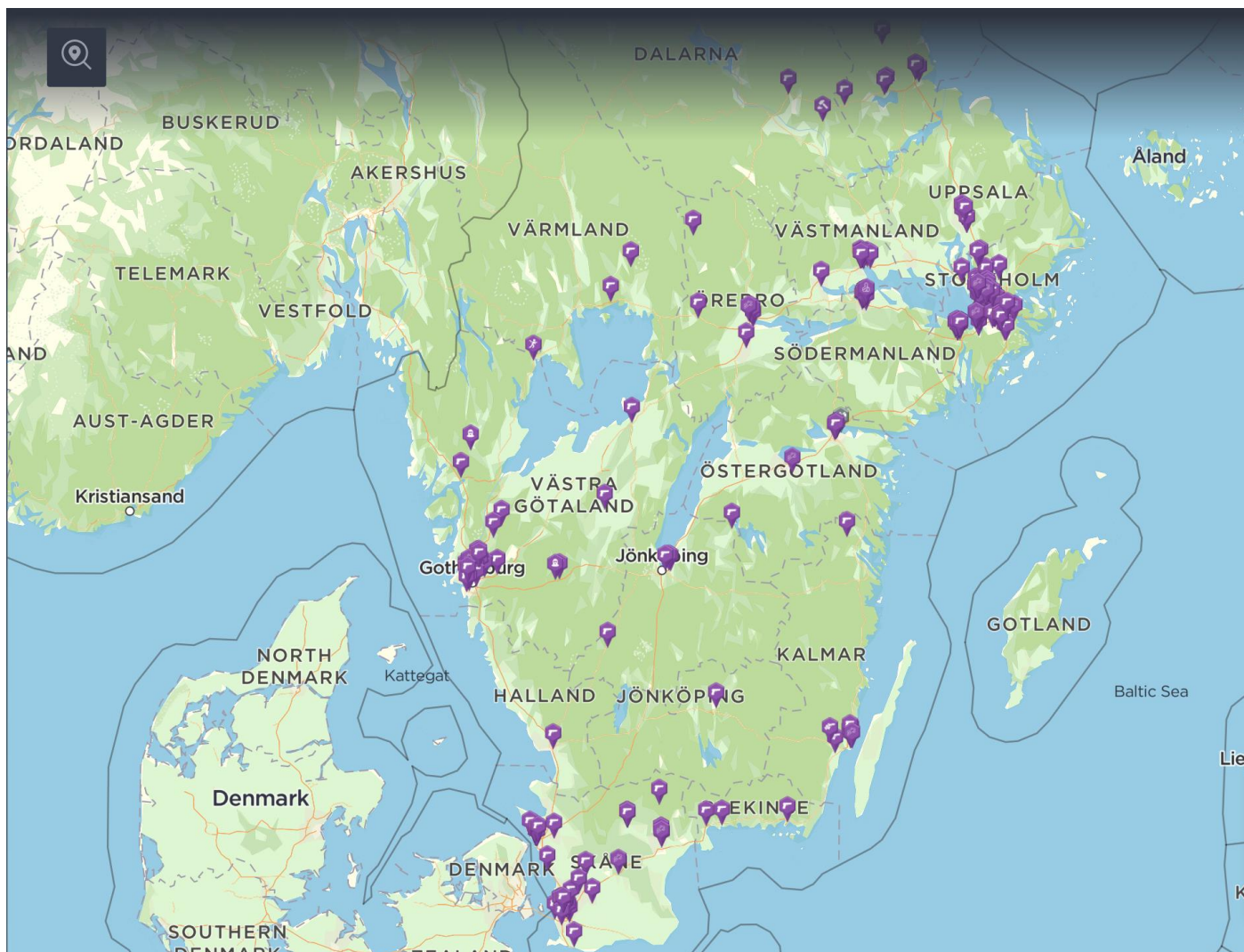


## Swedish PM seeks help from military as gang violence rocks country

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/29/swedish-pm-seeks-help-from-military-as-gang-violence-rocks-country>

Sep 29 – Sweden's prime minister announced that he will hold talks with the head of the Swedish armed forces and the police commissioner to discuss ways to stem gang violence following a wave of attacks that have resulted in at least 11 people killed so far this month. [Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson](#) said that he would meet with the armed forces' supreme commander and the national police commissioner on Friday to explore "how the armed forces can help police in their work against the criminal gangs".





A snapshot of shooting-related incidents reported by our analysts in Sweden in 2022. [Source: Intelligence Fusion]

“Sweden has never before seen anything like this,” Kristersson said on Thursday in a rare televised address to the nation.

“No other country in Europe is seeing anything like this,” he said.

Two people were killed in separate shootings in Stockholm on Wednesday, and a woman in her 20s was killed when a bomb tore up a house in Uppsala in the early hours of Thursday.

“This is a difficult time for Sweden,” Kristersson said in his speech.

“A 25-year-old woman went to bed last night on a completely ordinary evening but never got to wake up,” he said.

“We will hunt the gangs, we will defeat the gangs,” he added.

It was not immediately clear in what capacity the military would get involved in tackling Sweden’s gang problem, but previous proposals have focused on soldiers taking over protection duties from police to free up more resources for crime-fighting.

Getting the military involved in crime-fighting would be a highly unusual step for Sweden, but it underscores [the severity of the gang violence](#) that has claimed almost a dozen lives across the country so far this month, including teenagers and innocent bystanders.

The police estimate that about 30,000 people in Sweden are directly involved with or have ties to gang crime. The violence has also spread from major urban areas to smaller towns where violent crime was previously rare.

“The criminal conflicts in Sweden are a serious threat to the safety and security of the country,” National Police Commissioner Anders Thornberg said in a statement.

More than 60 people died in shootings last year in Sweden, the highest figure on record. This year is on track to be the same or worse. Swedish media have linked the latest surge in violence to a feud between rival factions of a criminal gang known as the Foxtrot network.





Earlier this week, two powerful blasts ripped through dwellings in central Sweden, wounding at least three people and damaging buildings. Kristersson's centre-right government [took power last year with a promise to get tough on crime](#), but so far has not been able to stem the violence. The government and the leftist opposition have [traded accusations over who is to blame for the situation](#). The opposition says the government has made the country less safe while Kristersson put the blame on "irresponsible migration policies and failed integration" under the previous government.

Sweden long stood out in Europe along with Germany for having liberal immigration policies and welcoming hundreds of thousands of asylum-seekers from the Middle East and Africa.

Sweden has since sharply restricted migration levels, citing rising crime levels and other social problems.

► Read also: [The rise of Sweden as Europe's gun crime capital](#) (2022)

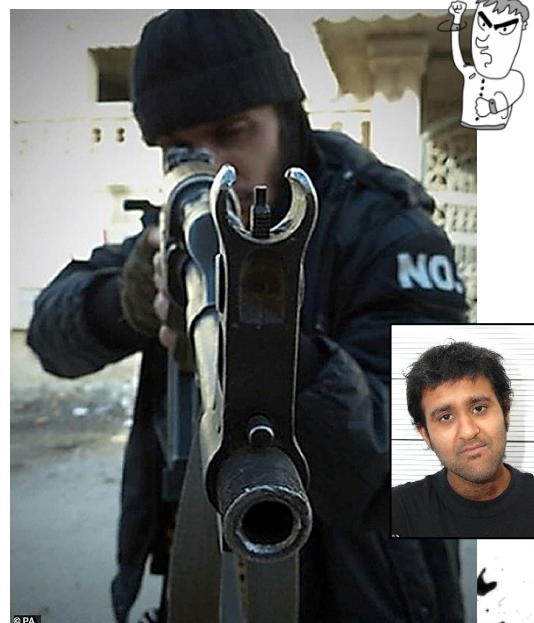
## 'Dangerous' British terrorist who went to Syria intent on 'martyrdom on the battlefield' is set to be released from UK jail after serving just 10 years of his 12-year sentence

Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12570781/british-terrorist-released-uk-jail.html>

Sep 28 – A British terrorist who travelled to [Syria](#) intent on 'martyrdom' is set to be released from jail after serving just 10 years of a 12-year sentence.

Mohammed Nahin Ahmed and his childhood friend Yusuf Zubair Sarwar were both jailed in 2014 and branded 'dangerous' by the trial judge after pleading guilty of joining a jihadi group in Syria.

The men, both 22, pleaded guilty to one count of engaging in preparation of terrorism acts contrary to Section 5 of the Terrorism Act. They were both sentenced to 12 years and eight months with an extended licence period of five years.



MailOnline [revealed in July](#) that Sarwar, now aged 31, was released from jail on licence after a Parole Board hearing in April 2022. He was required to serve two-thirds of his custodial sentence before being considered for release.

Sarwar had only served nine years of his 12 years and eight months sentence.

MailOnline can now confirm that Ahmed, also 31, has been granted a parole hearing on the 6th December and could be freed before the end of 2023. He would have served just over 10 years in jail.

A spokesperson for the Parole Board said: 'An oral hearing has been listed for the parole review of Mohammed Nahin Ahmed and is scheduled to take place in December 2023.

'Parole Board decisions are solely focused on what risk a prisoner could represent to the public if released and whether that risk is manageable in the community.

'A panel will carefully examine a huge range of evidence, including details of the original crime, and any evidence of behaviour change, as well as explore the harm done and impact the crime has had on the victims.

'Members read and digest hundreds of pages of evidence and reports in the lead up to an oral hearing.

'Evidence from witnesses including probation officers, psychiatrists and psychologists, officials supervising the offender in prison as well as victim personal statements are then given at the hearing.

'The prisoner and witnesses are then questioned at length during the hearing which often lasts a full day or more.

'Parole reviews are undertaken thoroughly and with extreme care. Protecting the public is our number one priority.'

In terms of Ahmed's parole bid, it is more contentious as he had an application to be released on licence rejected by the Parole Board in July 2021. No reason has been published for the decision.

Parole Board decisions are solely focused on whether a prisoner would represent a 'significant risk to the public after release.'

The Parole Board adds: 'It is up to the offender to demonstrate that they are safe for release, and that is hard to do.'

In 2021, the parole hearing decided Ahmed was still too dangerous to be released.

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Bravo UK! ISIS will highly appreciate adherence to laws!

## Somali piracy, once an unsolvable security threat, has almost completely stopped. Here's why

By Peter Viggo Jakobsen (Associate professor, Royal Danish Defence College)

Source: <https://theconversation.com/somali-piracy-once-an-unsolvable-security-threat-has-almost-completely-stopped-heres-why-213872>

Sep 27 – In 2011, pirates carried out [212 attacks](#) in a vast area spanning Somali waters, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, actions that the World Bank said cost the world economy [US\\$18 billion a year](#).

Armed pirates hijacked ships as far away as 1,000 nautical miles from the Somali coast. They held the ships and crews for ransom. The World Bank estimates that Somali pirates received [more than US\\$400 million](#) in ransom payments between 2005 and 2012.

The piracy problem appeared unsolvable. Anti-piracy naval missions undertaken by the world's most formidable navies, and self-protection measures adopted by the shipping industry, didn't seem to work. It

was, therefore, generally held that the solution lay ashore: major state-building in Somalia to remove the root causes of piracy.

The only problem was that no one was willing to undertake such a mission in the wake of America's failures in [Afghanistan and Iraq](#). And then there was an astonishing turnaround. The number of attacks fell to 10 in 2012 and only [two ships were hijacked](#) between 2013 and 2023.

For three decades, I have conducted research on international diplomacy, military strategy, use of force and peacebuilding. Together with a colleague specialising in military strategy, I [analysed the Somali piracy case](#). Academics and practitioners agree that four factors interacted to stop the pirates:





1. the conduct and coordination of several anti-piracy naval operations by the world's most capable navies, including all [five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council](#): the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China
2. the implementation of costly self-protection measures, not least the use of armed guards, by most flag states and shipping owners
3. development of a comprehensive legal toolbox enabling pirate prosecution and imprisonment
4. regional capacity-building making it possible to imprison pirates regionally and in Somalia.

The surprising thing is not that the four measures on their own proved sufficient to stop Somali piracy. What makes the Somali case special is the international community's ability to agree to them and pay for their implementation.

The Somali case is important because it's one of the few success stories in recent years where the use of limited force contributed to a sustainable outcome. Further, Somali pirates were stopped even though the conditions onshore in Somalia didn't improve in any major way.

### Collective action

Theoretically, the international community's collective effort shouldn't have happened because safety from piracy is a [costly public good](#). This means that it's very expensive to provide but no one can be prevented from enjoying it once it has been produced. The result is a [collective action problem](#) that's rarely overcome in international politics. Most actors prefer to free-ride rather than contribute to the production of the public good.

With respect to Somali piracy, all states and shipping owners had an incentive to leave it to others to solve the problem for them. The implementation of the four factors was very expensive for the states contributing to naval operations, and for shipowners who had to pay for self-protection measures, including hiring of armed guards.

[Our study](#) sought to understand how and why the collective action problem was overcome. The hope was to learn something that could help with overcoming similar problems in the future.

### What worked

We found that three factors explain why the amount of free-riding was minimised in the Somali case.

The first was that the Somali pirates attacked ships belonging to all five permanent members of the UN Security Council and all the major shipping companies. This induced France to take the lead in military action against the pirates. The US subsequently led with



respect to formulating a comprehensive strategy to implement the four factors presented earlier.

The involvement of European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato) in the anti-piracy naval operations made it hard for member states not to contribute. A total of 18 member states contributed ships. China and Russia supported the American-led strategy and launched their own naval operations because their ships were attacked as well.

Second, the US established an institution, the Contact Group on Somali Piracy, tailor-made to formulate and implement a broad anti-piracy strategy. The US handpicked who would lead various working groups so that it contained all the actors – state and non-state – that were required to implement the necessary measures. These actors provided the

expertise and the material resources required to implement the four factors presented earlier.

Third, the Somalia federal government and federal member states cooperated closely with anti-piracy efforts. They allowed the use of force against pirates in its national waters and on land. Somali authorities also cooperated with respect to the construction and running of pirate prisons paid for by international donors. This made it possible to overcome the piracy problem without engaging in the major state-building operation that had generally been viewed as a necessary condition for success when the piracy problem peaked in 2011.



### Shared interests

Unfortunately, this success story will be hard to replicate. Somali piracy aligned great power, as well as private sector, regional and local state interests to an unusual degree. This is, for example, not the case in the [Gulf of Guinea](#) off the west African coast. Here, local states are less cooperative with respect to tackling piracy than Somali governmental actors were.

It's also not the case with respect to tackling the [coups in west Africa](#), where Russia, the three western members of the UN Security Council and regional states have conflicting interests.

It was the high degree of shared interests among the many actors involved that made the Somali anti-piracy campaign so effective.

## 'Dangerous' Coventry student found guilty of building lethal drone for ISIS terrorists

Source: <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/dangerous-coventry-student-found-guilty-27804358>

Sep 28 – Coventry student has been found guilty of building a drone for terrorists. Mohamad Al-Bared hand-made the drone specifically to transport an explosive or chemical weapon into enemy territory for ISIS. The device was seized when police raided Al-Bared's home in Kare Road home on January 31. They also took a 3D printer and several devices including phones and laptop. Painstaking analysis of the devices revealed a series of alarming conversations that highlighted his support for ISIS as well as extremist material and violent propaganda videos.

They also found notebooks detailing chemical equations and recipes for chemical weapons. Despite Al-Bared having studied mechanical and chemical engineering, it emerged that the chemicals referenced were to be used as weapons rather than as part of his PhD studies.

His devices also revealed conversations on how he had researched and worked out how to get the drone into a war zone without being stopped by authorities. The 26-year-old had also set up a bogus company so he could pretend to be travelling on business. Following a trial at Birmingham Crown Court, today (September 28) a jury found him guilty of preparing acts of terrorism after building a drone with the intention of supplying it to a banned terrorist organisation. He will now be sentenced on November 27.



### 'Calculated and very dangerous'

Speaking after the verdict, Detective Chief Superintendent Mark Payne, Head of Counter Terrorism Policing West Midlands, said: "Al-Bared was a calculated individual and coupled with his education and expertise in mechanical and chemical engineering he was clearly very dangerous. He has made a purpose-built drone able to carry explosives or chemicals to be used as a weapon in a war zone. "Thankfully he was unable to continue his efforts following his swift arrest earlier this year. The jury heard how security-conscious he was, going to great lengths to try to hide anything that might lead to his identification.

"Today's verdict means a dangerous individual has been taken off our streets. There is no place in our society for individuals intent on participating in terrorism activity. "We will continue to work with partners and the CPS to protect our communities by pursuing and prosecuting such individuals. We work tirelessly to counter terrorism. Our absolute priority is to ensure the safety and security of the people who live, work and visit the West Midlands area."

## The Southern Border Poses Terrorism Risks. Homegrown Threats Still Loom Larger

By Jacob Ware

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230929-the-southern-border-poses-terrorism-risks-homegrown-threats-still-loom-larger>

Sep 29 – Recent reporting and opinion articles have raised fears of illegal immigrants crossing the southern border to commit terrorist attacks in the United States on behalf of foreign actors. "The reality is that [President Joe Biden's] open border is the gravest terrorist threat to the homeland in years," Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR), for instance, wrote in a Fox [article](#) commemorating the twenty-second anniversary of the



9/11 attacks. The comment followed an August news piece in [CNN](#) that revealed more than a dozen Uzbek migrants had sought asylum at the southern border, having “traveled with the help of a smuggler with ties to ISIS.”

Those arguments highlighting the threat of terrorist attacks by illegal immigrants overlook three important points of context. First, although such fears can never be completely dismissed, to date they have been mostly hypothetical, as there is [scant evidence](#) that illegal immigrants have committed acts of terrorism in the United States. For instance, of the 3,203 offenders in the University of Maryland’s [Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States](#) dataset, only nineteen (less than 0.6 percent) are listed as “Undocumented Resident.” Most modern acts of American terrorism directed or inspired by foreign terrorist organizations—such as ISIS-inspired attacks in the cities of San Bernardino, Orlando, and New York between 2015 and 2017—are instead committed by “[homegrown](#)” legal immigrants or U.S. citizens. This was in fact a [deliberate strategy](#) pursued by groups such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State, which calculated—correctly—that it would be far easier to inspire lone actors in the United States than attempt to send operatives into the country. As the Pulse nightclub in Orlando can attest, [lone American jihadists](#) can cause plenty of damage without needing to be smuggled across the border. Meanwhile, each of the 9/11 attackers flew into U.S. ports of entry and were in the country legally (albeit with two [having overstayed their visas](#)). Second, fear of illegal immigrants committing acts of terrorism is not entirely unfounded, but it has previously manifested in unexpected ways. In recent years, the most high-profile terrorism incidents involving illegal immigrants have in fact both been perpetrated by Canadian far-right extremists—an anti-government extremist who [attempted to attack](#) Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) in the build-up to the 2022 midterms, and a neo-Nazi who crossed the northern border and joined a white supremacist terrorist organization known as “The Base” in 2020, planning [to attack](#) a gun rights rally in Richmond. In the former attack, the would-be murderer had legally entered the United States as a temporary visitor through the San Ysidro port of entry in 2008, then overstayed his legally permitted stay. The latter incident, conversely, involved perhaps precisely the scenario many now fear at the southern border—an [international terrorist organization](#) deliberately [smuggling an operative](#) across a U.S. border with the intention to commit a [significant act of terrorism](#) against civilians. Of note, the Base conforms to the so-called [accelerationist](#) strategy of violent extremism, which seeks to conduct random acts of violence in order to accelerate the onset of an apocalyptic civil war. This far-right attack, accordingly, aimed to kill Second Amendment proponents in order to spark a broader conflagration between rallygoers and police in Richmond.

And finally, immigration does lead to a rise in terrorism, but—again perhaps counterintuitively—this violence has been largely [white supremacist in nature, not jihadist](#), with data analysis from the University of Pennsylvania’s Richard J. McAlexander [suggesting](#) “there is little evidence to support the common claim that letting in more immigrants means letting in more terrorists.” Instead, inflammatory rhetoric against immigrants contributes to the racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) “[Great Replacement](#)” theory, which claims that Jews and Marxists are orchestrating a deliberate replacement of white people in Western countries, operationalized through immigration and minority political power. The theory has directly led to catastrophic RMVE violence in communities such as [Pittsburgh](#), [El Paso](#), [Buffalo](#), and [Jacksonville](#) over the past five years.

The Pittsburgh terrorist, who murdered eleven worshippers at the Tree of Life synagogue in October 2018, directly cited immigration at the southern border as a central inspiration for his attack. “[Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] likes to bring invaders in that kill our people,” he wrote on far-right social media site Gab. “I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I’m going in.” The El Paso terrorist, who murdered twenty-three primarily Latino shoppers at a Walmart in August 2019, having traveled to the border town explicitly in search of immigrants, was arguably even more blunt: “This attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas.” RMVE terrorists [have killed more Americans than jihadists](#) since 9/11—and pose an imminent threat not just to minority communities, but also the [federal government](#) as well as [the Republican Party](#).

This data suggests that the issues of immigration and terrorism are indeed linked, but the problem is in fact far more nuanced than some commentators suggest. There are, then, at least three conclusions from the preceding analysis. First, the United States should, indeed, carefully watch for terrorism suspects entering the country, but the greatest threats will likely attempt to enter legally—or were born here. Second, the United States’ northern border at least historically has proven to be a comparable source of documented instances of politically motivated violence as the southern border, which consumes disproportionate attention in this febrile, polarized political environment. And third, a broader effort should be undertaken to counter the dehumanization of immigrants in American political rhetoric and finally enact much-needed immigration law reforms that would make the border less of a partisan, political flashpoint.

A porous southern border does provide an opportunity for jihadist terrorist organizations to send operatives to the United States. But for now, the most serious terrorist danger still comes from lone-actor RMVEs, radicalized online here inside the United States, attacking soft targets using firearms—as displayed to such heartbreaking effect just weeks ago in [Jacksonville](#).

Jacob Ware is research fellow at Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).





## Assessing the Risks of Existential Terrorism and AI

By J. T. Stone

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230929-assessing-the-risks-of-existential-terrorism-and-ai>

Sep 29 – Gary Ackerman, an associate professor and associate dean at the [College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity](#) (CEHC), has spent decades studying terrorism around the world — from the motivations and capabilities of terrorist groups to the mitigation strategies governments use to defend against them.

Last month, Ackerman published an article in the *European Journal of Risk Regulation* that gained a substantial amount of media attention: “[Existential Terrorism: Can Terrorists Destroy Humanity?](#)” The paper, which Ackerman co-authored with Zachary Kallenborn of the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) (CSIS), explores the plausibility of terrorist organizations using emerging technologies such as AI to enact existential harm, including human extinction.

Recently, a shorter version of the article, including various illustrative scenarios, was published by the [Irregular Warfare Initiative](#). News outlets such as [Forbes](#) and [Newsweek](#) have highlighted the research.

Ackerman has headed more than 10 large government-sponsored research projects over the past five years to address counterterrorism policy and operations, and has testified before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security about terrorist motivations for using nuclear weapons. He is also a senior investigator and co-founder of the nation’s first [Center for Advanced Red Teaming](#) (CART) housed at CEHC.

We caught up with Ackerman to learn more about existential terrorism and the threats it poses, what’s being done to prevent the use of AI as a weapon, and why he found it necessary to publish an article about this topic now.

### J. T. Stone: How Do You Define Existential Terrorism?

**Gary Ackerman:** We define existential terrorism as terrorism that will cause sufficient harm to the continuation of humanity, either by wiping out the population completely or reducing it to an unviable quantity. Another understanding of existential risk that we discuss is the prevention of human flourishing, in which the human species gets stuck in a cycle where it cannot grow, such as in a global totalitarian society that oppresses all of mankind. But for the purposes of our research, we define existential terrorism as terrorism that brings about (or comes close to bringing about) human extinction.

When people think about what could destroy humanity, they think of climate change, nuclear war or a pandemic, and not usually terrorism. Some people argue that terrorism at that scale is something seen only in science fiction or James Bond movies. We initially had the same reaction, but then we realized that no one has really taken this topic seriously. So we decided to take a more in-depth look at whether terrorists could ever cause a degree of harm that could put the existence of humanity in jeopardy.

### Stone: How Does Emerging Tech Like AI Contribute to the Threat of Existential Terrorism?

**Ackerman:** It’s really impossible for an individual or small group of terrorists to destroy humanity in most cases unless they have an extreme amount of leverage. One of the ways they can get leverage is through an enabling technology like AI, because it can act as a force multiplier, potentially even to cause harm at an extinction level. One example would be if terrorists hacked into an existing AI, say, that controlled nuclear weapons systems and set off nuclear war.

Another option would be if terrorists created a malevolent AI and instructed it to destroy humanity, although this option might be extremely difficult to do and remains highly speculative. This is because we don’t yet have the kind of AI that could destroy humanity on its own, and we don’t really know how far we are from that point — it could be five years, 50 years or maybe never.

The only current technology that terrorists could feasibly produce and deploy on their own to cause an existential threat is biotechnology. An example of this is if terrorists created a pandemic disease that was self-replicating, extremely contagious and caused high mortality rates, but this would require extremely high technical knowledge and specialized equipment. This explains why terrorists directly causing the end of humanity is very unlikely.

On the other hand, terrorists could cause harm indirectly by removing safeguards or preventing us from minimizing other risks. For example, terrorists could sabotage a rocket that we might send into space to divert a comet away from the Earth or remove safeguards that prevented an existing AI from going rogue. We call acts like these “spoilers,” which we believe are much more plausible than terrorists causing existential harm directly. Fortunately, these require an existential risk to have already manifested on its own, which means that terrorists could not bring about this kind of harm completely on their own.

### Stone: Why Did You Feel It Was Necessary to Publish an Article About This Topic?

**Ackerman:** A lot of people dismiss these hypothetical scenarios as crazy or too far-fetched. Even if we find that there’s not much of a threat, which is essentially what we have found to be the case at this moment, it’s still worth considering such scenarios, so that we’re prepared for future emerging threats, like



AI. Even from this initial research, we now understand some of these emerging threats better and that there are some areas where existential harm from terrorists is feasible, such as in the case of spoilers.

The other reason we explored existential terrorism is that by exploring the most extreme scenarios, we can better calibrate the likelihood of less extreme cases of terrorism. Overall, we found that although there are definitely people who would like to destroy humanity, it's not something that I would lose sleep over at the moment. But, at some point, they theoretically could succeed, so it's important to know what the threat might look like and what we can do to prevent it.

#### Stone: What's Being Done to Prevent the Potential Use of AI as a Weapon?

**Ackerman:** Not much has been done specifically to prevent AI from being used as a weapon on a human extinction scale. However, there's been a lot of work about AI risk and risk prevention published by think tanks like the [Global Catastrophic Risk Institute](#) (GCRI), where I'm also a senior advisor. In March, [over 1,000 industry leaders, researchers and tech CEOs](#) signed an [open letter](#) calling for a six-month moratorium on the development of advanced AI systems, citing AI's profound risks to society and humanity. But most of the action taken by Congress, at least in the United States, has focused more on addressing the other risks of AI, like displacing jobs or being used by our adversaries to design better weapons. Very few people in our government are seriously looking at AI as an existential problem, even though people are slowly becoming aware of these potential threats. There's a legitimate worry that the smarter we make systems, even if they don't quite get to sentience, the more likely they could become a major risk.

Broadly speaking, we have to think of AI as a global issue. We may have disagreements with other countries, but neither Russia, China nor any of the United States' other rivals have any interest in the world being destroyed. When it comes to threats of existential terrorism or climate change for that matter, we need global cooperation. Even if we compete with each other, our fights will mean nothing if none of us are around.

#### Stone: How Does This Work Fit into CEHC's Larger Research Portfolio?

**Ackerman:** Part of our goal at CEHC is to think about threats to the future and how to prevent them. CEHC tries to be on the cutting edge of new ideas, whether it relates to emergency preparedness or national security. Existential terrorism is not really the core of my research and this piece addresses much more extreme and speculative scenarios than I usually explore, but some of these ideas overlap with our day-to-day work. Most of my work is really much more data-focused, such as conducting horizon scans on new technology or building socio-technical models and simulations to analyze how terrorists and other adversaries might use technology to hurt U.S. citizens.

This paper was largely a thought experiment but it seems to have resonated with people. Hopefully, it'll make more people think critically about the issue of existential terrorism to ensure that we don't get surprised at a later date.

J. T. Stone is writer and reviewer at Hot Press Magazine; he studies at SUNY-Albany.

## Pirates wreak havoc on San Francisco Bay with vessels 'stolen and ransacked': ex-harbormaster

Source: <https://nypost.com/2023/10/02/pirates-wreak-havoc-on-san-francisco-bay/>

Oct 02 – Houseboat and yacht residents in the San Francisco Bay have sounded off about [incidents of piracy skyrocketing](#) by marauders pillaging and plundering from their watercrafts — and even stealing entire boats as The Golden City faces a crime crisis.

"The open shoreline of the [Oakland-Alameda] Estuary is littered with sunken wrecks and derelict, end-of-life vessels, and crime has risen to truly intolerable levels," former harbormaster Brock de Lappe said during a San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission enforcement meeting, [according to a Monday Fox News Digital report](#).

"Multiple vessels have been stolen and ransacked. Victims have had to resort to personally confronting the criminals to recover their property without the benefit of police support. Is this appropriate activity for a 79-year-old senior?"

One resident told the outlet she kayaked over to assist a man who was calling for help Tuesday night.

"They're yelling, 'Help me, please, please. Anybody help me.' And I go out there in my kayak with a headlamp, and there is a sailboat drifting down the estuary, and with my kayak I towed it to shore," said the woman, who did not reveal her name because she was afraid of retaliation.

"If there had been any wind at the time I wouldn't have been able to go out there and rescue this young man who had no motor and no ability to sail that boat," she reportedly said. The troubling piracy trend had



struck the Alameda Community Sailing Center, where four of their safety boats, which are worth between \$25,000 and \$35,000 each, had been stolen or destroyed, [Fox Business reported Saturday](#).



#### Locations of thefts:

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ① Jack London Square Marina   | ④ Outboard Motor Shop              |
| ② Marina Village Yacht Harbor | ⑤ Alameda Community Sailing Center |
| ③ Grand Marina                |                                    |

cannot continue our programs without the RIBs and cannot continue without insurance.” The episodes were downplayed by police in an interview with Fox News Digital last week. “Crime is both the perception of crime and the [actual presence](#) of crime,” Nishant Joshi, Chief of Alameda PD, said.

“And I say that because although, of the total incidents that are generated in the city of Alameda, less than one percent of those are attributed to all of our marinas.”

[Suspected bandits use a small boat to board larger ships and yachts in the harbor.](#) Dan Hill

Joshi added police were addressing the piracy complaints with an “increase” of patrols and efforts to “educate” the sea-faring community. Some residents believe the influx of crime in the Oakland



Estuary, the channel that separates Oakland from the suburban island community of Alameda, is coming from homeless residents in Oakland. One person [voiced their suspicions](#) last month after noticing more small boats tied up around a homeless camp in the city’s Union Point Park. Oakland, a city of 433,000 is now home to more than 9,700 homeless people, a 22% increase since before the COVID-19 pandemic, [according to non-profit EveryOne Home](#). “And you wonder, where did they get these boats? Small boats are expensive,” Jamie Camacho said. “Maybe



they're taking what little money they have to buy them, but it's, you know ... I know a lot of friends who have had their small boats disappear and their outboard motors." "We've not done a deep dive into identifying what particular group in society is committing these crimes," Joshi said.

"But I do think that certainly anyone who is in a challenged position will turn to crime when they're desperate."

The Oakland Police Department has only one officer trained to operate the police boat tasked with protecting the waterways around the city. "Fighting crime out here on the water is tough, as we only have one full-time marine officer, and that's myself," Officer Kaleo Albino told CBS Bay Area last month.

"But the city of Oakland Police Department, we tend to make things work with what we have, and I've been training approximately ten other maritime officers on how to operate the vessel. So, the vessel is available more hours than just myself being here."

The Coast Guard has recently been enlisted to help safeguard the area, San Francisco's [ABC affiliate reported](#) last month.

"In the waterways, it's very difficult to draw a line," Joshi said last week. "There are no roadways or fence lines, so we all have a shared interest, much like crime as a whole, to deal with this as a regional approach."

The beefed up patrols came after ship resident Michael West told CBS he and his neighbors were taking matters into their own hands instead of calling authorities.

"Someone in this marina had to defend themselves with guns against the pirates. And that's where it is right now," West said on Sept. 10. "Everybody here has a gun or knife or a sword or a stick or something, you know, to protect themselves."

Violent crime in San Francisco surged 12% last month, compared to August 2022, [according to statistics from the San Francisco Police Department](#) — with robbery up a whopping 31%.

Burglary, however, dropped 17% in August, compared to the same month last year, the statistics show.

## Highly educated Islamic terrorists – Challenges notion that education is a deterrent to terrorism

Source: <https://hindupost.in/crime/highly-educated-terrorists-challenges-notion-that-education-is-a-deterrent-to-terrorism/>

Oct 04 – Recent arrests of three suspected ISIS terrorists with impressive academic qualifications indicate that education has nothing to do with being radicalised or wanting to become terror enablers/terrorists. In fact, Islamist indoctrination of a high-IQ, well-educated person can amplify the terror threat and make the job of security agencies that much harder. Unless the religious indoctrination infrastructure is dismantled, just providing more education opportunities puts the entire nation at risk.

On Monday, October 2, the Delhi Police Special [Cell](#) revealed the arrest of a 32-year-old terrorist, Shahnawaz Alam, who had been on the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) list of most-wanted suspects due to his alleged role in a Pune module associated with the banned extremist organization, [Islamic State](#) (IS). In a series of raids at various locations in UP, two of his accomplices, identified as Mohammad Rizwan Ashraf and Mohammad Arshad Warsi, were also arrested. According to police reports, these three individuals were conspiring to execute terrorist attacks/explosions in Delhi (specifically at [Akshardham](#)) and Ayodhya ahead of the upcoming festival season. Additionally, they had identified Chabad House in Mumbai as one of their potential targets – all this under the directives of overseas-based handlers affiliated with the Islamic State (IS).

### Who are these educated terrorists?

Shahnawaz Alam (31), considered the most wanted among them, came from a middle-class family in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, where his father served as a government school teacher. Despite his modest background, Shahnawaz received an education that should have paved the way for a promising future.

Clearing the AIEEE, he secured admission to the prestigious NIT Visveswaraya in Nagpur, earning a BTech in Mining Engineering in 2016. Following graduation, he moved to Delhi to prepare for the SSC examination. During this period, Shahnawaz attended lectures by Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) at Shaheen Bagh, and it was here that he became influenced by ISIS ideology, according to police sources.

The second ISIS operative, Md. Arshad also came from a middle-class family in Garhwa, Jharkhand, with his father working as a government school teacher. Arshad pursued his education at Aligarh Muslim University, earning a BTech in Mechanical Engineering. He later moved to Delhi, where he studied at Jamia Millia University, completed an MBA, and pursued a PhD in Islamic Principles in Management.

The third operative, Md. Rizwan Ashraf had a somewhat different background. Born in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, he received his initial education in Uttar Pradesh before pursuing an Alimiyat in Arabic in 2009. Ashraf also held a BTech in Information Technology, which he completed in Noida in 2017.



## MODULE WANTED TO CARRY OUT STRIKES IN DELHI, AYODHYA

Photo: Rajesh Mehta

➤ Special Cell has busted an 'ISIS-inspired' terror module, arrested three members and claimed it was in final stage of carrying out terror strikes



➤ Module wanted to carry out high-intensity blasts in Delhi (Akshardham) and Ayodhya



➤ All three arrested men are engineers, one of them was on NIA's most wanted list with a reward on his head



➤ Incriminating material, including chemicals used for fabrication of IEDs, seized from them



➤ TOI had reported last week that the agencies had closed in on this module

### 3 Men From Delhi Wanted For 'Planning Terror Strikes For IS'

Countrywide Raids On, NIA Sleuths Say Closing In On One Of Them



Shahnawaz, Warsi and Rizwan have been arrested

## MAIN CHARACTERS

### Mohammed Shah Nawaz Alam

➤ BTech in mining from NIT Visvesvaraya, Nagpur, in 2016

➤ Stayed in Abu Fazal Enclave in Delhi, got radicalised on Telegram

➤ Was arrested in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, in multiple cases of dacoity and theft in 2019 and remained in jail for 8-9 months

➤ In December 2020, he got bail from jail

➤ Started communicating with

a foreign-based handler on Telegram

➤ Got married to Baanti Patel in Aligarh in 2022



➤ Prepared IEDs and tested them in Delhi and Rajasthan

➤ Met with other Pune module members in April

➤ Got caught during a raid in July in Pune, escaped from custody

➤ NIA declared a reward of ₹3 lakh on his arrest

### Arshad Warsi

➤ BTech in mechanical stream, moved to Delhi and studied at Jamia Millia Islamia

➤ Completed his MBA in marketing & operations (2016-18)

➤ Was currently pursuing PhD from Jamia in Islamic principles in management

➤ Also working as a physics teacher at Orchid Institute, Jamia Nagar; provided home tuitions in science and mathematics

➤ Warsi came in contact with Shah Nawaz during religious programmes in Jamia Nagar

### Mohammed Rizwan Ashraf

➤ Born in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in a middle-class family

➤ Completed BTech (IT) from a college in Ghaziabad in 2017

➤ He took a pledge to join ISIS through his Pak-based handler

**SEIZURES** Plastic canes containing chemicals, glass bottles containing acid, small steel balls, matchstick boxes, iron pipes, electronic weighing machine, thermometer, raw material like powder of different colours, electrical tapes, remote key, LED decoration lights, 2 batteries of 9 volts and connectors, timer watch, crackers, mobile phones, maps of India

These cases are not isolated; there are numerous examples of "highly educated" Islamic terrorists involved in extremist activities. Here is a list:

- Yasin [Bhatkal](#) alias Syed Ahmed Zarar Siddibappa, co-founder and leader of the Indian Mujahideen, possessed an engineering degree. Yasin played a prominent role in several significant acts of terrorism, including the 2010 Pune bombing, the 2010 Bangalore stadium bombing, the 2011 Mumbai bombings, the 2012 Pune bombings, and the 2013 Hyderabad blasts.
- Mohammed Asghar [Peerbhoy](#), who played a significant role in the Indian Mujahideen's media activities, was a principal software engineer at Yahoo. Peerbhoy, 31, led a "media terror cell" composed of highly educated and tech-savvy individuals from respectable families. They crafted emails sent just before or after the bombings in Delhi, Ahmedabad (Gujarat), and Jaipur (Rajasthan).
- Hafiz Muhammad [Saeed](#), the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba, held multiple master's degrees. Saeed possesses two master's degrees from the University of Punjab and a specialisation in Islamic Studies and Arabic Language from King Saud University.





- Yakub [Memon](#), educated in an English-medium school, graduated with a degree in commerce and became a chartered accountant; he was involved in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts – he was the accused number 1.
- Osama bin [Laden](#), mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, studied economics and business administration at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah. Some [reports](#) suggest he earned a civil engineering degree in 1979 and attended an English-language course in Oxford, England, in 1971.
- Ahmad Murtaza [Abbasi](#), an IIT graduate in chemical engineering, was involved in the Gorakhnath temple attack.

●► [Read the full article at the source's URL.](#)

## There Are No Rules

By Anne Applebaum (*The Atlantic*)

Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2023/10/israel-war-hamas-terrorism-ukraine-russia/675590/>

The “rules-based world order” is a system of norms and values that describe how the world ought to work, not how it actually works. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and Hamas’s surprise attack on Israeli civilians are both blatant rejections of that rules-based world order, and they herald something new. Both aggressors have deployed a sophisticated, militarized, modern form of terrorism, and they do not feel apologetic or embarrassed about this at all. Terrorists, by definition, are not fighting conventional wars and do not obey the laws of war. Instead, they deliberately create fear and chaos among civilian populations. Although terrorist tactics are usually associated with small revolutionary movements or clandestine groups, terrorism is now simply part of the way Russia fights wars. Although a sovereign state and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia first began deliberately hitting civilian targets in Syria in 2015, including power stations, water plants, and above all hospitals and medical facilities, 25 of which were hit in a single month in 2019. These attacks were unquestionably war crimes, and those who chose the targets knew they were war crimes. Some of the hospitals had shared their coordinates with the UN to avoid being hit. Instead, Russian and Syrian government forces [may have used that information to find them](#).

## US has its 'boot on the neck' of ISIS, but concerns it could grow in Afghanistan remain

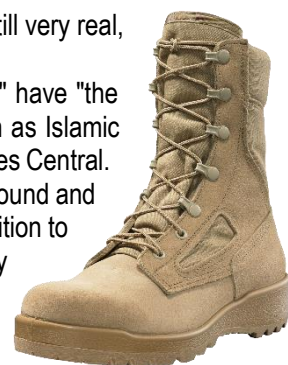


By Mike Brest (Defense Reporter)

Source: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/defense-national-security/us-isis-syria-concerns-could-resurrect-afghanistan>

Oct 04 – The threat the [Islamic State](#) terror group poses to the United States is limited at this point but still very real, according to a top military official.

U.S. forces are “in a good spot right now” as it relates to ISIS’s status in [Syria](#) but do “not necessarily” have “the touch of everything that’s going on” as it relates to the [Afghanistan](#) branch of the Islamic State, known as Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K), according to Lt. Gen. Alexis Grynkewich, commander of U.S. Air Forces Central. “ISIS probably isn’t something to worry about. We’ve got them down — visually, I think of being on the ground and we’ve got our boot on their neck, if you will. So they’re not in a position, ISIS in Syria, they’re not in a position to take significant action against us,” he said during a Defense Writers Group event on Wednesday. “They do have a fair number of cells. They’ve got a few senior leaders, they’ve got a few training grounds that are beyond the area where coalition forces routinely operate.”



The U.S. still conducts operations against ISIS fighters, including 36 operations in August, which resulted in the deaths of 7 ISIS operatives and the apprehension of 25 more, Central Command said. U.S. forces most recently captured Mamduh Ibrahim al-Haji Shaykh, whom CENTCOM spokesman Lt. Col. Troy Garlock described as an “ISIS facilitator,” in a successful helicopter raid in northern Syria last week.

Grynkewich stressed the significance of a number of prisons across northeast Syria housing “roughly 10,000 ISIS prisoners” that “could easily be freed if we don’t keep them secure.”

In January 2022, ISIS fighters launched a prison break at Gweiran Prison and the fighting went on for days until the Syrian Democratic Forces and coalition forces were able to end it. Dozens were killed on both sides in the more than week-long fight.



## ICI C<sup>2</sup>BRNE DIARY – October 2023

Another concern for the U.S. is the internally displaced persons camps in Syria that house tens of thousands of people. The U.S. has pushed countries to [repatriate](#) its citizens from these camps in order to reintegrate them back into society. Military personnel have described the children who live in these camps as a potential future generation of ISIS fighters, emphasizing the importance of the repatriation efforts.

The U.S. military is also following ISIS-K's development in Afghanistan from afar following its exit after two decades of war in August 2021. U.S. Central Command Commander Gen. [Michael "Erik" Kurilla](#) told lawmakers in March that ISIS-K will have the ability to launch attacks against U.S. interests outside the country in less than six months "with little to no warning."

Grynkewich on Wednesday concurred with Kurilla's assessment, acknowledged there's "been an increase in risk," and said he thinks "it is likely that ISIS-K has the desire, and in some cases, the capability to do external operations."

"We've seen some of that regionally. I don't think there's a threat beyond the region right now. But ISIS-K certainly has aspirations to go farther," he added. "They're likely one of the most capable elements of ISIS right now and something that we need to keep a close eye on. We've got a good feel overall of what their capabilities are. But again, you always want more, right."

ISIS-K has claimed responsibility for a handful of attacks in Pakistan that are "concerning" to Grynkewich, noting that such attacks are indicators that U.S. forces look for to determine an adversary's capabilities.

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** I hate pompous titles! Are we sure that we have the boot on the ISIS neck? The same way with the boot on the Taliban's neck?

## A combination of training and a brave heart gives birth to heroes



**Inbar Lieberman**, 25, the security coordinator of [Kibbutz Nir Am](#) since December 2022, has emerged as a symbol of unwavering courage and determination.

Early on a fateful Saturday, as the terrorists' explosive sounds shattered the peace of Nir Am, Inbar knew that this attack was unlike the typical rocket assaults that had become a grim routine for the region.

The distinctive nature of the threat urged Inbar into swift action.



## Kibbutz Nir Am



She dashed to open the armory, equipping her 12-member security team (her husband among them) with firearms and coordinating their response to the unfolding attack.

In an incredible act of valor, Inbar positioned her squad strategically across the settlement and devised ambushes that took the gunmen by surprise, turning the tide of the assault.

Over a span of four hours and despite the odds stacked against her, Lieberman killed five terrorists single-handedly, while her compatriots took down an additional 20, as reported by *Walla News*. The praise for her heroism was not limited to her community alone. Social media echoed with admiration for Inbar

Lieberman, recognizing her actions as nothing short of legendary. Nir Am was among the few communities that the  [Hamas terrorists](#)  attempted to breach but were firmly repulsed.



## Israel's 9/11? How Hamas Terrorist Attacks Will Change the Middle East

By Bruce Hoffman and Jacob Ware

Source: <https://warontherocks.com/2023/10/israels-9-11-how-hamas-terrorist-attacks-will-change-the-middle-east/>



Oct 10 – **Perhaps the most surprising part of Hamas' devastating cross-border attack was its complexity.** Rarely in history has a terrorist organization been able to fight from the air, sea, and land. Both  [al-Qaeda](#)  and the  [Tamil Tigers](#)  in Sri Lanka had similar capabilities but even they were incapable of launching simultaneous, coordinated assaults utilizing all three. Hamas, working alongside Palestine Islamic Jihad, and, per the *Wall Street Journal's*  [reporting](#) , supported and guided by Iran, the patron and financier of both, has now achieved an infamous notoriety. The potential for this war to expand to three fronts, should Hizballah decide to attack Israel from the north — as it did when Israel and Hamas clashed over Gaza in 2006 — and for violence to erupt from Palestinians on the Israeli-



occupied West Bank, would gravely complicate an already complex and fraught situation. Should Israel decide to strike Iran or Tehran decide to intervene more directly in the conflict, the consequences would be catastrophic for the region. With terrorist groups as far afield as Afghanistan pledging to support Hamas, the introduction of a diverse array of foreign fighters cannot be discounted either. For Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad, the timing was propitious. For months, Israel has been beset with internecine political fights. These internal frictions were progressively sharpened by greater polarization, highly controversial proposed judicial reforms, political vituperation, sustained mass protests, and boycotts of military service by reservists. Meanwhile, the Israeli government was nevertheless seeking normalization of relations with several countries across the Arab and Muslim worlds, with some success. Terrorists are always studying their enemies and probing for opportunities to strike precisely when their opponents are distracted or preoccupied with other matters. It was thus the perfect storm in Israel for Hamas, given the current government's fractious coalition, its unpopularity with many Israelis, the prime minister's ongoing legal travails, and the recent clashes both on the Temple Mount, which is sacred to both Muslims and Jews, and in the West Bank.

The surprise terrorist attacks that shattered Israel on Oct. 7 are without precedent. And, this war, which will surely escalate and likely have wide-ranging and longstanding repercussions, will be a watershed moment in national, regional, and international security on par with the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. Much will depend on Israel's next steps, with options likely ranging from a ground invasion of the Gaza Strip to perhaps a more ambitious and consequential strike directly against Iran. Either eventuality will reshape the Middle East for the foreseeable future — not least by likely derailing the Abraham Accords peace talks, as Hamas and Iran clearly intended.

### A Barbaric Attack on Israel's Civilians — and a Stunning Intelligence Failure

The failure of Israeli intelligence — arguably among the most sophisticated in the world — to detect the preparations and logistical staging that [were likely months in the planning](#) will result in independent inquiries, systemic reforms, and a new mindset regarding security and homeland defense.

It is hard not to draw a parallel with the other epic intelligence failure in Israel's history — the 1973 Yom Kippur War. And, the fact that these attacks occurred nearly 50 years later to the day makes this comparison even more compelling. But, with at least [700 killed, 2,000 wounded](#), and hundreds more missing and presumed being held captive in Gaza, the scope and magnitude of this weekend's surprise attacks will almost certainly approach — if not surpass — the 2,656 killed and 9,000 wounded half a century ago. Viewed from another perspective, Saturday's casualty toll alone was already double the number of Israelis killed on the worst day of the Yom Kippur War: [Oct. 7, 1973](#).

In terms of population proportions, this conflict will be much worse than the attacks suffered by the United States on 9/11. Indeed, much like in 2001 when many Americans knew someone or someone who knew someone who died at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, or on United Flight 93, Israelis will all be grieving the loss of relatives, friends, and neighbors. In the first day alone, it is the equivalent of if 20,000 Americans had been killed on 9/11. [Even in the darkest days of the Yom Kippur War](#), the Egyptian and Syrian armies never pierced the defensive ring around the country maintained by the Israel Defense Forces. Civilians then were not hunted down in their own homes and murdered, sexually assaulted, and wantonly killed and kidnapped. These recent events will forever change the security calculus of Israel in assuring the safety of its population. Having once seemed practical and effective, Israel's "[mowing the grass](#)" counterterrorism strategy now appears unforgivably short sighted and insufficient and will surely be replaced by a far harsher regime.

This situation arguably was foretold [35 years ago in Hamas' covenant](#). Just as Hitler's genocidal intentions toward the Jews in his 1923 book, *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*, were ignored or dismissed as bluster, so too have Hamas' identical intentions. "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it," is how the document begins. Article 7 then clearly states, "The Day of Judgement will not come about until Moslems fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Moslems, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him." And, Article 13 completely disdains negotiations or a peaceful resolution of Jewish and Palestinian territorial claims. "There is no solution for the Palestinian question," the covenant proclaims, "except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors." Nor are these words historical artifacts. Every Hamas "military" communiqué since the attacks began has ended with the words, "It is a jihad of victory or martyrdom."

[Many commentators](#) have rightly decried the attack as terrorism. And, Hamas has long been designated by the U.S. Department of State, at least half a dozen other countries, and two international organizations as a terrorist organization. But the reports of indiscriminate executions of civilians, sexual crimes, and the young, old, and disabled being dragged into captivity make even that pejorative label inadequate. Instead, clearer language is needed when civilians are treated like this.

**Pogroms, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and perhaps even crimes against humanity may thus be more accurate** — particularly given that Oct. 7 likely now marks the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.



## War in the Middle East?

Saturday's attacks should offer a stark reminder of terrorism's unique ability to drive geopolitical agendas and completely upend *status quos*. The timing of the attacks was likely a [response to the normalization process](#) in diplomatic relations between Israel and many Muslim countries in the Gulf and North Africa. Since 2020, the Abraham Accords have produced the historic opening of formal ties between Israel and a succession of Middle Eastern and African countries, [including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan](#). The possible conclusion of a U.S.-brokered establishment of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel was widely seen as a game-changer in regional security alignments. The attendant [promised defense pact](#) between Saudi Arabia and the United States was something Tehran was desperate to derail since it was obviously directed against Iran. Throughout history, the absolute worst enemy of terrorists has always been moderates and peacemakers. With Saturday's surprise attacks, Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad and their Iranian government patrons may have achieved their goal of upending a peace process that was on the verge of a major breakthrough.

What is less clear is how Hamas hopes the next days will unfold. Terrorism is, at its very core, [strategic violence](#), selected by actors who no longer seek political solutions. It is unclear what specific strategic result Hamas is seeking. Perhaps Hamas is attempting to provoke an overwhelming response, as al-Qaeda did on Sept. 11, inspiring both Palestinians and their allies [in Lebanon and beyond to attack Israel](#). Or perhaps they are merely acting as spoilers of a newly invigorated peace process, just like the Jewish far-right extremists whose killing of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 stymied the Oslo Accords that he had worked so hard to achieve. But this attack came at a time of [unprecedented support for the Palestinian cause](#) around the globe (and shortly after a controversial judicial reform proposal in Israel had [shocked](#) the democratic world). And, it was broadcast on social media, showing genuinely horrendous imagery of innocent civilians being butchered in the streets and taken hostage. It seems inevitable that the attacks will only set back the Palestinian cause, perhaps fatally. This may yet prove, then, a stunning miscalculation — and perhaps one only possible among actors blinded by hate.

Or, actors with no care whatsoever for the humanity they are charged with presiding over. Like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant during the 20-year war on terror, Hamas has [seemingly demonstrated](#) a disregard for the blood of those they purport to represent. In launching their jihad, the leaders of the group and many of its rank-and-file will be mercilessly hunted by Israeli security forces. But the path to their neutralization will be paved with the corpses of everyday Palestinian men, women, and children who want nothing but a more promising future. [Almost half](#) of Palestinians across Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank view the Abraham Accords positively, a greater percentage than in the rest of the Arab world. Hamas' hijacking of that process will not lead to anything but more violence — and will do nothing to improve the lives of those genuinely suffering in the Gaza Strip.

Perhaps the greatest threat now comes from further miscalculations by state actors. Indeed, as we write, the war is both far from over and will not be contained. An Israeli ground operation to end once-and-for-all the threats from Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [has promised](#), would almost certainly trigger an uprising on the West Bank and attacks in the north on Israel from Hizballah in Lebanon — Iran's other regional terrorist minion. Already, this past weekend, Hizballah [fired rockets from Lebanon into the contested Shebaa Farms along the border with Israel](#). And, on Monday, the [Israel Defense Forces was warning Israelis](#) living in the north about a suspected cross-border infiltration. If accurate, it was precisely this kind of cross-border activity by Hizballah that [triggered the 2006 Lebanon War](#). Faced with a three-front war of almost existential dimensions and fueled by decades of frustrations over failed peace processes, continued occupation and repression, and land annexation, the Palestinians may embrace the situation as their only hope of altering a *status quo* that has dragged on for 56 years — since Israel's lightning victory in the 1967 Six Day War.

Israel may thus feel driven to target the groups' enablers in Iran rather than the individual terrorist movements directly attacking it from three directions. The allure of dealing such a knock-out blow will be difficult for the Israeli leadership to resist, given the right-wing composition of this particular ruling coalition. But it would unleash powerful forces that would likely prove impossible to control and would certainly engulf the entire region. Perhaps most concerning, an Israeli government with unprecedented [far-right and nationalist](#) factions will be uncontrollable in its response. As Steven Cook [writes](#) for the Council on Foreign Relations, "Under these circumstances, no foreign government, including the United States, will have any leverage on Israel to respond with restraint."

Terrorism's power to upend peace processes, trigger dangerous escalations, and set countries on the path to far more destructive, lethal, and consequential wars has so often been dismissed. But it was an assassin's bullet in Sarajevo that resulted in World War I and produced 40 million casualties, and it was the 3,000 persons killed on Sept. 11 that launched the U.S.-led global war on terror in which an [estimated 3.6 to 3.8 million](#) have since perished. Saturday's attacks will profoundly change the Middle East, as the 1948, 1967, and 1973 wars and Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon did before them. Preventing the profound repercussions of Sarajevo in 1914 and the response to 9/11 that launched a two-decade-long struggle that many would argue did not end with the United States leaving Afghanistan two years ago, should be of



paramount importance in ending this war and containing its spread before the entire region erupts in violence. A task, sadly, far easier said than done.

### Implications Worldwide

Moreover, the conflict will also have ramifications far beyond the Middle East. Already, reports have emerged of non-Israeli citizens — including U.S. citizens — being killed or captured by the dozens. Pressure is sure to increase on the world's governments to respond, [perhaps with force](#), particularly if foreign nationals are among the hostages held in Gaza. What happened on Saturday in Israel should additionally be ringing alarm bells in Washington, D.C., about America's own enemies who opportunistically will seek to exploit the country's political paralysis, divisiveness, and distraction with multiple international security challenges alongside the ongoing possibility of domestic political violence as the country approaches among the most contentious presidential races in its history.

But the implications go even further. At a time when a war for the future of democracy rages in Eastern Europe, perhaps only an existential threat to Israel could draw American attention away from the Ukrainian cause, possibly smoothing a path toward a Russian triumph in Europe. Refugee flows from several countries and regions would further destabilize surrounding states as well as the European continent, encouraging the same backlashes seen after the Arab Spring. And, Jewish communities in Europe, the United States, and [beyond](#) will also pay a dear price — doubtless finding themselves in the crosshairs of anti-Semitic terrorists driven by the same hatred that drove the Hamas militants across the Gazan border.

The big question at the moment is whether the fighting will remain confined to Gaza and restricted to Israel and Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad, the terrorists directly responsible for Saturday's attacks. Hizballah, we can be certain, will be monitoring these developments and perhaps looking for an opportunity to expand the war by striking Israel from the north thus locking the Jewish state into a multi-front struggle, should Palestinians on the West Bank rise up as well. In 2006, Hizballah was initially castigated throughout the region for its recklessness [but eventually was lauded](#) for its success in withstanding the inevitable Israeli onslaught and ultimately further isolating Israel among the world's nations.

In other words, if anything approaching the worst-case scenario — a full-scale, full-theater, total war in the Middle East, involving Israel defending itself against Iran and its proxies — comes to fruition, the security and stability of the world will be affected in ways that would eclipse the impact of the 9/11 attacks 22 years ago.

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## 'Hamas is ISIS': Here's how we know

By Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman

Source: <https://m.jpost.com/middle-east/article-767627>

Oct 11 – Hamas and ISIS share ideological foundations and revere the same philosophical figures that developed them.

"Hamas terrorists bound, burned, and executed children," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proclaimed in a speech Monday, condemning the perpetrators of Saturday's terror.

"They are savages. Hamas is ISIS."

The comparison to the notorious terrorist organization ISIS underscored the gravity of the situation and the global threat that [Netanyahu believes Hamas poses](#). Just as the international community rallied together to combat the menace of ISIS, the prime minister implored the forces of civilization to unite once more, supporting Israel's efforts to dismantle Hamas. But is Hamas ISIS?

Dr. Harel Chorev of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Tel Aviv University said that Hamas and ISIS share ideological foundations and revere the same philosophical figures that developed them: Abdullah Azzam and Sayyid Qutb.



Azzam, born in the Palestinian West Bank during the 1950s under Jordanian rule, is often regarded as pivotal in developing contemporary global jihadism. A deep-seated hatred towards Israel marked his early years, particularly intensified when his family was compelled to flee across the Jordan River following Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War. Azzam's writings and lectures on "al-Qaida al-Sulba" (the Firm Foundation) laid the groundwork for the emergence of the al-Qaida terrorist organization. He recruited Osama Bin Laden to run the organization. Additionally, Azzam was a central figure in Hamas's genesis, contributing to its founding charter's authorship. He is best known for his reinterpretation of Islamic history and modern Western philosophy to provide ideological justifications for the fantastical ideologies driving global Islamist militant movements. Sayyid Qutb was an Egyptian ideologue who established the theoretical basis for radical Islamism. Centered on these philosophers' ideologies, [Hamas and ISIS](#) subscribe to a profoundly paranoid and apocalyptic perspective, in which they propagate the belief that "Crusaders and Zionists" were conspiring for centuries to destroy Islam. "They are running a holy war against their enemies," explained Chorev. However, the similarities between ISIS and Hamas are not only in philosophy but action, Chorev said. Here are four more things they have in common:

### Dehumanization of non-Muslims

As per Chorev's analysis, both ISIS and Hamas employ dehumanizing rhetoric against individuals who do not adhere to their interpretation of Islam – Christians and Jews, as well as Muslims they consider "not good Muslims." Their vehemently anti-Western stance is interconnected with this dehumanization, as is their explicit and overt expression of antisemitism.

"You can see it in their incitement on social networking," Chorev said, illustrating his point by referencing an incident following the tragic murder of Alter Shlomo Lederman, a 20-year-old yeshiva student who was deliberately targeted at a Ramot bus stop earlier this year. He noted that Hamas had released a cartoon depicting Lederman's face, complete with his fur hat, portrayed as part of a Palestinian maqluba dish, with a family gathered around, consuming it. "They see their enemies not as human enemies," Chorev said.

### Treatment of women

Both ISIS and Hamas are known to treat non-Muslim women as "sex toys," said Chorev. Following the recent attacks, videos circulated of the terrorists glorifying Allah for sending them "sex slaves." Israeli actress and advocate Noa Tishby shared footage released online by Hamas in which you can see several girls paraded through Gaza's city streets, some half-naked and others with blood gushing from between their legs. Similar stories have been shared by Yazidi women and girls who were abducted by ISIS and often sold into sexual slavery.

### Martyrdom

Both ISIS and Hamas celebrate becoming a "shaheed" or martyr for the Islamic faith. According to Chorev, when terrorists are apprehended in Israel there are often accounts of them expressing a willingness to die or even a desire for it, sometimes sharing that, "My family would be proud of me." He said, "This is hard, even impossible, for a typical Westerner to understand. How could someone desire his death? But it is the great common denominator between ISIS and Hamas."

According to Chorev, the two organizations have at least one more thing in common: By December 2017, the ISIS caliphate had relinquished control over 95% of its territory. Then, in 2019, the final vestiges of the physical ISIS caliphate met their end when the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces declared triumph following the Battle of Baghuz Fawqani in March 2019, effectively pushing the group into dormancy. "ISIS was the boss for quite some time until the West decided to destroy it," Chorev concluded. [Hamas can be destroyed, too.](#)

## Can Hamas Be Destroyed?

By Anchal Vohra

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/10/10/hamas-israel-hostages-war-destroy/>

Oct 10 – "I can only compare their attack to ISIS," Haim Regev, Israel's ambassador to the European Union and NATO, told *Foreign Policy* from his office in Brussels. It was a reference to the hundreds killed and dozens more abducted—including women, children, and older people—when armed Palestinian militants infiltrated southern Israel early Saturday morning. The world must put pressure on Hamas to release Israeli hostages unconditionally, Regev said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for his part, promised to unleash fury. He called up 300,000 reservists and alluded to an imminent ground incursion. Netanyahu warned Gaza residents in Hamas



areas to get out, as Israeli armed forces amassed at the de facto border with Gaza in preparation. Their ostensible mission, judging from the fiery statements of Israeli officials, will be to decapitate Hamas and definitively end the threat it poses to Israel.

But it's less clear what that might mean in practice. Is Israel in a position to eliminate Hamas? Would it be sufficient to force Hamas's leadership to leave Gaza? Would they have to be killed? Or is Hamas inevitably a permanent fixture of Palestinian politics, so long as there isn't a permanent resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

While Netanyahu may not admit it, he likely understands that Hamas has a lifeline in the form of its Israeli hostages. As long as Israeli citizens are in Hamas's hands, Netanyahu will be under pressure to eventually negotiate their release. In 2011, the Israeli government released more than a thousand Palestinian prisoners in exchange for one Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, captured by Palestinian militants who entered Israel through a tunnel.

In an [interview](#) with *Al Jazeera*, a senior Hamas leader said the group has captured enough Israelis to seek the release of all Palestinians in Israeli prisons. "What we have in our hands will release all our prisoners," said Saleh al-Arouri, the deputy chief of Hamas's political bureau. *Al Jazeera* reported that there are more than 5,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails. That includes 33 women and 170 minors, according to Addameer, a prisoners' rights NGO.

According to a [report](#) first published by Xinhua, China's state news agency, Qatar is mediating a deal between Israel and Hamas to get female Israeli hostages released in exchange for female Palestinian prisoners. "With U.S. support, Qatar is seeking to accomplish an urgent agreement," an anonymous source told Xinhua. But thus far there is no official word on any such deal. So far, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have increased Israel's leverage by arresting a senior Hamas leader, Muhammad Abu Ghali, the deputy commander of the southern division of Hamas's naval force. They are also building pressure on Hamas's leadership by blockading Gaza's supply of food, fuel, and power.

Rescuing Israeli hostages is a priority for Israel, but that is only one of the many reasons holding Israel back from a definitive ground incursion that it has long contemplated and decided against. The Israeli security apparatus has long believed that decapitating Hamas will require far more than a one-off, short-term military operation, and a wider campaign presents a host of challenges to Israeli authorities. It was not an accident that Israel unilaterally decided to evacuate the strip in 2005, decades after occupying the territory in 1967.

Yet the pressure is high in Israel not just for retribution against Hamas but for some significant strategic victory. "Our civilians have been slaughtered," retired Col. Eran Lerman, a former Israeli deputy national security advisor, told *Foreign Policy*. "We cannot live under this exterminatory threat." Two years ago, in a previous conflagration between the IDF and Hamas, Lerman advocated a more cautious response. "Hamas's capabilities must be destroyed but not to zero—that has been our idea," Lerman told me then. "Iran and Hezbollah are the bigger threat, and we must remain focused on them."

Even relatively liberal and peace-seeking Israelis are expressing a shift in perspective in the aftermath of Hamas's latest attack. Its scale and brutality have shocked Israel and united the diverse and quarrelling political landscape, with many now seeking a permanent solution to Hamas. For many, this means removing the group entirely from its sanctuary in Gaza. Lerman said Israel can no longer allow Hamas to operate in Gaza, not after its recent "murderous attack" on the people of Israel. Regev, the ambassador, said Israel "cannot tolerate" such attacks.

Any ground incursion that seeks a permanent diminution of Hamas, however, requires not just going in but staying back and reoccupying the strip. Israel thus faces a dilemma. Without boots on the ground, it cannot stop Hamas, but being on the ground means not just spending vast sums of money to take responsibility for the Palestinians post-conflict but also inevitably losing a lot of lives on both sides.

As in the past, Israel can bomb buildings and other infrastructure in Gaza used by Hamas, such as its underground tunnel network. But events this week are proof of how such measures have been insufficient to deter Hamas from inflicting terrorism on Israel. To find and destroy capabilities not in sight and to decimate the leadership, the IDF would need to go inside Gaza—supported by intelligence and air power—and scour each neighborhood, every single home, in the highly contested strip. The humanitarian cost alone of such an undertaking could be enough to [deter](#) Israel.

Moreover, the sympathy that Israel has garnered this week, despite often being seen as an aggressor in the conflict reluctant to make concessions and find peace, might soon deplete if unarmed residents of Gaza have nowhere to go and die in droves in Israeli bombings. And an armed conflict inside a Palestinian territory that threatens the lives of its 2 million inhabitants could lead to a wider conflict with Iran or its proxy Hezbollah, which has already heeded Hamas's call and launched a few attacks on Israel this week. It may even inflame passions on the dormant Arab street, forcing the hands of Israel's new friends in the Islamic world to stand with fellow Muslims and against Israel.

There have been demonstrations in Bahrain, Morocco, Turkey, Yemen, Tunisia, and Kuwait. Two Israeli tourists were [killed](#) in Egypt. Abdul Majeed Abdullah Hassan, who joined a rally with hundreds of people in Bahrain, [told](#) the *New York Times*: "This is the first time that we rejoice in this way for our Palestinian





brothers.” In the context of the Israeli occupation and blockade, the Hamas operation “warmed our hearts,” he said, calling his government’s participation in the Abraham Accords “shameful.”

A limited ground incursion could be one way out. Israelis could go in quickly and destroy current stockpiles and factories where large-to medium-sized rockets are built. But to make sure Hamas does not manufacture weapons in the future, the IDF would have to remain in Gaza. Hamas has time and again proved that it can adapt and build rockets in local workshops with products in daily use. For instance, it assembles crude but effective Qassam rockets with industrial metal piping and homemade fuel of potassium nitrate fertilizer and commercial explosives.

None of this should come as a surprise. It has always been true that unless the IDF is permanently stationed inside Gaza, Israel cannot contain Hamas’s threat effectively. In 2021, while I was researching Hamas’s capabilities, Michael Armstrong, an associate professor of operations research at Brock University in Canada who has written about the operational performance of weapons built by Hamas, [told me](#) that unless Israelis want to stay in Gaza and occupy it, he couldn’t really see how they could disarm Hamas.

Moreover, targeting Hamas members inside Gaza, where many people may support the group especially at a time like this, requires extremely good intelligence, which probably isn’t as readily available as Mossad’s folklore would have you believe.

Regev downplayed Israel’s intentions toward Hamas when speaking with *Foreign Policy*, describing them simply as “destroying their capabilities,” rather than occupying Gaza.

At the same time, however, it’s safe to assume that this time Israel isn’t bluffing. Even if hostages are released under an exchange, Hamas’s leadership faces a threat like never before. Some of its leaders are already in Lebanon and Qatar, while the group in the past has also operated from Turkey. More of its members might now be planning an escape as Israel’s counteroffensive intensifies.

[Anchal Vohra](#) is a Brussels-based columnist at *Foreign Policy* who writes about Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. She has covered the Middle East for the *Times of London* and has been a TV correspondent for Al Jazeera English and Deutsche Welle. She was previously based in Beirut and Delhi and has reported on conflict and politics from over two dozen countries.

## What Role Did Russia Play in Hamas's Attack on Israel?

By Mike Eckel

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20231010-what-role-did-russia-play-in-hamass-attack-on-israel>

Oct 10 – Last March, a Palestinian delegation arrived in Moscow for talks with Russian officials. The delegation was from Hamas, the militant Palestinian group that’s been labeled a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union. The [meeting](#), according to the Russian Foreign Ministry, touched on Russia’s “unchanged position in support of a just solution to the Palestinian problem.”

“When considering the issue of restoring Palestinian national unity, the Russian side expressed its readiness to continue to assist in overcoming differences and bringing together the positions of leading Palestinian political forces and movements on the platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization,” the ministry’s readout said.

Russia’s ties to Hamas are well-documented, as are its ties to Hamas’s main backer, Iran. For some observers and commentators of the ongoing bloodshed in Israel, that in itself is cause for blaming Moscow, accusing it of having a direct hand in the spiraling violence.

That’s not correct, said Hanna Notte, a Berlin-based analyst with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies and an expert on Russian policy in the Middle East.

Russia’s embrace of Iran has benefited Moscow in its war on Ukraine, with Tehran supplying kamikaze drones and other equipment to help Russian forces seeking to hold back a slow-moving Ukrainian counteroffensive. But it’s a big stretch to extrapolate from there and say Russia would endorse Hamas’s bloody assault and risk outright disruption in relations with Israel, whose ties to Moscow are lukewarm but certainly not hostile, she said.

In an October 9 phone interview with RFE/RL, Notte explained more of the nuances involving Russia’s role in the Middle East. The interview has been slightly edited for clarity and grammar.

**Mike Eckel:** You are skeptical of speculation that there could somehow be a Russian role in this attack? Is there any indication that they might have some sort of direct, or indirect connection to this?

**Hanna Notte:** So looking at this, there’ve been selective reports over the last years, and this predates the war in Ukraine, that Russian-made systems have shown up in Hamas’s hands. Anti-tank missiles, shoulder-launched, anti-aircraft missiles; this goes back years and Israel, at the time, assumed that these weapons fell into Hamas hands via Iran. So I’ve never seen an indication of direct, large weapons shipments from Russia to Hamas,



let alone Hamas being trained by Russian military. And again, in the context of this latest attack, I have yet to see the evidence that this is Russian weapons or that the Russians have trained Hamas. So I don't see a direct role here.

Of course, Russia-Hamas relations go way back. I mean, they were invited to Moscow, I guess, in 2006, after they won the election in the Palestinian territories, and there've been Hamas delegations that have been going ever since. You know, the Russians have been quite active in recent years, trying to mediate between different Palestinian factions. And of course, they've never recognized Hamas as a terrorist organization. They've always argued that, you know, the different factions need to forge unity.

And it's sort of a niche that the Russians have carved out for themselves on the peace process, because they've lamented quite frequently in the last few years that the Americans monopolize the peace process, especially during the Trump administration and the 'Deal of the Century' [a controversial Trump-era peace proposal]. So they tried to carve out this niche, priding themselves on talking to all the Palestinian factions. Factions came to Moscow frequently....

So Russians have been active on the Palestinian side, and that goes back historically. The Soviet Union took quite a pro-Palestinian stance. The Russian [Foreign Ministry] has historically taken quite a pro-Palestinian stance or a very, as it says, a very even-handed approach on the conflict. So these relations go way back. That is true. But I don't think that we can infer from that, that there is sort of direct military support.

There's another question about whether Russia's role matters indirectly here. I would argue that because of the war in Ukraine, because of the severe deterioration in Russia-West relations, and therefore, the changing geopolitics of the Russia-Iran relationship, Russia is, broadly speaking, enabling Iran more in the region. So Iran feels more emboldened. Iran gives drones and other support to Russia. It is probably getting some sort of support from Russia in return.

The Russians have become less enthusiastic about seeing the JCPOA [the 2015 Iran nuclear deal] being restored. They've become more forgiving of Iran. And so this general sense of 'emboldenment' might be playing into what we're seeing right now. So there is a Russia, there is a Ukraine war connection here, but I see it as being more indirect as opposed to direct.

**Eckel: Okay, well, you've jumped into three questions that I planned to ask there, so that's great. So what is the benefit that Russia might somehow gain from all this?**

**Notte:** I'm a bit of two minds here as well. I think on the one hand, it is certainly true that fostering instability, tensions, violence in the Middle East is broadly speaking beneficial to Russia right now. If they can foster crises and instability elsewhere, and deflect attention from Western states, from the United States primarily, away from Ukraine and from NATO's eastern flank, that is beneficial in the broader geopolitical game right now. If a byproduct of what we're seeing right now is to throw a wrench into Israeli-Saudi normalization talks, I think that's also welcome to Moscow because Israeli-Saudi relations, that's an American game. So that's sort of on the benefit side for Russia.

On the potential negative side for them, I look at Russian foreign policy in the Middle East as a policy that is about fostering carefully calibrated instability, low-level instability. I don't see how if this escalates into a bigger war, an Israel-Iran confrontation that might then well engulf Lebanon and Syria, how this would necessarily be beneficial for Russia. Because the Russians have naval and air bases in Syria, which are very important to them; they project power into the eastern Mediterranean from those bases. Those bases are important as logistics hub for the Russians to continue their operations in Africa and the Sahel and ... Wagner [the Russian mercenary group founded by the late Yevgeny Prigozhin] is staying in the game in Africa.

So Syria is important. Now, if Syria gets destabilized by a broader war, the Russians don't necessarily have the military bandwidth right now to deal with such a situation. So I'm not sure that the bigger war is necessarily in their interest. And it's not something that they need, I think — sort of more calibrated escalation is more beneficial to them."

**Eckel: That's my next question: Whether Russia has the bandwidth, as it were, to deal with a broader regional war when they have a major investment of military capabilities now tied up in Ukraine: Can they juggle two balls at the same time?**

**Notte:** It's a good question. It would depend on what kind of Russian involvement would be required. They have kept their bases in Syria. They have kept much of the military hardware in Syria. But that's been sufficient for keeping the situation under control in Syria, as is, and major combat operations have largely ceased in the country over the last years. The only thing is that you still have what 800-900 American troops in northeast Syria and the Russians have been harassing them more intensively over the last six months, because I think there is, over the medium term, a Russian game to try to push the Americans out of Syria. But a bigger war? That's a different ballgame.

My own view is that there's no doubt that Russian-Iranian relations have qualitatively changed. But still, I don't think that Russia wants to go all-in with Iran, that it wants to disrupt its relations with Israel and with Gulf states. Now, if there's a larger war, and the Americans come down hard on the side of Israel, as would be very much expected. I think, you know, I mean, they've already sent the aircraft carrier to the eastern Mediterranean, there's no doubt where the Americans would come down in this larger war.



The question then that I have is: Will Russia have to pick sides? Will Russia see no choice but to further drift into the Iranian orbit, if there's a larger war? They might have to. I'm not sure that they want to. And so that is also why I don't think the Russians want the situation to go to such a larger war.

**Eckel: Talk about Moscow's relationship with Israel these days. Is it hot? Is it cold? Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy voiced solidarity with Israel. How would you how would you characterize that relationship these days?**

**Notte:** Maybe lukewarm, but better since [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu came to power in December. It was more frosty [previously] given the Israeli reaction after the Bucha attack; they criticized Russia quite harshly. But, Israel has [as of] today not delivered lethal weapons to Ukraine. And I think that is appreciated in Moscow, and they want to keep it that way.

So there have been tensions, but there is still a fairly significant trade relationship. There is the big Russian diaspora in Israel, which predates the Ukraine war, but it's become even bigger since the Ukraine war started.

And there is from the Israeli viewpoint, most importantly, deconfliction over the skies in Syria. That is the primary reason why the Israelis have been so cautious vis-a-vis Russia, and not joined sanctions and not provided lethal support to Ukraine.

And so, yes, it's been it's been more rocky than usual, but the personal relationship between Bibi [Netanyahu] and Putin somewhat helps. They get along.

Since Netanyahu came to form the government, it's been slightly less acrimonious. But I think from Russia's point of view, keeping the Israelis from going firmly over to Kyiv's side is important, which is another reason why I sort of personally fail to be convinced that the Russians directly supported Hamas here, because if they did, I would assume that the Israelis will find out sooner rather than later. And then you have lost the Israelis completely if you're Russia, potentially, and I'm not so sure that you would want to risk that because to keep them from supporting Ukraine has been fairly important to Russia.

[Mike Eckel](#) is a senior correspondent reporting on political and economic developments in Russia, Ukraine, and around the former Soviet Union, as well as news involving cybercrime and espionage.

## Hamas terrorists went low-tech to avoid Israel's high powered intelligence agencies, reports show

By Christopher White | The National Desk

Source: <https://wpde.com/news/nation-world/hamas-terrorists-went-low-tech-to-avoid-israels-high-powered-intelligence-agencies-reports-show>

Oct 10 – This weekend's carnage in Israel is raising questions about why and how the vaunted Israeli intelligence community missed a growing threat in Gaza at their southern border. New reports are beginning to piece together parts of the puzzle, and one of those pieces suggests Hamas leaders avoided all types of communications technology in the planning phase.

Signs of an impending attack were there, according to reports. Jerusalem, for example, ignored repeated warnings that the Gaza-based terror group -- Hamas -- was planning "something big" near Israel's border, one Egyptian intelligence official [told the Associated Press](#). Israel was distracted by skirmishes happening further north around the West Bank settlements, said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to divulge such sensitive information.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office denied the report in a statement Monday, two days after the initial attack, which has so far resulted in the deaths of 700 people inside Israel. Another 2,000 injuries have been reported. Netanyahu has declared war on the organization, promising massive retaliation.

"No early message came from Egypt and the prime minister did not speak or meet with the intelligence chief since the establishment of the government — not indirectly or directly," the statement read, calling the reports fake news.

While the attacks, which entailed the use of hand gliders, motorcycles and even bulldozers, surprised the Israeli government and Western intelligence agencies, they don't often track Hamas leaders as closely as the Egyptian government, the New York Times [reported](#) yesterday.

Israel maintained a good grasp of networks of Hamas supporters inside the Gaza Strip until 2005, when it withdrew troops and settlers amid international pressure to pull back from the territory. Even so, Israel maintained an edge in collecting information, using a vast array of technological and human intelligence.

Similar surveillance tools are being used in the West Bank to monitor Palestinians, [past reports](#) show.

Israel began integrating facial recognition with a network of cameras and smartphones throughout the territory, [The Washington Post reported](#) in 2021, citing descriptions of the program by Israeli soldiers.



The initiative is part of a [smartphone technology called Blue Wolf](#), which captures pictures of Palestinian faces and matches them to Israeli databases. A soldier is alerted through the app when they have to determine whether to detain a person.



Terrorists in the Gaza Strip discovered ways to evade those types of technologies, putting Israel at a distinct disadvantage, according to Amir Avivi, a retired Israeli general. **“They’ve gone back to the Stone Age,”** he told the Times of Israel, referring to those who had planned the assault. They weren’t using phones or computers and were conducting sensitive business in rooms that are guarded from technological espionage, said Avivi, who is now the president and founder of Israel Defense and Security Forum. Another potential factor was Hamas deliberately led Israel into believing they had no intention of attacking, Avivi noted. Israeli officials, in an attempt to maintain relative calm inside the Gaza Strip, **allowed nearly 20,000 Palestinian laborers to work in Israel, giving them a chance** to earn upward of 10 times the

amount of money they would inside Gaza. Israel's security officials, through the program, believed the Hamas saw itself as interested more in governing rather than as a weapon of destruction. The truth is that Israel's elimination was their highest priority, according to Avivi. In addition to acting as an anti-Israeli force inside Gaza, it also provides some services, such as trash collection, among other things. While Israel was led to believe they were placating an impoverished community, Hama's fighters were being trained of the invasion, sometimes under the watchful eye of Israeli officials, Reuters [reported](#), citing a source close to Hamas.

"Hamas used an unprecedented intelligence tactic to mislead," giving Israel the belief, the source said.

Even though Netanyahu's government denies ignoring warnings, Israel does admit it was caught with its defenses down.

"This is our 9/11," Major Nir Dinar, spokesperson for the Israeli Defense Forces, told Reuters, referring to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks against the United States, which also was the result of an intelligence failure "They got us."

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Low-tech is the essence of asymmetry.

## How did Israeli intelligence miss Hamas' preparations to attack? A US counterterrorism expert explains how Israeli intelligence works

By Javed Ali

Source: <https://theconversation.com/how-did-israeli-intelligence-miss-hamas-preparations-to-attack-a-us-counterterrorism-expert-explains-how-israeli-intelligence-works-215410>

*Oct 11 – Israel is widely recognized as having highly sophisticated intelligence capabilities, both in terms of its ability to collect information about potential threats within its own country and outside of it. And so as details unfold about the [full extent of Hamas' unprecedented and surprise attack](#) on 20 Israeli towns and several army bases on Oct. 7, 2023, the question lingers: How did [Israel fail to piece together](#) clues about this large-scale and highly complex plot in advance?*

*Israeli intelligence [did detect some suspicious](#) activity on Hamas militant networks before the attack, [The New York Times reported](#) on Oct. 10, 2023. But the warning wasn't acted upon or fully understood in its entirety – similar to what happened in the United States [shortly before the terrorist attacks](#) on Sept. 11, 2001. "Intelligence analysis is like putting a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle together from individual pieces of intelligence every day and trying to make judgments for policymakers to actually do something with those insights," said [Javed Ali](#), a counterterrorism and intelligence scholar who spent years working in U.S. intelligence.*

*We spoke with Ali to try to better understand how Israeli intelligence works and the potential gaps in the system that paved the way for the Hamas incursion.*

### 1. What questions did you have as you watched the attacks unfold?

This took an enormous amount of deliberate and careful planning, and Hamas must have gone to great lengths to conceal the plotting from Israeli intelligence. This plotting [may indeed have been hidden](#) as the plot was being coordinated.



## ICI C<sup>2</sup>BRNE DIARY – October 2023

Because of the attack's advanced features, I also thought that Iran almost certainly [played a role in supporting the operation](#) – although some U.S. officials have so far said [they do not have intelligence evidence of that happening](#). Finally,  [Hamas is on Israel's doorstep](#). One would think Israel could better understand what is happening in Gaza and the West Bank, as opposed to 1,000 miles away in Iran. How did Israel not see something this advanced right next door? Some Israeli officials have said [they believed Hamas was already deterred](#) by recent Israeli counterterrorism operations, and that the group lacked the capability to launch an attack on the scope and scale of what occurred.



Bodies of Israelis lie on the ground following Hamas' attack in Sderot, Israel, on Oct. 7, 2023. [Ilia Yefimovich/picture alliance via Getty Images](#)

### 2. How does Israeli intelligence work, and how is it regarded internationally?

Israel has one of the most capable and sophisticated intelligence enterprises at the international level. The current design and functioning of Israel's intelligence system broadly mirrors that in the U.S., with respect to roles and responsibilities.

In Israel, Shin Bet is the Israeli domestic security service, so the equivalent of the FBI, which monitors threats within the country. On the foreign security side, [Israel has Mossad](#), which is equivalent to the CIA. Third, there is an Israeli military intelligence agency, similar to the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency – and there are other, smaller organizations within military intelligence that are focused on different intelligence issues.

Like most Western countries, Israel relies on a combination of different intelligence sources. This includes recruiting people to provide intelligence agencies with the sensitive information they have direct access to, which is known as human intelligence – think spies. There is what is called signals intelligence, which can be different forms of electronic communications like phone calls, emails or texts that the Israelis gain access to. Then there is imagery intelligence, which could be a satellite, for example, that captures photos of, say, militant training camps or equipment. A fourth kind of intelligence is open source, or publicly available information that is already out there for anyone to get, such as internet chat forums. While I was



winding down my work in intelligence a few years ago, there was a shift to seeing much more publicly available intelligence than other kinds of traditional intelligence.

### 3. How does Israel's intelligence system differ from the US system?

Unlike the U.S., one thing that Israel doesn't have is an overall intelligence coordinator, a single representative who knows about and oversees all of the different intelligence components.

The U.S. system has a director of national intelligence position, who runs the [Office of the Director of National Intelligence](#), which was created in 2004. These were both recommendations of the [9/11 Commission](#), after it found that the U.S. approach to intelligence was too fragmented across different agencies and offices.

So, when there are tough issues that no one agency could resolve on its own, or analytic differences in intelligence, you need an independent office of experts to help work through those issues. That's what this office does.

I spent several years working within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. In one of my jobs there, I reported to the director of national intelligence.

There is no equivalent to that central office and function in Israel. In my opinion, Israel might consider down the road how a comprehensive intelligence coordinator could help avoid this challenge in the future.

### 4. What role does the US have in monitoring threats to Israel, if any?

The U.S. and Israel have a very strong intelligence relationship. That partnership is bilateral, meaning it is just between the two countries. It is not part of a [larger international group](#) of countries that share intelligence.

The U.S. also has a broader intelligence partnership, [known as "Five Eyes,"](#) with Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Nevertheless, the general rule in these strong bilateral relationships is that when one side picks up intelligence about threats to the other, it should automatically get passed on.

This may be a case where the U.S. is shifting its intelligence priorities to other parts of the world, like Ukraine, Russia and China.

As a result, we may not have had significant intelligence on this particular Hamas plot, and so there was nothing to pass to Israel to warn them.

[Javed Ali](#) is Associate professor of practice in counterterrorism, domestic terrorism, cybersecurity and national security law and policy, University of Michigan.

## Hamas terror tactics test Israel's war strategy

By Marc Fisher

Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/10/10/hamas-terror-israel/>

Oct 10 – As new evidence emerges of atrocities committed by Palestinian militants against Israeli civilians, and as [Israel's military begins its offensive into Gaza](#), a debate is unfolding about Hamas's long-term strategic aims and what impact Saturday's dramatic incursion will have on the politics of the Middle East.

While the roots of the conflict are decades old, even seasoned foreign policy watchers and scholars of international relations have been surprised by the extraordinary outburst of violence. In the wake of Hamas's killing of more than 1,000 Israelis, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government declared war on Hamas. The United Nations also framed the newly reignited conflict as war. At the same time, both Israeli and U.S. politicians, as well as other leaders around the world, characterized the Hamas assault as terrorism — an attack by non-state actors against civilians to inspire fear.

The semantic distinction is not just academic: With the carnage piquing emotions in the Middle East and beyond, new questions about century-old arguments are focusing attention on what assaults on civilians achieve for militant groups.

"There's no consensus over whether terrorism works," said Max Abrahms, a political scientist at Northeastern University who conducted one of the largest studies to date on the [impact of terror tactics](#). His research concluded that such attacks rarely achieve the group's policy goals. "But it depends on what 'works' means," Abrahms said. "If you're talking about the promotion of terror and fear, by that definition, it has a 100 percent success rate. But on coercing a government to make policy concessions? Far less so."

It's also not clear how best to push back against extremist groups' use of terror. Targeting civilians is clearly illegal under the rules of war, but those rules are set by countries to govern themselves. Hamas is, at best, a hybrid — a militant group that governs a territory that is not a nation-state. Although it won parliamentary elections in Gaza in 2006, it seized power from the Palestinian Authority in 2007 and has not permitted a vote since then.





Yet when the United Nations undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs urged Hamas on Tuesday to release hostages and called on Israel to lift its blockade of aid to Gaza, he addressed Hamas as if it were subject to international law. “My message to all sides is unequivocal: The [laws of war must be upheld](#),” Martin Griffiths said in a statement.

But militant groups aren’t bound by the norms of international law, both because they’re outmatched in resources and because their goals are not traditional military objectives, according to scholars who study the roots and impacts of terrorism.

“An organization like Hamas that has been fighting for decades and has run elections is not just expressing rage,” said Peter Krause, a political scientist at Boston College who studies the efficacy of terrorism. “They’ve tried boycotts, strikes, terrorism, military objectives. They have strategic goals, and Hamas has been very strategic in its use of violence through the years, including times when they refrained from launching rockets for some strategic goal.”

Hamas’s shock troops — 1,500 of which the Israeli government claims to have killed — did not go after military targets on Saturday, such as Tel Aviv’s international airport, internet infrastructure, power plants or key government and military installations. Rather, Krause said, the goal appeared to be to invoke fear and outrage in Israel, to force the government into a disproportionate military reaction, and skewer ongoing efforts to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel.

“In no way will this rampage increase the odds of achieving a Palestinian state,” Abrahms said. “On the other hand, it will provoke Israel into trying to crush Hamas, which could end up strengthening Hamas and deepening the Palestinians’ impulse toward revenge.” The decision to attack civilians and take hostages, as callous as it was, was likely designed to drive Israel to retaliate with such force that the world turns against the Israelis, Krause said. Hamas also wants to be seen as the standard-bearer of Palestinian resistance across the Arab world. Although some leaders have called on Israel to show restraint in its response to the attacks, there is little precedent for turning the other cheek in the face of an assault on civilians. The Biden administration has all but given Israel a green light to retaliate against Hamas, vowing its public unconditional support for Netanyahu’s war.



## How does Hamas get its weapons? A mix of improvisation, resourcefulness and a key overseas benefactor

By Brad Lendon

Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/11/middleeast/hamas-weaponry-gaza-israel-palestine-unrest-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>

Oct 12 – The [brutal rampage](#) by Islamist [militant group Hamas](#) on Israel last weekend involved thousands of rockets and missiles, drones dropping explosives, and untold numbers of small arms and ammunition.

But the attack was launched from the [Hamas-ruled enclave of Gaza](#), a 140-square-mile (360-square-kilometer) strip of Mediterranean coastal land bordered on two sides by Israel and one by Egypt.

It's a poor, densely populated area, with few resources.

And it has been almost completely cut off from the rest of the world for nearly 17 years, when Hamas seized control, prompting Israel and Egypt to impose a strict siege on the territory, which is ongoing.

Israel also maintains an air and naval blockade on Gaza as well as a vast array of surveillance.

Which begs the question: How did Hamas amass the sheer amount of weaponry that enabled the group to pull off coordinated attacks that have left more than 1,200 people dead in Israel and thousands more injured – while continuing to rain rocket fire down on Israel?

The answer, according to experts, is through a combination of guile, improvisation, tenacity and an important overseas benefactor.



Members of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, are shown in January 2017. Said Khatib/AFP/Getty Images/FILE

### The Iran factor

"Hamas acquires its weapons through smuggling or local construction and receives some [military support from Iran](#)," the CIA's World Factbook says. While the Israeli and US governments have [yet to find any direct role by Iran](#) in last weekend's raids, experts say the Islamic Republic has long been Hamas' main military supporter, smuggling weapons into the enclave through clandestine cross-border tunnels or boats that have escaped the Mediterranean blockade.





“ Hamas’ tunnel infrastructure is still massive despite Israel and Egypt regularly degrading it,” said Bilal Saab, senior fellow and director of the Defense and Security Program at the Middle East Institute (MEI) in Washington.

“ Hamas has received arms from Iran smuggled into the (Gaza) Strip via tunnels. This often included longer-range systems,” said Daniel Byman, a senior fellow with the Transnational Threats Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

“ Iran has also been shipping Hamas its more advanced ... ballistic missiles via sea, in components for construction in Gaza,” said Charles Lister, senior fellow at the MEI.

But Iran has been a mentor, too, analysts say.

“ Iran also helped Hamas with its indigenous manufacturing, enabling Hamas to create its own arsenals,” said Byman at the CSIS.

A senior Hamas official based in Lebanon gave details of the Hamas’ weapons manufacturing in an edited interview with Russia Today’s Arabic-news channel RTArabic published on their website on Sunday.

**“ We have local factories for everything, for rockets with ranges of 250 km, for 160 km, 80km, and 10 km. We have factories for mortars and their shells. ... We have factories for Kalashnikovs (rifles) and their bullets. We’re manufacturing the bullets with permission from the Russians. We’re building it in Gaza,” Ali Baraka, head of Hamas National Relations Abroad, is quoted as saying.**



A Palestinian man is lowered into a smuggling tunnel beneath the Gaza-Egypt border, in the southern Gaza Strip, on September 11, 2013. Mahmud Hams/AFP/Getty Images/FILE

### Recycling

For bigger items, the MEI’s Lister said Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a branch of the Iranian military that answers directly to the country’s supreme leader, has been giving Hamas engineers weapons training for almost two decades.

“ Years of having access to more advanced systems has given Hamas engineers the knowledge necessary to significantly enhance its domestic production capacity,” Lister said. And Tehran keeps the training of Hamas’ weapons makers current, he added.

“ Hamas’ rocket and missile engineers are part of Iran’s regional network, so frequent training and exchange in Iran itself is part and parcel of Iran’s efforts to professionalize its proxy forces across the region,” Lister said.



But how Hamas sources the raw materials for those indigenous weapons also shows the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the group. Gaza has none of the heavy industry that would support weapons production in most of the world. According to the CIA Factbook, its main industries are textiles, food processing and furniture.

But among its main exports are **scrap iron**, which can provide material to make weapons in the tunnel network below the enclave. And that metal in many instances comes from previous destructive fighting in Gaza, according to [Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib, who wrote about it](#) for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Fikra Forum in 2021.

When Gaza infrastructure has been destroyed in Israeli airstrikes, what's left – sheet metal and metal pipes, rebar, electrical wiring – has found its way into Hamas' weapon workshops, emerging as rocket tubes or other explosive devices, he wrote.

Recycling unexploded Israel munitions for their explosive material and other parts adds to Hamas' supply chain, Alkhatib wrote.

"The IDF's operation indirectly provided Hamas with materials that are otherwise strictly monitored or forbidden altogether in Gaza," he wrote.

Of course, all of that didn't happen overnight.

To fire as many munitions as it did on Saturday in such a short period means Hamas must have been building up its arsenal, both by smuggling and manufacturing, over the long haul, said Aaron Pilkington, a US Air Force analyst on Middle East affairs and PhD candidate at the University of Denver.

Baraka, the Hamas official in Lebanon, said the militant group had been preparing last weekend's attack for two years.

He made no mention of any outside involvement in the planning of the attack, saying in the Russian media report only that the allies of Hamas "support us with weapons and money. First and foremost, it is Iran that gives us money and weapons."

The analysts also say the size and scope of Hamas' raids on Israel caught them – as well as Israeli and other countries intelligence services – off guard.

"It is important to remember that firing off a bunch of rockets is actually very uncomplicated," Pilkington said.

"What is surprising, ... is how you could set stockpile, move, set up, and fire thousands of rockets all while eluding Israeli, Egyptian, Saudi intelligence, etc. It is difficult to see how Palestinian militants could have done this without ... Iranian guidance."

**Brad Lendon** is the Senior Global Military Affairs Writer for CNN Digital Worldwide, based in Seoul, South Korea.

## Is the Gaza-Israel Fighting "A False Flag"? They Let It Happen? Their Objective Is "to Wipe Gaza Off the Map"?



MICHEL CHOSSUDOVSKY  
OCT 12, 2023



## Hundreds of the Afghan Taliban Suicide Bombers arrived to Mashhad Iran on their way to Gaza

By Ajmal Sohail

[Source](#)

Oct 12 – Iran's supreme leader has asked the leader of the Afghan Taliban to take part in the war against Israel, in response to his counterpart the leader of the Afghan Taliban Sheikh Haibatullah Akhudzada ordered the deployment of hundreds of the Taliban suicide bombers. In accordance with sources, about 300 Afghan Taliban suicide bombers of Badri and Omari forces have arrived to Mashhad, Iran, ready to be deployed to Gaza

**Ajmal Sohail** is Whistleblower & Counterterrorism, Counter Violent Extremism and Counter Insurgency senior Expert, Guest-Speaker, National Security and Geopolitical Analyst.



## EU compares Hamas to Islamic State, evasive on Gaza Strip

Source: [https://euobserver.com/world/157546?utm\\_source=euobs&utm\\_medium=email](https://euobserver.com/world/157546?utm_source=euobs&utm_medium=email)

Oct 12 – The EU has refrained from calling out possible Israeli war crimes for laying siege to the Gaza Strip, while ratcheting up its condemnation of Hamas.

On Tuesday (12 October), the European Commission said some of the atrocities carried out by Hamas were worse than those perpetrated by the Islamic State (Daesh), a terrorist militant group that had filmed decapitations and claimed responsibility for numerous deadly attacks in Europe.

"Some of the pictures coming out remind us of what Daesh did or even worse," said Peter Stano, the spokesperson for the EU's foreign policy branch, citing the 260 young people killed at the Nova Music festival on the Israel side near the Gaza Strip, as an example.

The Israel Defense Forces made similar Hamas comparisons with the Islamic State only a few hours later on X, formally Twitter. And NATO defence ministers in Brussels were also reportedly shown, by Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant, "graphic and shocking footage" videos of killings by Hamas.

The Israeli ambassador to the EU and Nato made a [similar comparison in an op-ed in EUobserver](#) on Thursday.

Amnesty International said they had also verified videos which show armed men shooting at civilians and dragging people away as hostages.

"One disturbing video shows armed men parading a woman through central Gaza, like a scene from a nightmare," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary general.

Callamard also condemned the hostage-taking of some 150 civilians by Hamas. And she said Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip amounted to collective punishment, which is a war crime.

### Collective punishment

When pressed, Stano would not directly condemn Israel's decision to cut off water, food and electricity to the some 2.3 million residents in Gaza.

"What we are witnessing in Gaza is a direct consequence of what Hamas started on Saturday," he said.

Instead, he said the EU sought an "end of aggression" and a reduction of violence, while refraining to use the word "ceasefire".

"Israel has the right to defend itself in line with international law," he said, in a nod to the indiscriminate bombing of the Gaza Strip.

His boss, the EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, had earlier [described the Israeli siege of Gaza as illegal](#).

**While Borrell condemned Hamas, he also rejected "collective punishments" against the Palestinian people and called the EU to step up aid.**

The position appears to stand in contrast to European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, who made no reference to Palestinians or the respect for international law in her public statements on X.

Her chief spokesperson, Eric Mamer, says such statements on conflict don't have to make explicit references to international law because they are "implied".

The European Commission, has in the past, described similar scenes of bombing devastation as possible war crimes.

In 2016, the EU said Russian and Syrian aerial bombardment of eastern Aleppo, a city in Syria, "may amount to war crimes."

And last year, von der Leyen said Russian attacks against civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, "especially electricity, are war crimes."

According to the European Commission, there is no discrepancy between that and the current Israeli aerial bombardment of the Gaza Strip. It says the attack by Russia against Ukraine had been unprovoked, unlike the Hamas with Israel.

"Israel is in a situation where it is defending in an extremely complex theatre of operations," said Mamer.

At least 1,200 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the weekend, and more than 5,600 injured. A similar number of people in Israel, mostly civilians, have also been killed and some 2,400 injured.

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Borrell rejected collective punishment. Someone must inform him that Hamas terrorists are Palestinians as well. They are not from another tribe or another world (although they behave like bloodthirsty aliens). If the majority of Palestinians are opposing their activity and policy, they should have revolt and impose their will for peace and prosperity. Been used as human shields is happening because Palestinians allow them to do that. Now they will suffer the consequences and



perhaps after the war they will decide what is best for them and not for the fanatical minority they offer nothing to the society pretending they fight for freedom. Besides, any aid given to Gaza right now it is for sure that will not reach plain people in need.

## Hamas' crimes against humanity 'evoke those of Islamic State'

By Ambassador Haim Regev

Source: <https://euobserver.com/opinion/157544>



Israel's flag seen on the Berlaymont, which houses the headquarters of the European Commission, in Brussels [File: Johanna Geron/AFP]

Oct 12 – Last Saturday (7 October), the people of Israel were confronted with an unimaginable horror. In the stillness of the night, under the cover of darkness, more than 1,500 terrorists infiltrated Israel's borders at multiple points, launching a coordinated and brutal attack on Israeli communities.

Simultaneously, rockets rained down from the skies, targeting innocent civilians from the south of the country to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

This was not just an act of terror; it was an act of war, a cowardly and criminal war.

The terrorists had no regard to basic human values, they slaughtered babies, the elderly, mothers who were protecting their children with their bodies and youngsters at a rave party festival.

The terrorists left behind carnage, whole families erased, murdered in their beds, burned in their houses, decapitated and ravaged. Women were raped brutally and bleeding children were dragged by the terrorists to Gaza, to be held as hostages. The horror is unimaginable. They also had the audacity to film these horrors, and post them online — this is how many families found out about their loved ones.

These dreadful events are clearly war crimes and crimes against humanity.



## ICI C<sup>2</sup>BRNE DIARY – October 2023

They evoke for many the tragic pictures of the Islamic State's eradication of the Yazidis in the Sinjar area of northern Iraq in 2014. Isis and Hamas share indeed the same radical Islamic ideology, the same despise for human life and the same extremely violent and barbarous means to achieve their goals. The magnitude of this attack cannot be overstated. More than 1,300 people have lost their lives, and over 3,000 have been wounded to varying degrees. Heart-wrenchingly, over 130 individuals are classified as missing or captives, kidnapped and taken to Gaza. These numbers continue to climb, leaving families in a state of unbearable uncertainty.

This is 2nd Lt. Adar Ben Simon, 20 an IDF search and rescue officer. On Saturday she was leading a group of bootcamp recruits when she texted her sister: "9 terrorists coming at us. I'm with bullets in the chamber" She hid her recruits and along with fellow commanders engaged the terrorists. She was killed in the gun battle - most of her recruits survived.

What makes this act of terror particularly chilling is that it did not arise in response to any legitimate grievances or provocations from Israel. It was an assault that came without warning, without reason. It is a stark reminder of the true nature of the terrorist organisations involved, chief among them, Hamas. Hamas's actions reveal an alarming indifference to the well-being of its own people in Gaza.

In the pursuit of its objectives, it knowingly and deliberately used civilians as human shields, placing them in harm's way to further its brutal agenda. It is a stark contrast to the values of compassion, humanity, and respect for human life that we hold dear.

The terror attack also serves as a stark reminder that in the face of hatred and violence, Israel remains a

nation committed to protecting its citizens. The nation's security forces are working tirelessly to regain control over its communities and borders, free hostages kidnapped to Gaza, and dismantle the infrastructure that enables such acts of terror.

This is not merely an Israeli struggle; it is a battle against the forces of terror that seek to undermine peace and stability in the region and indeed all over the world. The international community must stand united in condemning this terrorist attack and affirming Israel's right to self-defence. The message to those who enable and support terror must be unequivocal: such actions will not be tolerated.

### West Bank and Lebanon

As we confront the shadow of terror, we call on the international community to make it unequivocally clear to states and terrorist organisations in the region that opening another front against Israel will be met with a severe response. The expansion of the arena of combat against Israel will not be tolerated. Furthermore, Israel expects the international community to condemn this terrorist attack on its citizens and to affirm its right and obligation to defend its citizens and territory. Standing united against terror is not just a matter of principle; it is a necessity if we are to preserve the values of peace, security, and human dignity.

## The world cannot let terrorism win

Israel needs all the solidarity and moral support that it can get from Europe. These are not easy times, and this war will take time. The legitimacy to act in order to protect our citizen and territory is crucial as we fight



for our right to live in security and peace. We urge the EU leadership employ every available means to facilitate the safe return of our hostages home. Furthermore, we turn to our friends in the European Union to convey a resounding message to Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority, urging them to abstain from further involvement in this war. As we stand at this crossroads, the support and unity between Israel and Europe are more critical than ever. Ultimately, it is in moments of adversity that a nation's true character shines through. The measure of a nation is not solely defined by the darkness it faces but also by the resilience it displays amidst the shadows, and Israel will prevail.

**Ambassador Haim Regev** was Head of the Middle East and Peace Process Division in Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs from August 2016 to August 2021. In addition, between May 2020 and June 2021, Ambassador Regev served as Chief of Staff for Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gabi Ashkenazi. In his last mission overseas (2004 to 2008), Ambassador Regev served as Counselor for Congressional Affairs at the Embassy of Israel in Washington D.C.

## Border Lessons from the 9/11 Report and DHS's 'Homeland Threat Assessment 2024'

By Andrew R. Arthur

Source: <https://cis.org/Arthur/Border-Lessons-911-Report-and-DHSs-Homeland-Threat-Assessment-2024>

Oct 12 – The savage [incursion](#) by HAMAS terrorists into Israel on October 7 — which included the killing of more than 1,000 individuals (including 14 Americans) and the possible kidnapping of U.S. citizens — has stirred fears of similar attacks in the United States. Now is the time to remember a few border lessons from the [9/11 Commission Report](#) and to learn some new ones from DHS's "[Homeland Threat Assessment 2024](#)".

### HAMAS

As the Director of National Intelligence's [Counter Terrorism Guide](#) explains: HAMAS formed in late 1987 at the beginning of the first Palestinian intifada (uprising). Its roots are in the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, and it is supported by a robust sociopolitical structure inside the Palestinian territories. The group's charter calls for establishing an Islamic Palestinian state in place of Israel and rejects all agreements made between the PLO and Israel. HAMAS' strength is concentrated in the Gaza Strip and areas of the West Bank.

In case you are wondering why "HAMAS" is usually capitalized, that's because it's an [acronym](#) for the "Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya ('Islamic Resistance Movement)". In any event, according to the Council on Foreign Relations, it's hardly a purely grassroots group within the Palestinian territories, as:

Iran is one of Hamas's biggest benefactors, contributing funds, weapons, and training. Though Iran and Hamas briefly fell out after backing opposing sides in Syria's civil war, Iran currently provides some \$100 million annually to Hamas, [Palestinian Islamic Jihad], and other Palestinian groups designated as terrorist organizations by the United States. **Iran was quick to praise Hamas's assault on Israel in late 2023 and pledge its continuing support for the Palestinian group.**

### Iran

HAMAS is just one of many terrorist groups that are sponsored by the Islamic Republic of Iran, as per the State Department, which reported in its [Country Reports on Terrorism 2021](#):

Iran continued to be the **leading state sponsor of terrorism**, facilitating a wide range of terrorist and other illicit activities around the world. Regionally, Iran supported acts of terrorism in Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen through proxies and partner groups such as Hizballah and Hamas. Additionally, senior AQ leaders continued to reside in Iran and engaged with other AQ elements from the country. **Globally, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security remained Iran's primary actor involved in supporting terrorist recruitment, financing, and plots across Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America.** [Emphasis added.]

### September 11th and "Operation Enduring Freedom"

Note that "AQ" in that passage refers to "al-Qa'ida", "the Base", a terrorist organization best known for [targeting](#) a number of U.S. interests around the world, and in particular for carrying out the September 11th attacks.

Nearly 3,000 were [killed in those attacks](#), and more than 6,000 others were injured as 19 alien "AQ" terrorists hijacked four domestic airliners they then crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan, the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., and into a field outside Shanksville, Pa. The attacks [cost](#) the United States billions of dollars, and fires continued to burn in New York for 99 days.



At the time, AQ was based in Afghanistan under the protection of the then-Taliban government. In response to those attacks, the U.S. government launched [“Operation Enduring Freedom”](#) less than four weeks later, which was aimed at “dislodging” (read: “destroying”) both AQ and the Taliban. Some 2,343 U.S. military members gave their lives in the course of the operation, with many others maimed and injured.

The operation, of course, came to end during the Biden administration’s chaotic [evacuation and withdrawal](#) from Afghanistan in August 2021, which was timed for [completion](#) by the 20th anniversary of the September 11th attacks. You can read the administration’s [excuses](#) for the turmoil that accompanied that withdrawal, which it dropped in a characteristic garbage dump the Thursday before Easter.

### The 9/11 Commission

On November 27, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the Intelligence Authorization Act for FY 2003 ([IAA FY03](#)). Title VI of IAA FY 03 established the “National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States”, which even at the time was referred to as the “9/11 Commission”.

Among the goals of that commission was to “examine and report upon the facts and causes relating to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001”, and “investigate and report to the President and Congress on its findings, conclusions, and recommendations for corrective measures that can be taken to prevent acts of terrorism”.

The 9/11 Commission was truly bipartisan, with former New Jersey Gov. [Tom Kean](#) (R) as its chairman and former Rep. [Lee Hamilton](#) (D-Ind.) as vice chair. On August 21, 2004, it [closed](#), having issued its findings in a massive volume captioned, appropriately, the [“9/11 Commission Report”](#).

Read it, and you’ll realize how patent the threats were (there’s a chapter captioned “The System was Blinking Red”) and how unprepared the country then was. (“We believe the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities, and management.”)

Given that the 9/11 attacks were carried out by 19 foreign nationals, there is a lot dealing with failures of immigration policy therein, all summarized in the following passage:

In the decade before September 11, 2001, border security — encompassing travel, entry, and immigration — was not seen as a national security matter. Public figures voiced concern about the “war on drugs,” the right level and kind of immigration, problems along the southwest border, migration crises originating in the Caribbean and elsewhere, or the growing criminal traffic in humans. The immigration system as a whole was widely viewed as increasingly dysfunctional and badly in need of reform. In national security circles, however, only smuggling of weapons of mass destruction carried weight, not the entry of terrorists who might use such weapons or the presence of associated foreign-born terrorists.

As I explained in a [June post](#), those same pre-9/11 concerns are, once again, the main (and to a degree, sole) ones animating our current border debates — not the possibility that terrorist aliens could exploit our lax immigration controls to attack the homeland.

If you want proof, just watch the video of a September 14 [hearing](#) before the House Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement on “Terrorist Entry Through the Southwest Border”, at which my colleague [Todd Bensman](#) testified, and listen to the discussion between the Democratic members of the subcommittee and their witness.

### DHS Homeland Threat Assessment 2024

Perhaps 9/11 was a one-off affair, and terrorist groups like HAMAS and other Iranian lackeys, as well as outfits not on Tehran’s payroll, with an axe to grind against the United States, will content themselves with simply launching attacks on other Western interests and U.S. allies. It’s possible, I guess. But take a look at the DHS Homeland Threat Assessment 2024 and you might have second thoughts, particularly when you read passages like the following: “Foreign terrorists continue to engage with supporters online to solicit funds, create and share media, and encourage attacks while their affiliates in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East prioritize local goals.” I assume the carnage in Israel would qualify as one of those “local goals”. Or this: “Foreign terrorist groups like al-Qa’ida and ISIS are seeking to rebuild overseas, and they maintain worldwide networks of supporters that could seek to target the Homeland”. Not surprisingly, Iran receives its own special treatment in that report: Among state actors, we expect Iran to remain the primary sponsor of terrorism and continue its efforts to advance plots against individuals in the United States.

...

Iran maintains its intent to plot attacks against current and former US government officials in retaliation for the 2020 death of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Qods Force (IRGCQF) Commander and designated foreign terrorist Qassem Soleimani. Iran relies on individuals with pre-existing access to the United States for surveillance and lethal plotting — using dual nationals, members of criminal networks, and private investigators. It’s not just those with “pre-existing access to the United States” who pose a threat, however. “Individuals with terrorism



connections are interested in using established travel routes and permissive environments to facilitate access to the United States.” That latter clause, “permissive environments to facilitate access to the United States” is vague, but less so when you consider the following from that assessment:

The **complex border and immigration security challenges we have faced over the last year are likely to continue**. Although encounters with migrants have declined from record highs in December, migrants seeking entry to the United States are still arriving at a rate that is on pace to nearly match 2022 total encounters. **As part of this increase, we have encountered growing numbers of individuals in the Terrorist Screening Data Set (TSDS), also known as the “watchlist.”**

...  
Record numbers of migrants traveling from a growing number of countries have been encountered at our borders this fiscal year ... **Terrorists and criminal actors may exploit the elevated flow and increasingly complex security environment to enter the United States**. Individuals with potential terrorism connections continue to attempt to enter the Homeland. **As of July, approximately 160 non-US persons in the TSDS attempted to enter the United States via the southern border this year, most of whom were encountered attempting to illegally enter between ports of entry. This represents an increase from the approximately 100 encounters in all of FY 2022.**

### Open the Aperture — the System Is “Melting Down”

That report was prepared by the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis ([I&A](#)). As its website explains, I&A’s “main focus is to provide the Department with the intelligence and information it needs to keep the Homeland safe, secure, and resilient”. With that in mind, perhaps I&A should open its aperture just a little wider. It’s true, as that report states, that “approximately 160 non-US persons [aliens] in the TSDS attempted to enter the United States via the southern border this year”, 154 to be specific, [according to CBP statistics](#). And yes, that’s an “increase from the approximately 100 encounters in all of FY 2022” (98 in fact). More saliently, however, it’s 27 more watchlist aliens in the first 11 months of FY 2023 than in the past six fiscal years — *combined*. Perhaps — just perhaps — I&A should read that chapter in the 9/11 Commission report captioned “The System was Blinking Red”. If the system was blinking red then, it seems to have melted down over the control panel and is dripping on the floor today.

### 9/11 Restrictions for Us, but Not for Them

Everyday, Americans live in a post-9/11 world. When you try to open a checking account, you need a stack of identification documents thanks to Title III of the [USA-PATRIOT Act](#). Apply for a driver’s license, and you need a bigger stack, all to comply with Title II of the [REAL ID Act](#). You can’t get on an airplane without taking off your shoes and emptying your water bottle, all thanks to 9/11 wannabes. But head to the Southwest border and it’s not even September 10, 2001, again. It’s May 27, 1924, the [day before](#) the Border Patrol was formed. Pancho Villa faced tougher resistance when he [rode into](#) Columbus, Ariz. in March 1916. Today, he and his men would likely get parole and work authorization. In most countries, the laws are imposed more rigorously on foreign nationals than they are on citizens. Not here. The administration’s attitude seems more akin to “9/11 restrictions for us, not for them”. HAMAS’s actions in Israel reveal that terrorists remain willing to engage in unmitigated savagery to attack Western institutions, and whenever Western institutions are under attack, the United States inevitably ends up in the crosshairs. It’s critical to remember the 9/11 Commission’s warning that border security *is* national security, but right now, the border’s not secure from terrorist exploitation, as even DHS admits.

[Andrew “Art” Arthur](#) serves as Resident Fellow in Law and Policy for the Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington, DC-based research institute that examines the impact of immigration on American society.

## A teacher dies and 2 people are wounded in a stabbing in a French school

Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/french-media-teacher-killed-injured-rare-school-stabbing-103952121>

Oct 13 – A man of **Chechen origin** who was under surveillance by the French security services over suspected radicalization stabbed a teacher to death at his former high school and critically wounded two other people in northern [France](#) on Friday, authorities said.

The attack was being investigated as potential terrorism amid soaring global tensions over the war between Israel and Hamas. It also happened almost three years after another teacher, Samuel Paty, was beheaded by a radicalized Chechen near a Paris area school. French anti-terror prosecutors were leading





the investigation into the stabbings at the Gambetta-Carnot school, which enrolls students ages 11-18 and is located in the city of **Arras**, some 115 miles (185 kilometers) north of Paris.

A colleague and a fellow teacher identified the dead educator as Dominique Bernard, a French language teacher at the school.

President Emmanuel Macron, who visited the school hours after the attack, said the victim “stepped in and probably saved many lives.” Macron also said that police thwarted an “attempted attack” in another French region after the teacher’s fatal stabbing, but he did not provide details.

The suspected assailant in the violence at the school was arrested. The National Police force identified him as a Russian national of Chechen origin who was born in 2003. The French intelligence services told The Associated Press the man had been closely watched since the summer with tails and telephone surveillance and was stopped as recently as Thursday for a police check that found no wrongdoing.

Sliman Hamzi, a police officer who was one of the first on the scene said the suspected attacker, a former student at the school, shouted “**Allahu akbar**,” or “God is great” in Arabic. Hamzi said he was alerted by another officer, rushed to the school and saw a male victim lying on the ground outside the school and the attacker being taken away.

“Colleagues arrived quickly but unfortunately couldn’t save the victim,” Hamzi said. He said the victim had his throat slit.

“I’m extremely shocked by what I saw,” the officer said. “It was a horrible thing to see this poor man who was killed on the job by a lunatic.” Police said two other men, a second teacher and a security guard, were in critical condition.

Macron traveled to Arras along with the interior and education ministers. Macron stopped for a moment before the blanket-covered body of the teacher, which was in the parking lot in front of the school. A puddle of blood was visible as forensic experts worked around the body. Macron then went to see students from the school in an adjacent building. School attacks are rare in France, and the government asked authorities to heighten vigilance at all schools across the country.

Julie Duhamel, an official with the the Unsa teachers’ union in the Pas-de-Calais region that includes Arras, told Franceinfo that teachers had noted the suspect’s radicalization “a few years ago.”

The suspected assailant’s telephone conversations in recent days gave no indication of an impending attack, leading intelligence officers to conclude that the assailant decided suddenly on Friday to act, intelligence services told The Associated Press.

The suspect’s brother was arrested in the summer of 2019 by the DGSJ -- France’s counter-terrorism intelligence service -- on suspicion of being involved in the planning of an attack that was thwarted and is in jail, French intelligence said.

Police said another brother was taken into custody for questioning on Friday.

Hundreds of police deployed around the school and nearby neighborhoods, including heavily armed units, and barricaded a wide perimeter around the school. Parents said pupils were still confined to the locked-down school more than three hours after the attack. Friday’s attack had echoes of Paty’s slaying on Oct 16, 2020 — also a Friday — by an 18-year-old who had become radicalized. Like the suspect in Friday’s stabbings, the attacker had a Chechen background.

Martin Doussau, a philosophy teacher at Gambetta-Carnot, said the assailant was armed with two knives and appeared to be hunting specifically for a history teacher. Paty taught history and geography.

“I was chased by the attacker, who ... asked me if I teach history. (He said), ‘Are you a history teacher, are you a history teacher?’” said Doussau, who recounted how he barricaded himself behind a door until police used a stun gun to subdue the attacker.

“When he turned around and asked me if I am a history teacher, I immediately thought of Samuel Paty,” Doussau told reporters.

Prosecutors said they were considering charges of terror-related murder and attempted murder against the suspect.

The attack came amid heightened tensions around the world over Hamas’ weekend attack on southern Israel and Israel’s military response, which have killed hundreds of civilians on both sides. There have been calls in Muslim nations for mass protests after Friday prayers over Israel’s intense bombing campaign in Gaza.

Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin on Thursday ordered local authorities to ban all pro-Palestinian demonstrations amid a rise in antisemitic acts since the Hamas attack. France is estimated to have the



world's third-largest Jewish population after Israel and the U.S., and the largest Muslim population in Western Europe. France's National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament, held a minute of silence for the victims at the opening of its Friday session. National Assembly Vice President Naima Moutchou said the assembly "expresses its solidarity and thoughts for the victims, their families and the educational community as we learn that a teacher has been killed and several others have been injured."

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** (1) A "teacher dies" instead of "A teacher was murdered". (2) Again, the word "terrorist" is missing from the article of a mass media. (3) No connection with the Hamas massacre in order not to disturb the peaceful waters of the French pod. (4) The family of the perpetrator was under surveillance by the police (as always). In 2014, the French authorities requested the deportation of Mohamed Mogouchkov's family when he was residing in the city of Rennes. However, the mobilization of several NGOs, including Mrap, Cimade, and RES, put a brake on her expulsion. Too much respect for civil rights and democracy is bad for the peace and wellbeing of law-abiding citizens.

## France raises alert to highest level after teacher's fatal stabbing

France on Friday (13 Oct) raised its security alert to the highest level after a man of Chechen origin stabbed a teacher to death and severely wounded two other adults at a school in the northern town of Arras in a knife attack that echoed the grisly slaying of a teacher in 2020.

The attack came a day after French President Emmanuel Macron called for unity in a primetime speech amid fears of a spillover of the Israel-Hamas in France, home to Europe's largest Muslim and Jewish communities. 7,000 troops mobilized as well.

## Analysts Examine Israel's Security Failures in Hamas Attack

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20231013-analysts-examine-israel-s-security-failures-in-hamas-attack>

Oct 13 – Analysts point to numerous security failures by Israel's intelligence and military apparatus ahead of Hamas' unprecedented attack on Israel.

Andrew England, Middle East editor of London's *Financial Times*, expressed surprise at the Iran-backed Hamas militants' ability to launch coordinated attacks from Gaza, hemmed in by Israeli military fences and checkpoints. Both the United States and European Union have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization.

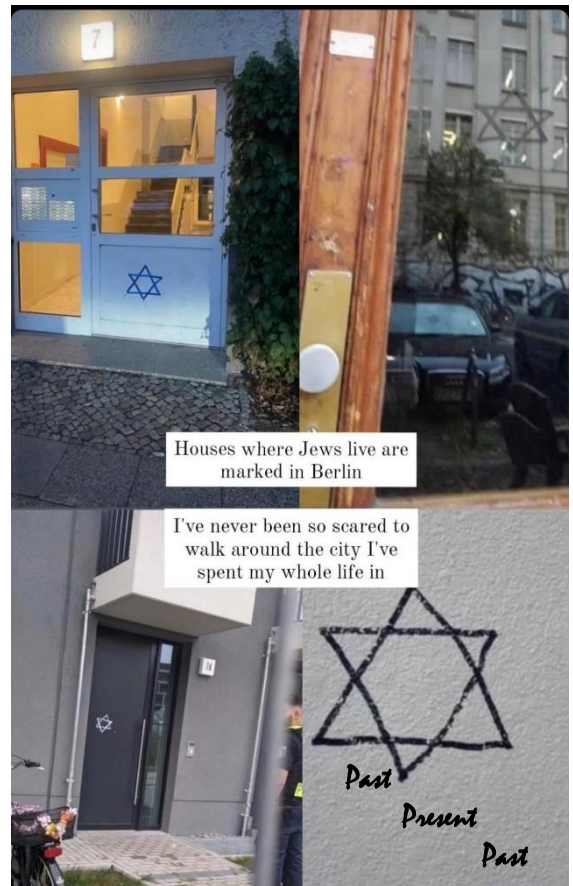
England writes, "Hamas's deadly, carefully planned and multi-faceted operation has unleashed Israel's most terrifying nightmare: civilians finding themselves on the front lines of the protracted conflict as their homes became war zones. He says it "suggests a massive intelligence failure that will send shockwaves—and fear—through Israeli society."

Natan Sachs directs the Center for Middle East Policy at Washington's Brookings Institution. He told an online audience this week that a "deep crisis of trust in the Israeli state and military" now exists among Israel's traumatized populace.

Sachs, like others, expects a tough Israeli response from both to Hamas.

"There is a willingness, a demand even in Israel to incur costs that would not have been, even in the past," Sachs said. "This is going to be a terrible time in the Gaza Strip. I am almost certain it will enter militarily in the ground forces. The calls in Israel to topple Hamas now are loud, I do not know if they will win the day, but I would not rule it out."

Other observers say that Israel had concentrated troops in the West Bank and further north in anticipation of a flare-up of violence there, rather than near the southern border with Gaza. They note the current hard-right Israeli government's push to overhaul the supreme court, drawing months of fierce protests from citizens, including army reservists, also may have been perceived as weakness by Hamas.



“ Hamas must be made to pay for its atrocities,” writes *The Economist’s* Patrick Lane. “But it is also clear that Benjamin Netanyahu’s long-pursued policy of ignoring Palestinians’ aspirations to sovereignty is in tatters.”

While Israel is known for its cutting-edge defense systems that include the Iron Dome missile interception system and drones, former CIA officer on the Middle East, Bob Baer told CNN that neither the U.S. nor Israel have good intelligence on Hamas and its plans.

“They’re not up on cell phones. There’s no metadata on these people. So, this has become a very disciplined organization,” Baer said. “The Israelis don’t have any good human sources inside Gaza. Otherwise, they would have found out about this. It’s really, very much a black hole for the Israelis. Simply bombarding Gaza is going to risk a regional war.”

A rocket attack from Lebanon into northern Israel late Tuesday into early Wednesday raises concerns about a wider danger. Brookings’ Sachs said one of the most important policy considerations is to make sure Lebanon’s Iran-backed Hezbollah stays out of this conflict.

“Hezbollah is more powerful than Hamas by far, and Israel’s response in Lebanon, I fear, would be absolutely devastating in a country that’s already reeling from enormous domestic crises. If Hezbollah decides to join, I don’t think Iran will,” Sachs said. “We will see huge devastation in the north, precisely because Israel feels so cornered.”

Karim Emile Bitar of the Geneva Center for Security Policy told France24 that while Hamas could have planned this alone, it appears Iran provided support—a claim Tehran denies.

“I think Iran has been growing increasingly nervous because of the ongoing Saudi Israeli rapprochement,” Bitar said, which could explain “this turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

## Hamas's Messianic Violence

By Hussein Aboubakr Mansour

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/64964/hamas-messianic-violence>



Nova Music Festival massacre

Oct 10 – The videos released by Hamas’s media wing showcasing their murderous acts from this past weekend bear a visible slogan watermarked on their top right corners reading “Revolution of those who resist.” Last month, in my [essay](#) for *Mosaic*, I attempted to place the evolution of the concept of the Nakba



and the Palestinian cause within the history of Arab and Muslim revolutionary thought. While that essay was focused on the realm of ideas and mostly on the previous decades, the events now unfolding force us to see the horrifying application of the ideas of the Palestinian revolution on our phone, computer, and television screens.

Two things were immediately noticeable: the attempts of Hamas to portray its massacres as the beginning of the Islamic redemptive battle for Palestine and the quick, enthusiastic response by many pro-Palestinian activists, both in the Middle East and the West, religious and secular. From the comfort of his office in Qatar, Hamas's leader, Ismail Haniyeh, gave a fifteen-minute speech—aired on Al Jazeera—in which he praised the actions of the terrorists and asserted, "This battle is not only for the Palestinian people or only for Gaza. Gaza is merely the lever of resistance, . . . but since this is about al-Aqsa mosque, it is the battle of the [Islamic] nation. I call upon all the nation's children, no matter where they are, to join the fight . . . of the men who are writing history with their blood and their rifles."

Haniyeh managed to pack into this short speech every moral and political slogan and symbol the Arab and Muslim masses generally associate with the Palestinian cause, drawing on the well-established tradition of legitimizing all forms of violence against Israel. Haniyeh sees Palestine not as a concrete place or a mere geopolitical

issue, but as part and parcel of a collective moral identity, deeply ingrained in the minds of many of his coreligionists. As he and his Iranian backers know well, the slogan "Free Palestine!" stirs a fervor that bypasses rational discourse. Because of this emotional resonance, discussions that begin with the plight of the Palestinians often inexorably lead not just to expressions of vicious hatred of Israel, but to straightforward anti-Semitism—especially within Islamist circles.

Among the ideologies Arab intellectuals imported from Europe in the first half of the 20th century was a strain of revolutionary anti-Semitism that casts Jews as the eternal enemy of the Arab people, and of humanity at large. This is not to say that every Arab or Muslim subscribes to these views, but that they are influential and widespread, and very often fused with much older religious and cultural biases. The result of this ideological influx has been a deadly combination of traditional Islamic hatred for Jews, modern anti-Semitism, and revolutionary fervor—a combination embodied by groups such as Hamas.

When Ismail Haniyeh frames the Israel-Palestinian conflict in Islamic eschatological terms, using the imagery of divine justice and cosmic warfare, he is speaking about it in a way that seems entirely natural to many, if not most, residents of the Middle East. Any kind of nuance is often the first casualty of this apocalyptic rhetoric, and this case is no exception. Moreover, the eschatological visions of fundamentalists—with all their populist appeal among Muslims—merge with surprising ease into modern, secular ideas of revolution for the sake of social justice as understood by sophisticated Westerners with degrees in social science from elite universities.

In revolutionary logic, the ends often justify the means, and violence against a perceived oppressor is not only permissible but heroic. By such reasoning even the rape of women and the torture of children can be seen as deeds done in the pursuit of justice. In fashionable academic jargon, this is simply a form of retributive justice against an illegitimate state built on stolen land. Secular Westerners, like Islamists, are especially inclined toward such views when they see the Palestinian cause as a symbol of some larger revolution—Black Lives Matter, for instance, or the global struggle against imperialism.

For 75 years, the Israel-Palestinian conflict has been interpreted in just such ways—by Arab nationalists, by Islamic fundamentalists, and by Western revolutionaries. Today there are countless people who, under the influence such thinking, cannot see the events playing out except through dramatic narratives of historical humiliation, dispossession, and resistance. Rational questions—e.g., how does going door to door slaughtering people



Kfar Aza



in their homes improve material conditions in Gaza?—don't figure into such thinking. Thus you have, for instance, 31 student organizations at Harvard responding to Saturday's invasion by condemning Israel. In the worst cases, this sort of thinking has led to the dehumanization of the Israeli populace and, by extension, Jews as a whole. It can justify, or at the very least excuse, any act of violence, no matter how depraved or barbaric. On social media, one can see celebrations in Egypt, Jordan, and the West Bank of the murder of 900 Israelis, and even rallies to support Hamas at Western cities. The extent of the sympathy for demonic behavior within the Arab world is a reality so unsettling that many Arabs who don't approve of it are hesitant to discuss it openly. If Palestinians are ever to achieve some measure of actual freedom or meaningful national self-determination, they and their sympathizers will have to find a way to discuss their situation without calling for or condoning the mass murder of Jews.

Hussein Aboubakr Mansour is a writing fellow at the Middle East Forum and director of the Program for Emerging Democratic Voices from the Middle East at the Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET).

### Hamas Militants Had Detailed Maps of Israeli Towns, Military Bases and Infiltration Routes

Source: <https://www.anixneuseis.gr/hamas-militants-had-detailed-maps-of-israeli-towns-military-bases-and-infiltration-routes/>



Oct 12—Hamas militants who [flooded into southern Israel from Gaza last weekend](#) carried detailed maps of the towns and military bases that they targeted. Some also carried tactical guides identifying weak spots on Israeli army armored vehicles. The documents, written in Arabic, were recovered from the sites of attacks or bodies of dead Hamas fighters by Israeli civilians, soldiers and emergency personnel and seen by The Wall Street Journal. Authorities are examining the trove, Israeli officials said. Taken together, the documents indicate that Hamas set out from the start to target not just military installations, but to attack civilian population centers and to take hostages, and they offer evidence of the scale of [Hamas's intelligence-gathering](#) and the [degree of planning](#) for the assault. More than 1,300 Israelis were killed in the attacks, which have deeply shaken the country's sense of security and [prompted Israel to declare war](#) on Hamas. "They knew exactly what the targets were going to be," said Michael Milshtein, a former Israeli military intelligence officer and head of Palestinian Studies



Forum at Tel Aviv University. “There is nothing close to this level of planning in any steps Hamas had done in the past.”

One 14-page document labeled “top secret” in Arabic and dated June 15, 2023 describes a plan for infiltrating Mefalsim, a small collective community called a kibbutz, near Gaza and taking residents hostage.

Two teams of five and a commander [would carry out the operation](#) on “Hour S, Day Y,” it reads. Maps and aerial pictures of the town were contained in the document, which says there were 1,000 “civilians” guarded by a volunteer security force.



It warned that Israeli troops stationed nearby could arrive at Mefalsim “within 3-5 minutes.” Members of the assault team were designated to open holes in a security fence, while others were to provide “artillery” fire, the document says. Once inside the force would take prisoners and hold them as hostages “for negotiations,” the plan reads.

On Saturday, Mefalsim was attacked by squads of Hamas militants. However, according to Tamir Erez, 41, a resident, the kibbutz volunteer force was able to successfully fight back and no one was killed. Other nearby communities, such as Be’eri and Kfar Aza, suffered many casualties and hostages.

“It shows sophistication, systematic intelligence collection, use of human sources, use of open intelligence sources and information obtained through cyberattacks,” said Eyal Pinko, a former security services officer, of the Hamas plan for Mefalsim.

[A map recovered from a site in Israel suggests the degree of Hamas planning and intelligence-gathering leading up to Saturday’s surprise attack.](#) PHOTO: SOUTH FIRST RESPONDERS

Attackers killed in the town of Ofakim near Gaza, also were carrying maps and other documents, said Almog Cohen, a resident and a member of the Israeli Parliament, who took part in the fighting. A map found in one militant’s vest showed the attackers had targeted the town and knew its landmarks.

“The map marks places with crowds, synagogues and kindergartens,” he said. “There were additional details on the maps that showed they had come prepared—more than prepared,” Cohen said, adding that the map had been turned over to Israel’s domestic security service, the Shin Bet.

Another map recovered in southern Israel showed the locations and names in Arabic of other towns near Gaza that were attacked by militants, including Ein Hashlosha and Kisufim, along with a dotted red line and the notation “path of the northern platoon.”

Hamas representatives didn’t respond to a request for comment on the documents.

Hamas’s planning for Saturday’s attack began in 2021, when the militant group began closely studying Israel’s tactics and strategies, according to Abu Obaida, the spokesman for Hamas’s military wing, in a statement on its Telegram account Thursday. The result was already “more than we had planned,” he said.

In another sign of sophisticated preparations, Hamas used drones to drop grenades on Israel’s observation towers and remotely-operated machine guns, apparently depriving Israeli soldiers of at least parts of the extensive infrastructure for monitoring the border and responding to breaches of the security fence around Gaza.

A video released by Hamas less than two hours after the initial attack began on Oct. 7 and independently verified by the Journal showed a drone flying over a tower along the Gaza fence and dropping a bomb on an unmanned machine gun.

In a briefing for reporters on Thursday morning, Israel Defense Forces spokesman Richard Hecht said that the army is examining materials found on members of Nukhba, the elite Hamas unit whose uniformed fighters are the core of its military wing. It wasn’t clear if they were the same materials the Journal showed to Israeli officials.

A volunteer group called “South First Responders” which has been helping to recover casualties and clear debris in the battle zone, has posted on social media materials found on the bodies of militants including maps, information on Israeli army units and their markings, and driving routes.





Some of the recovered documents suggest Hamas believed it would face stiff military resistance from Israeli troops stationed along the border, analysts said.

A one-page sheet was found with photographs of eight types of Israeli army armored personnel carriers, along with brief notations in Arabic about where to attack the vehicles and what explosives to employ to have the best chance of disabling them.

The guidance offered in the document also suggests that some attackers had little experience against Israel's formidable army and needed guidance about the weapons and tactics to use if they encountered armored vehicles.

A separate document focused on purported "weak points" in the Israeli army's main battle tank, the Merkava, advising that attackers should shoot "at it from a 50-meter distance using an RPG-7 or other direct weapons," referring to a rocket-propelled grenade launcher.

At least one Israeli tank was attacked and disabled during the initial hours of the attack.

Another of the documents recovered by Israeli medics and other volunteers in the battle zone. PHOTO: SOUTH FIRST RESPONDERS

## October 7 and the War for the Middle East

By Jonathan Spyer

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/64982/october-7-and-the-war-for-the-middle-east>

Oct 14 – [The Hamas attack](#) from Gaza on October 7 and the resultant situation of war reflect the return to center stage in the region of two linked phenomena. These are, firstly, the Iranian project for the destruction of Israel through the prosecution of a long war maintained by client and proxy organizations and directed mainly against Israel's civilian population, and secondly, the popularity at grassroots level across the region of Islamist and anti-Western politics, and the consequent continued vigor and dominance of Islamist militarized political movements in the Arabic-speaking world. The meeting point between these two processes is what made possible [the Hamas offensive](#).

So, to understand what is taking place, it's worth taking a closer look at each of these phenomena, and seeking to understand the nature of the relationship between them.

The precise role of Iran in the [Hamas surprise attack](#) remains a matter of dispute. But the dispute is concerned only with a small part of the picture, namely, the extent to which Iran was or was not involved in real-time tactical decision-making on the day of the attack and in the period immediately preceding it.

Regarding this, the evidence remains inconclusive. But what is not under dispute is that the Hamas military capability is the product of the movement's link with Iran.

### Hamas' Allies and Friends

Hamas has a number of state allies or friends, which assist or support it in the diplomatic and economic fields. Erdogan's Turkey is one such friend (and the friendship, domiciling, and assistance remain, despite Turkey's rapprochement with Israel). Qatar, which domiciles Hamas's leadership and whose state media support the movement, is another. But the only ally offering military assistance and know-how is Iran. Hamas's homegrown missile- and rocket-making capacity is the result of Iranian assistance.

Given Israel's close surveillance of Gaza, it seems a near certainty that preparations and training for the October 7 attack (such as training on the use of paragliders) took place outside of the Strip. The provision of the long-range Iranian Fajr and Syrian M-302 missile systems to Hamas is obviously and straightforwardly the result of the alliance with Iran. And so on. That is, the military alliance between Iran and Hamas is not in dispute, and capacities deriving from this alliance were essential to the October 7 attack.

Why does Iran maintain this alliance? Iran projects power throughout the region by the utilization of proxy, almost exclusively Islamist political-military organizations. Its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)



has developed a methodology of the combination of political and paramilitary power, adapted to local circumstances, which is without peer in the Middle East. It has brought Tehran power and influence in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza.

With regard to Israel, Islamist Iran holds to the view developed in its time by Arab nationalism that Israel is an inherently weak society protected by powerful military technology. The strategy therefore is to bypass the technological wall and strike at the civilian society itself. To achieve this, an effort is under way to surround Israel with spaces controlled by or accessible to Tehran's militia instruments. This goal is now at quite an advanced stage: Iranian proxies control Lebanon and Gaza, have freedom of action in Syria and Iraq, and appear to have access to the West Bank via Syria and Jordan.

Israel has over recent years focused mainly on the Iranian nuclear threat. But the nuclear ambition is mainly intended as an insurance policy beneath which the strategy outlined here can be pursued. The nature and form of this strategy was neglected, or dismissed. The Iranian intention is that by the constant harassment and periodic violence of these militias, Israeli society will gradually and over time become untenable, as normal life for Israelis is demonstrated to be an impossibility. The October 7 attack, it hardly needs to be said, is being seen as an important episode in this process.

The Iranian project is only feasible, of course, if it can find willing recruits among the Arab Muslim populations among whom it seeks influence. In its favor in this regard is the fact that the politics of Islamism remain without peer in terms of popularity and legitimacy at ground level in the Levant and in Iraq. From Egypt up to Iraq, and taking in the West Bank/Gaza, Lebanon and Syria on the way, Islamism has no serious rival at street level. In Iran's disfavor is that it is a Shia power. This has served to limit its appeal. But Tehran has sought to invest heavily in the Palestinian cause in an effort to counteract this limitation by making the flag of a supposedly pan-Islamic project its own. Its success in this regard has been limited, as witnessed by the steep loss of popularity it suffered among Sunni Arab populations during the Arab Spring period when it supported the Assad regime in its suppression of a Sunni Islamist insurgency.

Nevertheless, Iran continues (probably with some justification) to believe in the pan-Islamic appeal of the Palestinian cause at popular level in the Arab and broader Islamic world, and hence continues to invest in it.

The result, as witnessed in Gaza this month, is that the groundswell of Islamist militancy from below meets the provision of Iranian state support from above, to become a physical force capacity of considerable and murderous consequence.

Despite the important Shia-Sunni divide, this meeting is in many ways a natural one. After all, the Islamic Republic of Iran is itself the product of the same forces of Islamic revival over the last half century in the Middle East as is the Hamas enclave in Gaza.

It is important to understand the nature and dimensions of this project, because it forms the main challenge to the efforts currently under way by Israel, the United Arab Emirates, the Saudi crown prince and others to promote a diametrically opposed vision of the region. That vision places commerce and peaceful economic and societal development, alongside respect for tradition, at the heart of its project.

The victory of that vision, which is comparable in many ways to the thinking underlying the advance of Asian states and economies in recent decades, is by no means assured in the Middle East. The counter project of the states and movements of political Islam has its own considerable capacities.

The events of October 7 and the subsequent larger fight now brewing in its wake will be an episode in this broader contest. The outcome of the latter is likely to determine the future of the Middle East.

[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).

## Hamas Hostage Taking

By Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, Ph.D.

Source: [https://www.academia.edu/108154197/Hamas\\_Hostage\\_Taking](https://www.academia.edu/108154197/Hamas_Hostage_Taking)

Oct 15 – “We have joined the effort by Jews all around the world to show the faces of those kidnapped by Hamas in the worst single antisemitic atrocity since the Holocaust.”

### Lifting the Curtain on Hamas' Psychosis

The deep dive into the psychotic world of Hamas continues. We focus on the concept of bonding which relates to maternal attachment. This is the central pathological issue which they disclosed by taking hostages. Not only did they tell their Palestinian people to be human shields, it is the Jews they took back to Gaza who are the most “valuable” human shields in their jihadi arsenal. They know we would give just about anything to get





our people back home as in the IDF hostage Gilad Shalit. Today the Israeli hostages are civilians – women, children, babies, elderly and disabled – the most vulnerable.



### Jihadi Emperor's New Clothes Syndrome How do we know Hamas is psychotic?

The key lies in their nonverbal behavior. Think of the children's story *The Emperor's New Clothes*. What the child saw but not the adults because the adults were too terrified as they were in denial. The child knew that the emperor was naked. By lifting the curtain on cruelty, we gain the psychological edge. We cannot afford to be in denial – think of the tragedy of the \$220 million fence. We cannot dismiss out of hand when we hear warnings from others. This makes us prudent, NOT paranoid. This is precisely the case for the heroine of the Kibbutz Nir Am, Inbal Nir-Liberman, head of security. The men blew her off probably the gender card played a role, yet she understood and was NOT in denial sensing the impending threat of destruction. She saved her kibbutz. If you take this simple perspective and look at the way in which Hamas nonverbally bonds to the hostages, you come to understand the nature of the psychosis - that the perpetrator jihadis forcefully merge with their victims into a single entity. Jihadi + Jewish hostage = 1. This is symbiosis and pathological fusion.

### Hostage Taking

Hostage taking as a psychological dynamic harkens back to the re-creation of the maternal relationship in a state of merger. "Social media and its graphic imagery for jihadi violence creates a variant of the Stockholm Syndrome forming an identification with the aggressor. Its perversion functions as a lure for those who are mentally unstable and vicariously enjoy violence."

### A Fusional Psychotic State

What is fusion?

Maternal fusion is a "symbiotic relationship ... in which ... the mother fuses her identity with another's, usually a child. The results are extremely detrimental to the functioning of all parties involved. This ego fusion usually occurs when the child is very small, earlier than age two, according to psychology textbooks on the subject, and leaves the child in a lifelong servitude of sorts."

### How the Maternal Fusion appears in Jihad

The maternal relationship is the launching pad for jihad. Its graphic representation can be seen in images of fusion — by which is meant, primarily, the mother holding the infant or the mother with child. The



maternal platform is the crucible that molds the minds of these terrorists. The self fuses with an object and harkens back to the first primary fusion in life, between mother and baby, or the maternal fusion. In jihadi culture the terrorists are undifferentiated and chronically fuse with their objects, projecting their fears into them and then killing them off because they have never been able to developmentally move beyond a fusional state with their mothers. They have not gone through an individuation separation phase in development. This is common in shame-honor cultures. The children become pawns in the parents' hands. Power is wielded by men, while the female has illusory power over the infant. The jihadi uses his grandiosity and omnipotence as a defense against his early dependency needs. If male, the infant is an object of honor; if female, the infant is a devalued object, only having value once she is old enough to produce a male baby. Sex is also a life fusion. Hence the perversion of sex by the Hamas rapes.

### Military Instructions for Hostage Taking


When the military schools instruct personnel about things to do if taken hostage, they teach them to try to humanize to personalize the situation by using the first names of their captors. This strategy articulates how to shift from being perceived only as an object in the terrorist's mind to a real human being with feelings. It is an attempt to create an empathic bond with the perpetrator who lacks empathy. This is exactly what Rachel Edri intuitively knew to do. She was not in denial. "Held Hostage" was a report authored by the Center for Counter Terrorism, West Point, but there was no discussion of terror bonding nor understanding of early childhood development.

### Revisiting Hijacking

Finally, we revisit hijacking as it was initially viewed as hostage taking and using the hostages as pawns. This, of course, changed with the PLO murdering its hostages and with Al Qaeda on 9/11. Hostage taking embodies the Hamas' psychotic behavior of taking that which is not theirs and claiming possession. This reveals their level of greediness and deprivation. Moreover, it enacts maternal fusion. The term has also been used by some Muslims, non-Muslims and analysts to claim that jihadis have "hijacked" Islam rather than understanding it is a defensive maneuver to avoid dealing with those ideologies that promote violence in the Quran as part and parcel of Islam. I work and pray to bring our missing families and hostages home now. You can too.

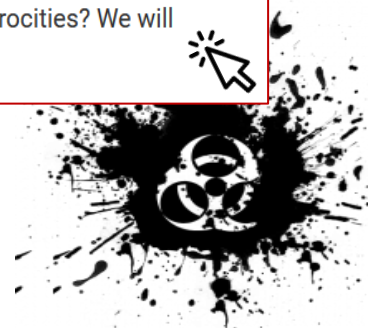
**Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, PhD** is a fellow at the American Center for Democracy. She is a graduate of the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis. She holds a doctorate in comparative literature from the University of Minnesota which focused on Al Andalus including Old Spanish in Arabic script. Dr. Kobrin was contacted after 9/11 by the U.S. Army concerning the relationship between the devalued female in Arab-Muslim culture and the suicide attack. Her work has been used extensively by the military. She published her first book *The Banality of Suicide Terrorism* in 2010 which has also been translated into Hebrew. Dr. Kobrin is a graduate of the Human Terrain Program, Leavenworth Kansas. She has lectured military and law enforcement in the U.S., Madrid, Sri Lanka, Israel and NATO. She conducted prison interviews in Minneapolis in 2005-2006 and predicted at Rand Santa Monica that there would be problems coming from the Somali community due to failure to integrate into American society. The first American Somali suicide bomber detonated in Puntland five months later. She immigrated to Israel in 2010.

## War Blog # "Hamas-ese" How To Speak To Hamas In The Only Language They Know

 Nancy Kobrin

 2 Views  2 Pages  1 File ▾

And so our deep dive continues into the psychotic world of Hamas and their perverse relationship to their mother as the tragedy of the Maternal Drama of the Hamas continue. Today we deal with their language-Hamas-ese, it is the specific language of psychosis. It is the only language they understand. It is a dialect of what I named over 10 years ago Jihadese. But why is it mandatory that we come to understand their nonverbal language of atrocities? We will explore this below but first some definitions to contextualize the rage that exceeds murder itself.



## Two Swedes were fatally shot in central Brussels in a terrorist attack

Source: [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/sweden/article/2023/10/16/two-swedes-fatally-shot-in-central-brussels\\_6179647\\_213.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/sweden/article/2023/10/16/two-swedes-fatally-shot-in-central-brussels_6179647_213.html)

Oct 16 – Two Swedish nationals were shot dead in Brussels late Monday, October 16, by a suspect who remains at large, in an attack the Belgian prime minister described as "terrorism". The gunman fled on a scooter and Belgium's security observatory raised its **terror alert to level four or "very serious"** – the highest – for Brussels, and **level three nationally**. The Belgium crisis center said on social media that a third individual had been targeted in the attack but said the person was not in a critical condition.

Belgium's premier, Alexander De Croo, said the shooting had targeted Swedes – the attack came just before a Belgium-Sweden



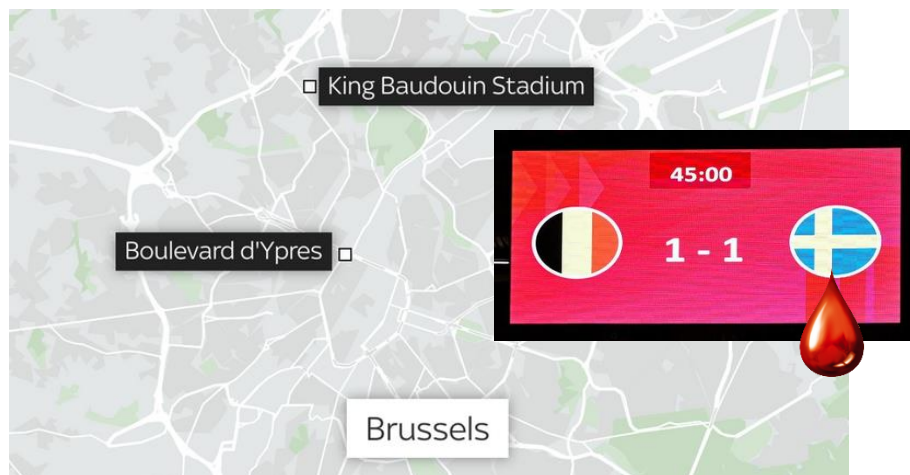
football match – and European leaders were quick to offer their solidarity. In a video posted on social media, a man identifying himself as the attacker said "he was inspired by the Islamic State" (IS) extremist group, the spokesman for the federal prosecutor's office, Eric Van Duyse, said on the LN24 news channel.

Several Belgian media named the suspect as **Abdesalem Al Guilani, aged 45 of Tunisian origin who lived in Brussels.**

"I have just offered my sincere condolences to the Swedish PM following tonight's harrowing attack on Swedish citizens in Brussels," De Croo posted on social media. "Our thoughts are with the families and friends who lost their loved ones. As close partners the fight against terrorism is a joint one."

Several Belgian media outlets said the two individuals killed were wearing football shirts belonging to the Swedish national team ahead of the game between Sweden and Belgium. The Group F European qualifier match between the two countries was suspended at half-time "due to incidents," the Belgian side posted on social media accounts.

Journalists in the Roi Baudouin stadium in Brussels said around 35,000 fans were being kept on the ground, and the UEFA website said the match had been halted at half-time at one goal apiece. Belgian media reported that Swedish players did not want to continue the game after the attack.



### 'Stood there frozen'

A video of a man speaking Arabic and claiming responsibility for the shooting has been circulating on social media. The federal prosecutor in charge of terrorism cases launched an investigation. Police are only investigating one suspect at the moment based on preliminary information.

The individual claiming the attack said the Swedish nationality of his victims was a motivation, Van Duyse said but added there appeared to be no links with the conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Middle East. Sweden has been at the center of a bitter row this year with Muslim countries after multiple burnings of the Koran, Islam's holy book.

"Devastated by the news of two Swedish football supporters murdered in Brussels tonight and a third person being seriously wounded. All my thoughts are with their families and loved ones," Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said. "Swedish authorities work closely with their Belgian partners to find the murderer," he added on social media. The shooting took place in the city center's northern districts. Police had been alerted to



the incident after 7:00 pm local time (1700 GMT). In a video shared online by the Flemish newspaper Het Laatste Nieuws, the shooter is seen with an automatic weapon on his shoulder, fleeing on a scooter. Four gunshots can be heard in the video.

A witness who spoke to LN24 channel described his shock during the incident. "I stood there frozen, I didn't move. I was shocked by what happened, even now I am still in shock. It was a man who came, pushed me, told me to stop running if I wanted to stay alive," said the witness, who gave his name as Sulayman. The Belgian royal palace said it was "shocked" by the shooting.

### 'Despicable'

Several metro stations in Brussels were also closed, Belgium's RTBF reported. The president of the European Commission, which is based in Brussels, was quick to condemn the attack and offer support.

"Tonight, my thoughts are with the families of the two victims of the despicable attack in Brussels," Ursula von der Leyen posted on social media. "I extend my heartfelt support to the Belgian police, so they swiftly apprehend the suspect. Together, we stand united against terror." Brussels is home to EU offices including the Commission, the European Council, which represents member states, and the European Parliament.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Europe was "shaken" by an "Islamist" attack in Brussels, while France's interior minister had earlier given instructions to strengthen border controls with Belgium. Belgium, alongside France, had already been the target of an attack claimed by IS extremists in **March 2016, at Brussels' main airport and on the metro system, which killed 32 people**. On Tuesday (17/10) Spokesman Eric Van Duyse told AFP that officers "opened fire" as they apprehended the man in the **Schaerbeek area** of the city, but did not say if the suspect was wounded – **UPDATE**: Shot in the chest; died at hospital. ISIS claimed responsibility.



**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** The terrorist fled on a scooter. Authorities announced his name, origin, and immigration status. This means that they were aware of him and his behavior. They let him move freely. Swedish families paid the price. Authorities will investigate their security system – what all authorities always do **post-actively!**

## French interior Ministry claims Karim Benzema has ties to a terrorist organization

Source: <https://www.marca.com/en/football/2023/10/17/652ef2fd22601d066c8b459e.html>

Oct 18 – French footballer [Karim Benzema](#) recently got transferred to Arabian side Al-Ittihad after a long career at Real Madrid, he recently expressed his support for Palestine in their conflict with Israel. Amid this support, the star forward has received criticism from all over the place but France is where he is getting serious accusations from. Interior Ministry head, Gerald Darmanin is accusing [Benzema](#) of having ties with a terrorist group called the Muslim Brotherhood.

"Mister Karim Benzema has notorious ties, as we all know, with the Muslim Brotherhood," said Darmanin on the CNews Network.

In a recent Instagram post, Karim Benzema issued his support and demand for all bombings to stop in the Gaza Strip, defending children and women from any harm. He wrote: "All our prayers go out for all the Gaza inhabitants who are once more victims of unfair bombings that don't forgive women or children."

### Who are the Muslim Brotherhood group?

The Muslim Brotherhood was born in Egypt during the year of 1928 in Ismalia, North East of Cairo. It was a group founded by Sheik Hassan Al-Banna. Considered a reformist organization of the Suni leadership that set themselves two specific goals:



to free the country from British oppression and take the power in Egypt in order to fill it back with Islamic values. This information was first shared by Le Monde.

The Brotherhood became popular organizing charitable and social activities for the working and middle class. This program allowed religion to have a privileged place thanks to an education-based popular movement that was destined to guarantee Islam's regeneration. A key investment in the eyes of Hassan Al-Banna, who was the main leader of this organization.

## Threats in U.S. rising after Hamas attack on Israel, says FBI Director Christopher Wray

Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/threats-in-u-s-rising-after-hamas-attack-on-israel-says-fbi-director-christopher-wray/>

Oct 15 – Threats in the U.S. have been rising, since [Hamas invaded Israel](#) a week ago, FBI Director Christopher Wray and FBI officials said Sunday in a rare phone briefing for reporters.

"The threat is very much ongoing and in fact, the threat picture continues to evolve," Wray said. "Here in the U.S., we cannot and do not discount the possibility that Hamas or other foreign terrorist organizations could exploit the conflict to call on their supporters to conduct attacks on our own soil."

He said that Jews and Muslims alike, as well as their institutions and houses of worship, have been threatened in the U.S. and told reporters that the bureau is "moving quickly to mitigate" the threats.

Wray, in an address Saturday to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, also noted "an increase in reported threats" and in particular warned that "we've got to be on the lookout ... for lone actors who may take inspiration from recent events to commit violence of their own."

He urged police chiefs to "stay vigilant" because as first responders, "you're often the first to see the signs that someone may be mobilizing to violence."

Senior FBI officials said most of the threats are not credible, and some have been addressed. As Wray suggested, the bureau's biggest concern is a lone wolf-style assailant who is not on their radars.

This type of threat is best addressed through tips from the public, the officials said. They told reporters that there have been threats against Muslim facilities as well as Jewish facilities. Threats against Muslim centers are up, although the level of antisemitic threats is also spiking.

The FBI is working through Joint Terrorism Task Forces to mitigate threats and keep these communities safe, Wray said.

The FBI director twice said that he was "horrified...by the brutality committed at the hands of Hamas" and said that countering terrorism is the bureau's No. 1 priority. "We will not tolerate violence motivated by hate and extremism, he said.

Wray also said that the bureau's legal attaché office in Tel Aviv is working with Israeli and U.S. Embassy partners "to locate and identify all Americans who've been impacted in the region, including those [who remain unaccounted for](#)." He added that victim services specialists are working with victims and their families at home and abroad.

## The Women-Hating Women Who Support Hamas

By Phyllis Chesler

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/64975/the-women-hating-women-who-support-hamas>

Oct 11 – Even as the Iranian government is jailing, raping, torturing and murdering Iranian women whose hijabs have slipped or gone missing, women in New York City are demonstrating in favor of Hamas's Oct. 7 atrocities wearing hijabs and even niqabs. Some women make faces and obscene gestures, curse, [mock](#) Israeli tears, make a show of spitting and sport [Nazi](#) symbols.

How will such American female support for Hamas barbarians further the cause of women in Gaza? Will such support stop child marriage, abolish polygamy, end forced veiling, prohibit wife beating or prevent and punish honor killing (femicide)? These and other horrific abuses (jailing, torturing and murdering both dissidents and gays, censoring thought, indoctrinating children into hate) define how Hamas remains in power in Gaza.

We cannot blame the Israeli government for any of this. *Israel exited Gaza in 2005*. And if anyone really looks into the matter, they will see that Hamas's leaders live in palatial villas and that Gaza is nowhere near as crowded as many major cities. It is not an open-air prison or concentration camp, a mantra that has been drummed into people's heads both in the West and in Muslim countries continuously for more than 50 years.



The Big Lies include the one that states, over and over again, that the Gaza Strip is the most densely packed area in the world. According to *Al Jazeera* (!), based on CIA statistics, Gaza has "a density of 15,096 people per square mile, which is less than the density of the city of Tel Aviv (21,793 per square mile). ... Gaza City is the 63rd most densely populated area in the world at 42,059



per square mile. This is far below Bnei Brak in Israel (76,000 per square mile)."

**Who are these American women demonstrators? Are they freedom-fighting feminists? Or are they anti-feminists, Islamist versions of Atwood's Handmaids who have (forgive the pun) voluntarily and eagerly taken the veil?** They are similar to the women who supported and were themselves [active participants](#) in ISIS's female militia. They enforced a manifesto that was far more extreme than Hitler's vision of women belonging in the nursery, kitchen and church.

In 2015, ISIS posted their manifesto in Arabic. It mandates child marriage to adult men; face and body veiling; the abolition of beauty parlors and modern clothing, "which are [instruments of the devil](#)"; limited

education for girls; and singles out the West's education of women as causing "the emasculation of Muslim men."

ISIS also held public, videoed auctions of naked, captured sex slaves. [Sex slavery](#), as well as all forms of slavery, are [age-old](#) customs among Muslims and I've written about this many times before. Interestingly, the ISIS women continued to [terrorize](#) and torture other Muslim women, mainly Syrians and Iraqis, in the [al-Hol](#) refugee camp.

Hamas is ISIS on steroids.

And yet, these American (and European) women are cheering for the rape, torture, public humiliation and murder of Israeli women, children and the elderly by Islamist terrorists and for the murder and kidnapping of Israeli male civilians of all ages.

There is absolutely no moral equivalence between Hamas terrorists who purposely target innocent civilians and the Israel army that now needs to utterly destroy, once and for all, Hamas's rule over Gazan civilians, whom they've used as human shields, just as they've embedded their bombs, rockets and command posts in mosques, hospitals, ambulances, schools and residential buildings as so much potential civilian fodder for the sake of propaganda.

And the world media and other elites keep falling for it.

These Western women demonstrators—and their many left-wing feminist allies—have been carefully indoctrinated into believing Very Big Lies: Namely, that Israel is a Nazi, apartheid state of "colonial settlers" who have stolen the land and imprisoned an indigenous people. This is the mantra that is meant to justify the destruction of the Jewish state.

This must never happen. Israel must do whatever it takes, no matter the cost, to rid both Israel and non-Hamas Palestinians of Hamas.

How can women, presumably the more compassionate sex, support such cruelty, such ferocious barbarism?

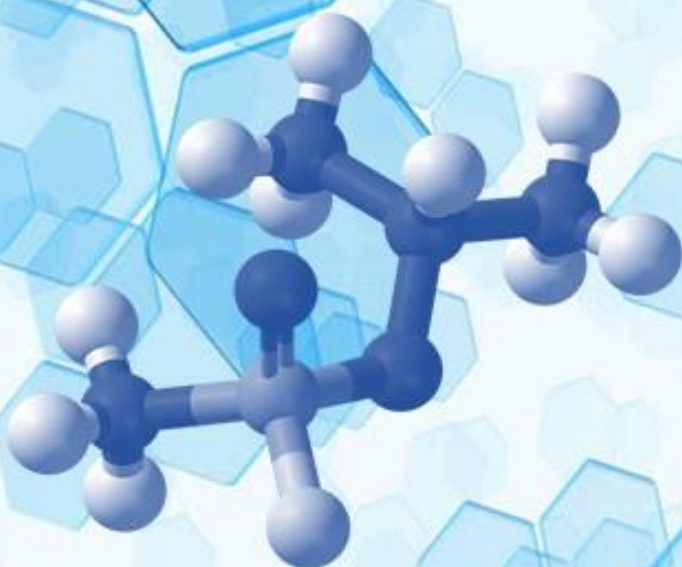
As the author of [Woman's Inhumanity to Woman](#), internalized sexism among women and female-female cruelty does not surprise me. In tribal cultures, women murder their daughters-in-law, try to murder their co-wives, support and carry out the genital mutilation and the honor killing of their daughters. Some women in the West vote for "macho" male tyrants, compete viciously against other women, steal their jobs and their spouses.

Most women do not automatically embrace freedom and truth any more than most men do.

**Phyllis Chesler**, a writing fellow at the Middle East Forum, is an emerita professor of psychology and women's studies and the author of twenty books, including *Women and Madness*, *Islamic Gender Apartheid*, *An American Bride in Kabul*, *A Politically Incorrect Feminist*, and *A Family Conspiracy: Honor Killings*.



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# CHEM NEWS





## Project PROACTIVE: An Inclusive Human-Centered Approach in CBRNe Preparedness and Response



By Grigore Havarneanu

Source: <https://nct-cbnw.com/project-proactive-an-inclusive-human-centered-approach-in-cbrne-preparedness-and-response/>

Sep 21 – PROACTIVE stands for “PReparedness against CBRNE threats through cOmmon Approaches between security praCTitioners and the Vulnerable civil society”. It was a Research and Innovation Action funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 program. The project started in May 2019, ended in August 2023, and had a budget of €4.97M.

The main objective of PROACTIVE was to enhance preparedness against and responses to CBRNe incidents through improved harmonization of procedures between various categories of practitioners, and a better articulation of the needs of vulnerable citizen groups. For more than 4.5 years the project brought together CBRNe practitioners and civil society, including representatives of vulnerable groups which was a big achievement in the European Research and Innovation world.

The consortium, coordinated by the International Union of Railways (UIC) in Paris, included 15 partners among which law enforcement agencies, transport and health practitioners, academia and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The consortium united interdisciplinary expertise from 12 countries, specifically: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Latvia, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, UK, and Ukraine.

### A Human-Centered Approach in CBRNe

The project used social science and humanities (SSH) methods, such as literature reviews, surveys, workshops, interviews, and focus groups to facilitate face-to-face interaction between CBRNe practitioners and citizens in controlled settings simulating CBRNe incidents. This allowed the project team to test tools and study natural interactions in such situations, for example through observational coding of behaviors. PROACTIVE first ran a tabletop exercise in France in April 2022 with more than 40 participants from 15 different countries. During the event practitioners and civil society came together to learn about one another’s expectations. The scenario, which involved a CBRNe incident on a regional passenger train, helped to identify gaps between first responders’ intended actions and vulnerable citizens’ needs.

●► [Read the full article in the source’s URL.](https://nct-cbnw.com/project-proactive-an-inclusive-human-centered-approach-in-cbrne-preparedness-and-response/)

**Grigore Havarneanu (PhD)** is a Traffic and Transport Psychologist with international experience as researcher, project manager and lecturer. He is a Senior Security Research Advisor at the International Union of Railways in Paris, where he is involved in European research projects and leads EU-funded project proposals. He coordinated the PROACTIVE project and conducts applied psychology and human factors research to improve the safety, security and resilience of land transport.

**EDITOR’S COMMENT:** From the website of the PROACTIVE project download [Deliverable D6.5](#) (“Report on the third field exercise and evaluation workshop”). It is a must-keep document regarding handling contaminated victims.

## CBW Defense on the “Circuit”

By Kevin Cresswell

Source: <https://nct-cbnw.com/cbw-defense-on-the-circuit/>

Sep18 – Executive Protection (EP), Close Protection (CP), The “Circuit” or VIP Protection, however you term it, is not just concerned with conventional threats. Asymmetric violent encounters must also be considered. An attack could come from colorless, in some cases odorless liquids and gases released covertly. For those in the business of protecting others it is a necessary additional risk assessment and the team must be trained in rapid response and mitigation.

Your role in VIP (or Principal) security is to plan and prepare for potential situations before they happen and to ensure the client is not exposed to security threats using four pillars of defense;

- What is the threat and risk?
- What is the intelligence?
- Advance, and location indicators.







Responses required in Chemical Biological Weapon (CBW) incidents are generally met by tactically sound CP procedures and understanding of the principles undermining those pillars;

- Quick identification of the hazard deployed.
- Immediate deployment of protective technology.
- Rapid, precise medical intervention.
- Decontamination.
- Basic and advanced life support measures as the Principal is moved out of the danger area.

This is a dynamic environment in which the protective details' methods used to counter any CBW threat can be situational. It is important to define the scope of CBW response in the close protection context. Some threat agents are found in the military environment not used in an assassination attack. There are significant technologies to guard against the effects of the deployment of CBW against Principals, protection details must have the required training and team leaders should be acquainted with the threat as part of their risk assessment process. Training for CP teams should focus on technically viable threats.

●► [Read the full article in the source's URL.](#)

[Kevin Cresswell](#) has over 40 years of law enforcement, military, intelligence and commercial business development experience in the defense and security sector. He is a dual national of the UK and US and a global consultant based in Los Angeles, California. Through the Defense Equipment Company, he currently provides support to ADS Inc CWMD accounts in the state/local/federal and international market.

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** I think the most important thing is to vigorously train the VIP client on donning an escape hood he/she carries in a pocket or handbag by himself/herself. Second, security should have NA antidotes at hand all the time. If these two are not done then either the security or the client will die.

**On 7 July 2023, the OPCW confirmed that all chemical weapons stockpiles declared by the 193 States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention since 1997 — totaling **72,304 metric tons** of chemical agents — have been irreversibly destroyed under the OPCW's strict verification regime.**



## DOD Announces Release of 2023 Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction

Source: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3541619/dod-announces-release-of-2023-strategy-for-countering-weapons-of-mass-destructi/>

Sep 28 – Today, the Department of Defense released the unclassified version of its 2023 Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD).

The 2023 DOD CWMD Strategy seeks to account for current and emerging WMD challenges and threats, and provide tailored methods to address them. The Department will account for WMD threats holistically to prevent, mitigate, withstand, operate through, and recover from WMD attacks in close consultation with Allies and partners.

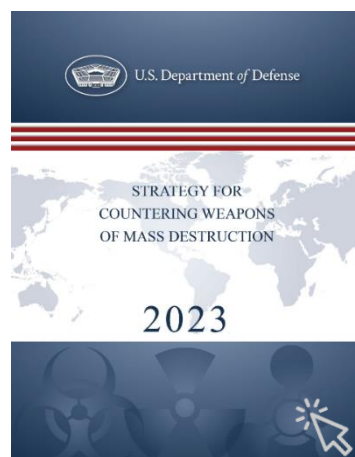
"This Strategy lays the foundation for the Department to confront the complex and demanding challenges presented by WMD," wrote Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in the Secretary's Foreword.

In line with the 2022 National Defense Strategy, the CWMD Strategy recognizes the People's Republic of China as the pacing challenge, Russia as the acute threat, and the DPRK, Iran, and violent extremist organizations as persistent threats.

Recognizing that different actors and threat modalities pose distinct challenges, the CWMD Strategy outlines a strategic approach that requires tailored investments and actions to address each challenge. The CWMD Strategy explains how the Department will align authorities, operations, activities, and investments based on the DoD's unique current and emerging CWMD needs.

"This Strategy reinforces other guidance provided in the Nuclear Posture Review, the Missile Defense Review, and the Biodefense Posture Review by clarifying the role of the CWMD mission within the Department's overall approach to integrated deterrence and conflict," said Secretary Lloyd Austin, "I am confident that the Department possesses the ingenuity and determination necessary to outpace current and future threats."

The 2023 CWMD Strategy is the third iteration for the Department, and replaces the 2014 Strategy for CWMD.



## The Role of Early Warning Chemical Detection on the Battlefield

By Toni Leikas

Source (download): <https://environics.fi/blog/the-role-of-early-warning-chemical-detection-on-the-battlefield/#msdynttrid=iChDHxH1CEuKhRFRf9fyjCG21jAx2CtqKrv8irA-BM>

*For over 100 years, all units have approached the CBRN problem in a similar manner, by avoiding the threat, protecting against it, and decontaminating from it. These simple actions still provide a linear approach to detect existing hazards and offer a bypass of CBRN obstacles, enabling the safe passage of units.*

*This white paper opens the challenges, requirements, and procedures of early-warning chemical detection, mostly from a military perspective.*

### Challenging CBRN Operation Environment

The use of CBRN agents can be integrated in hybrid and asymmetric fighting through proxy forces and near-peer adversaries and threats, influencing to operational environments and civil population. CBRN threats increase sustainment requirements and degraded combat power. State and non-state actors continue to develop CBRN agents' programs to gain advantage against us and our allies. Industrial facilities have the potential risk of causing exposure to agents or toxic industrial materials by accident, leaks or by attack.

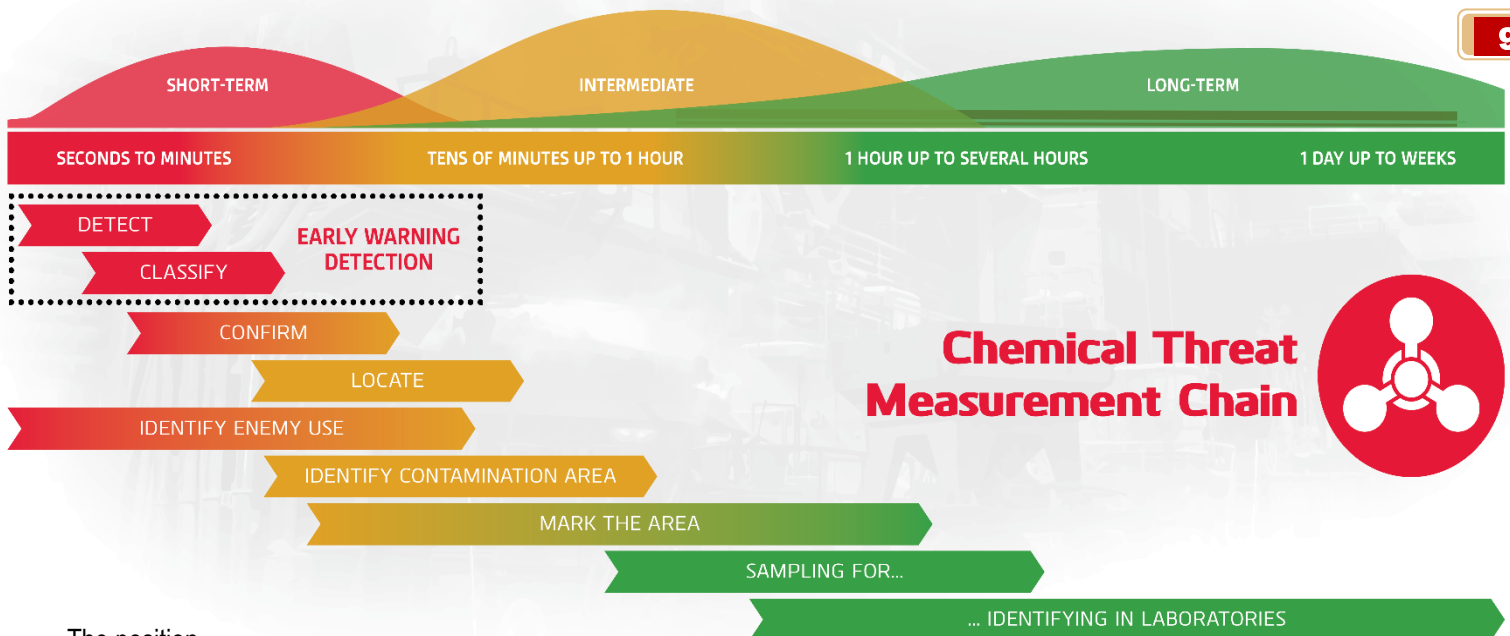
[Download Full White Paper](#)

CBRN agents can be used to disrupt, isolate, block, defeat and degrade friendly forces. Dense urban areas and subterranean environments increase the challenges, not forgetting the post effects of a strike, collateral damages, and mass casualties.

### Early Warning: Detect to Warn!

The definition of early warning chemical detection covers a detector/system that provides advance notice of a chemical concentration rising above a preset detection limit, triggering an early warning alarm and concentration monitoring. In summary, "early warning" is synonym of "chemical detection".





## Chemical Threat Measurement Chain



### The position

of Early Warning Chemical Detection in the timeline of actions sequence during a chemical incident based on Military Components of CBRN Management. Early warning is used when the detection concerns chemical vapours and gases. The decision to warn is based on the assumption that there is a threat present, and it may, or not, move towards the warned units' locations. Early warning detection is conducted by field-proven chemical detectors with potential threat-based detection performance to gain time to warn the unit, and time to start protection procedures. Chemical detection requirements are resourced, for example, by actors trained to operate chemical detection systems. Operation and decision levels have different requirements, needs, and use for early-warning detection. At the tactical level it is "detect to warn". At operational level it is "detect to treat" for postexposure medical countermeasures and treatments. The operational level needs also positive identification and forensics identification. This higher level requires support from low-density, highly trained, and specialised units. In other words: more time, higher-level tools, and logistics support.

► Download the full paper from the source's URL.

**Toni Leikas** is a retired Finnish Defence Forces CBRN Captain. His career focused mostly on infantry, engineering and CBRN reconnaissance. He has developed procedures for mounted and dismounted CBRN reconnaissance, and detachments and deployment of CBRN field laboratory's, reconnaissance and survey tactics and methods. Capt. Toni Leikas has used multiple detection and identification technologies on the field, utilizing real chemical agents, gaining a solid experience and knowledge on suitable tools for end-users.

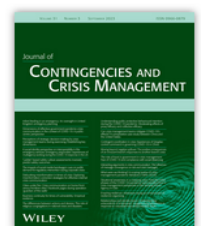
## Journal of CONTINGENCIES AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

### Exploring attitudes towards health preparedness in the Middle East and North Africa against chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats: A qualitative study

Hassan Farhat ✉, Guillaume Alinier, Mariana Helou, **Ioannis Galatas**, Denis Josse, Craig Campbell, Nelson Olim, Ayşe Handan Dökmeci, Mohammed Heriza, Henda Chebbi, Kawther El-Aifa, Amira Jaafar, Sami Souissi, Asma Ben Amor, Nicholas Castle, Loua Al-Shaikh, Walid Abougalala, Mohamed Ben Dhiab, James Laughton ... [See fewer authors](#) ^

First published: 10 October 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12509>



Advertisement



Since 1970, Middle East and North African (MENA) countries have witnessed evolutionary industrial development and long-running terrorist and inter-country conflicts. Additionally, the risk of accidental,



<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-5973.12509> deliberate or natural chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats has also increased, requiring a collaborative review of the health sectors' preparedness for potential CBRN risks within the region. This study aimed to explore the opinion of multidisciplinary experts interested in disaster management research in MENA about perspectives and challenges on readiness for potential CBRN incidents.

A modified interview online link was sent to the participants. A qualitative thematic analysis was performed on the responses using Nvivo®12 software, following semi-structured modified interviews using the Phonic® application.

A total of 29 participants were sufficient to reach the data saturation. Through an inductive coding approach, **five themes were identified: 'CBRN-Related Incidents are a Threat', 'Inadequate National Practice and Policy', 'Need for International Cooperation', 'Importance of Better Mass Gathering Management', and 'Ineffective Hospital Preparedness'.**

With the assistance of the World Health Organization, there is a consensus on the need for cooperation between the MENA countries to ensure adequate healthcare preparedness for CBRN threats. Suggested measures should be considered, such as creating a unified database and liaison officer designation.

## Responding to Chemical Suicide Incidents

Source: <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/emergency-preparedness/responding-to-chemical-suicide-incidents/>



Oct 11 – The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have released a safety and health advisory for first responders, "[Personal Protective Equipment Recommendations for Response to Chemical Suicide Incidents PDF](#)." The advisory provides personal protective equipment (PPE)



recommendations for first responders plus response recommendations that will help agencies with planning and training for chemical suicide incidents.

### What are chemical suicides?

Chemical suicides involve the use of lethal toxic gases generated by intentionally mixing common household chemicals in a confined space such as a car, bathroom or closet. The most common toxic gases produced in chemical suicide incidents are hydrogen sulfide, hydrogen cyanide and carbon monoxide.

### What do first responders need to know?

First responders must understand the potential incident health and safety hazards associated with response to a chemical suicide. They also need to know the PPE and PPE support tools recommended for response.

### What is included in the advisory?

The advisory offers guidance such as:

- PPE recommendations for first responders to minimize the likelihood of responder exposures, injuries and fatalities during chemical suicide incidents.
- Relevant national guidance and standards supporting the PPE recommendations.
- Potential incident health and safety hazards associated with response to chemical suicides.
- Details on the immediately dangerous to life or health environment at a chemical suicide incident and who should be permitted to enter.
- Other considerations for an effective and safe response, including recommendations for decontamination, clean-up operations and training.

## Chemical weapons and railway tunnels



Abandoned railways have been used for a number of purposes, but none stranger than for the storage of chemical weapons. During World War II, the tunnels of the old Great Western Railway in the Blue Mountains (west of Sydney) were used for this very purpose. In a top-secret operation, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) imported mustard gas and the lethal choking agent phosgene. Around one million chemical weapons were imported from 1942 to the end of the war, and many of them passed through the Blue Mountain tunnels.



## Tunnel Rats of the Vietnam War

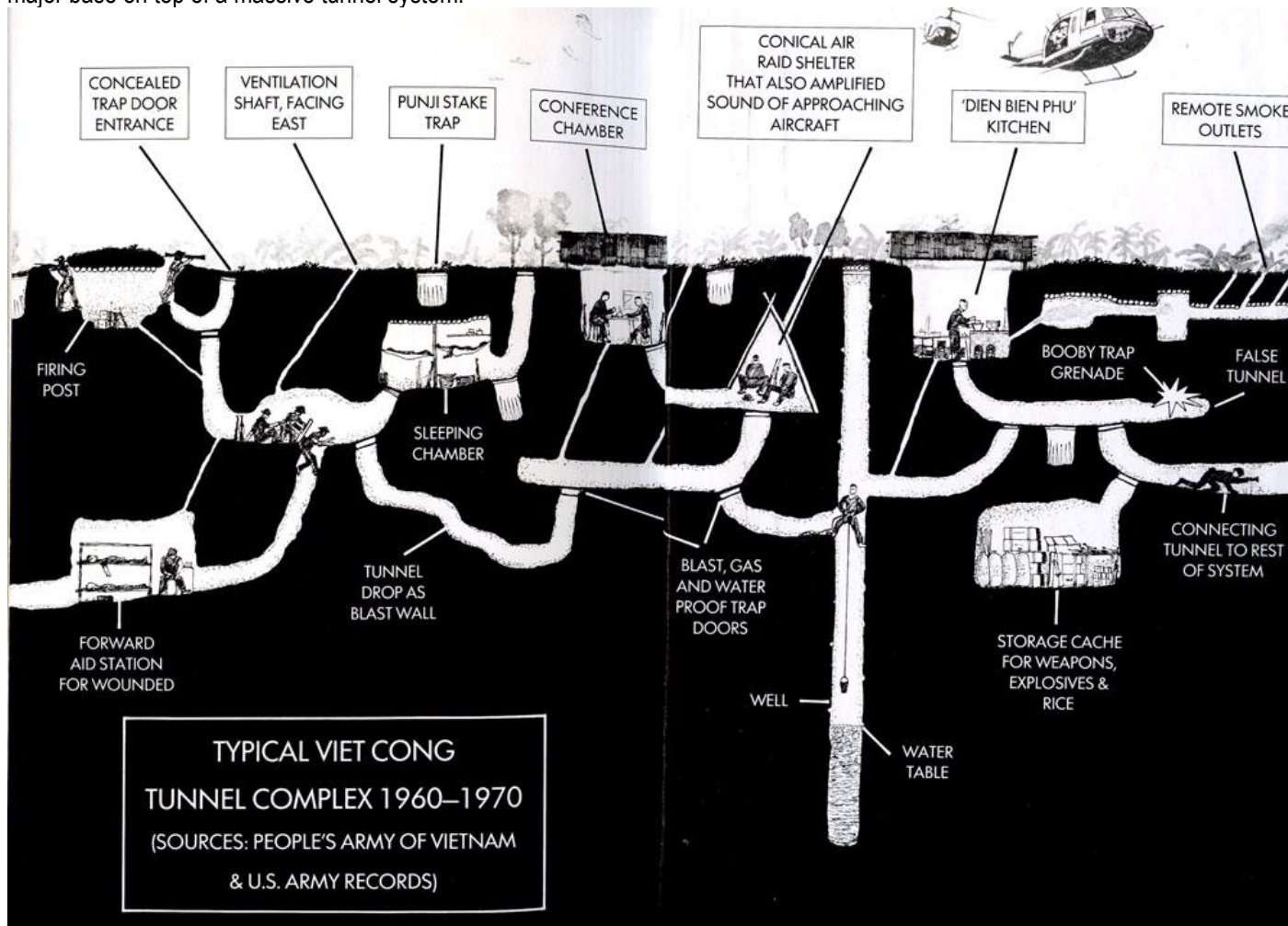
Source: <https://www.thenmusa.org/articles/tunnel-rats-of-the-vietnam-war/>

The Army faced two different threats in the Vietnam War, preventing it from focusing on exceptional performance in either conventional or unconventional warfare. The conventional forces of the North Vietnamese Army demanded respect from the U.S. Army. At the same time, the unconventional insurgency of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (known as the Viet Cong) presented a very real threat to Soldiers throughout the conflict. Tunnels were particularly useful in the insurgency and a series of tunnel networks provided the Viet Cong with manufacturing, resupply, and planning space within easy striking distance of their targets. Few Soldiers could fit into the tunnels and follow the guerillas into their lairs. While ordinary Soldiers occasionally went into the tunnels the Army recognized the need for a select group of experts to solve this unique problem. Aside from helicopter pilots and Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols, few conventional (non-special operations) Soldiers would place themselves so consistently in danger in Vietnam. These Soldiers were the “tunnel rats”: volunteer specialists who ventured into the labyrinth knowing that every step in the dark could be their last.



### An Unconventional Mission

The Army's search and destroy missions in 1966 began uncovering a large network of tunnels near Saigon. III Corps estimated one such tunnel network had been made over the course of up to 20 years and had small, well-camouflaged entrances. Viet Cong tunnels were generally either simple, shallow structures used as refuges and fighting positions or large, complex networks used to evade detection of medical, staging, or command areas. The layers of clay used to construct the walls and ceiling defied easy demolition or collapse of the tunnel. Some tunnel networks stretched thousands of feet and contained several levels and chambers. Underneath the ground an entire army could plan, train, and move without disturbance even when, as was the case in Cu Chi, the U.S. built a major base on top of a massive tunnel system.



A diagram of a basic Viet Cong tunnel system. *U.S. Army*

When found, tunnels often contained valuable intelligence or supplies. But the tunnels presented two difficulties for the Army: they were small, often too small for most Soldiers to fit in, and they were wholly unknown. The tiny tunnels, most only measuring two feet by three feet, meant Soldiers could only enter one at a time. No two tunnel complexes were ever the same layout, with sections joining at various angles in a zigzag pattern.

### The Tunnel Rat and His Gear

The Army initially had trouble figuring out how to deal with the tunnels. Bombing was ineffective: even 750-pound bombs landing 50 yards away from a tunnel entrance had no effect on either the tunnel or the entrance. Attempts to “smoke out” Viet Cong with tear gas or smoke grenades failed in the larger networks. Dogs sent down could not avoid any booby traps. The average Soldier sent down to explore an entrance usually failed to recognize the connection of surface tunnels to deeper networks. While hasty clearance often fell to the smallest Soldier in an infantry squad or platoon, asking them to go into deeper tunnels was generally counter-productive. Many casualties among these untrained



Soldiers came from accidents in the tunnels instead of enemy action. Capt. Herbert Thornton, a chemical corps officer with the 1st Infantry Division responsible for contaminating the tunnels with chemical agents, created specialized teams to enter, clear, and exploit the tunnels in 1966. Deliberate tunnel clearance fell to this group of volunteer infantryman, engineers, and chemical weapons experts. The tunnel rats were an eclectic group selected for unique characteristics. Most were short (most less than 5 feet 5 inches) with a slight, wiry build. The job also required a special kind of mental toughness: crawling for hours in claustrophobic darkness expecting mortal danger could break down even the bravest men. The job also demanded lightning-quick reflexes and no hesitation: confrontations with venomous snakes or Viet Cong often occurred at hand-to-hand range. Thornton knew a tunnel rat “had to have an inquisitive mind, a lot of guts, and a lot of real moxie in knowing what to touch and what not to touch to stay alive—because you could blow yourself out of there in a heartbeat.” Many tunnel rats avoided the vices common to their fellow Soldiers: drinking, smoking, candy, and chewing gum could dull their sense of smell and give away their position. Instead, they trained themselves and others to survive underground.

Some Soldiers took to the work with gusto: Staff Sgt. Pedro Rejo-Ruiz, a wiry Cuban immigrant who became known as “the human probe,” and Sgt. Robert “Batman” Batten volunteered to serve two extra tours with the tunnel rats. Batten joined Cpt. Thornton on the Viet Cong’s top ten most wanted list (only below top generals) because of how effective Batten and Thornton’s tunnel rats became. Rejo-Ruiz had been fighting his entire life; as a teenager in the early days of Fidel Castro’s Cuba he routinely harassed the communist troops with gunfire. After his family fled to the United States, he joined the Army to continue to fight against what he saw as an encroaching threat. Rejo-Ruiz had been defying death as a mine detector in the 1st Infantry Division before offering his services to the tunnel rats. He became obsessed with the challenges and theory of tunnel warfare and went down tunnels known to have guerillas hiding in them, particularly when another tunnel rat had been wounded while clearing. After becoming a naturalized citizen while recovering from injuries sustained in combat, he immediately returned to the tunnels and was one of the few rats to survive the deadly game of cat and mouse.



Staff Sgt. Pedro Rejo-Ruiz in his element. *U.S. Army*

Soldiers in tunnels had to travel light and abandon their technological advantages. Helmets, load bearing equipment, and even water canteens might be too bulky to carry underground. Some tunnel rats even abandoned their uniform coat. Soldiers began entering with a pistol and flashlight, and the Army later added a communications wire, compass, and bayonet to help them check for traps and communicate to the surface. Tunnel rats often carried a gas mask to protect against poison gas traps, but many decided to leave even that above-ground. As the war went on and tunnel rats refined their techniques, most ended up taking less and less down into the tunnels.

#### Denying Refuge

Often, gaining entry to the tunnels was difficult as the doors were challenging to discover without careful search. The tunnels generally lacked electric lighting and cleverly hid ventilation to minimize traces. Most tunnels required painstaking exploration to uncover and tunnel rats arrived on scene only after regular patrols had uncovered an entrance. Other times it was easy. In one instance, a Soldier and his German Shepherd were in the lead of a patrol when the dog suddenly stopped and sat. The patrol immediately stopped on alert: the dog had been trained to sniff out the enemy. Suddenly, the top of a well-hidden tunnel flew open and a Viet Cong soldier jumped out holding grenades. He was immediately shot and killed. A tunnel rat went down in the tunnel and captured a high-ranking Viet Cong officer.

Finding an entrance did not guarantee entry: Viet Cong often booby trapped the doors or placed grenades in nearby trees to kill Soldiers trying to gain entry to the tunnel systems. Once Soldiers gained access to a tunnel system, tunnel rats had a difficult decision to make about their gas mask. The gas mask deadened sounds by making a Soldier’s breathing seem louder and restricted his sight. But most tunnel rats could not pull out and don their gas mask inside the tunnel should they encounter poison gas released by fleeing Viet Cong. By 1969, experienced tunnel rats would first roll a fragmentation grenade into the entrance or blow the entrance open with explosives. The latter option also tended to solve the problem of booby-trapped doors and both meant that the rat could at least enter the tunnel unopposed, which some rats preferred despite alerting anyone below to their presence.

Once in the tunnel network, the real dangers began. Tunnels were dug to dissipate shock waves from explosions. This construction also obstructed Soldiers’ lines of sight: an ambush by the Viet Cong could be waiting around every bend. The tunnel system could be home to venomous snakes (whether living there or kept as traps by Viet Cong) or scorpions around every corner or in any wall indentation or hidden



ledge. Spiders, mosquitoes, and bats annoyed and distracted Soldiers already on edge. Nature's obstacles are enough for modern cavers to deal with but they were the tip of the iceberg for tunnel rats.



A tunnel rat explores a hole between “floors” of the tunnel system. These changes in elevation were among the most dangerous situations for tunnel rats because they could not ensure no traps or enemy were present before going through. *U.S. Army*

The Viet Cong built booby traps in most of the tunnel systems. Tunnel rats could expect grenades, poison gas, punji stake traps, and tethered venomous snakes. None of these traps would have the audio or scent signature a tunnel rat could recognize from a guerilla waiting in ambush. As Harold Roper, a tunnel rat in the early days of 1966, recalled: “I felt more fear that I’ve ever come close to feeling before or since.” There were only around 100 Army tunnel rats in Vietnam and most either died in the tunnels or in ambushes on the surface. This built a special culture among the tunnel rats, who ensured that no rat, wounded (and most were at least once) or dead, was ever left inside a tunnel. The tunnel rats went above and beyond to avenge their injured or fallen comrades: Rejo-Ruiz crawled through choking tear gas into a tunnel with a cratering charge to finish the job after the Viet Cong had wounded two other rats. Another time, the rats used 300 pounds of C-4 to blow the top off of a tunnel system when one of their number had been injured.







A Viet Cong soldier crouches in a bunker with an SKS rifle. A connecting tunnel is in the foreground. *National Archives and Records Administration*

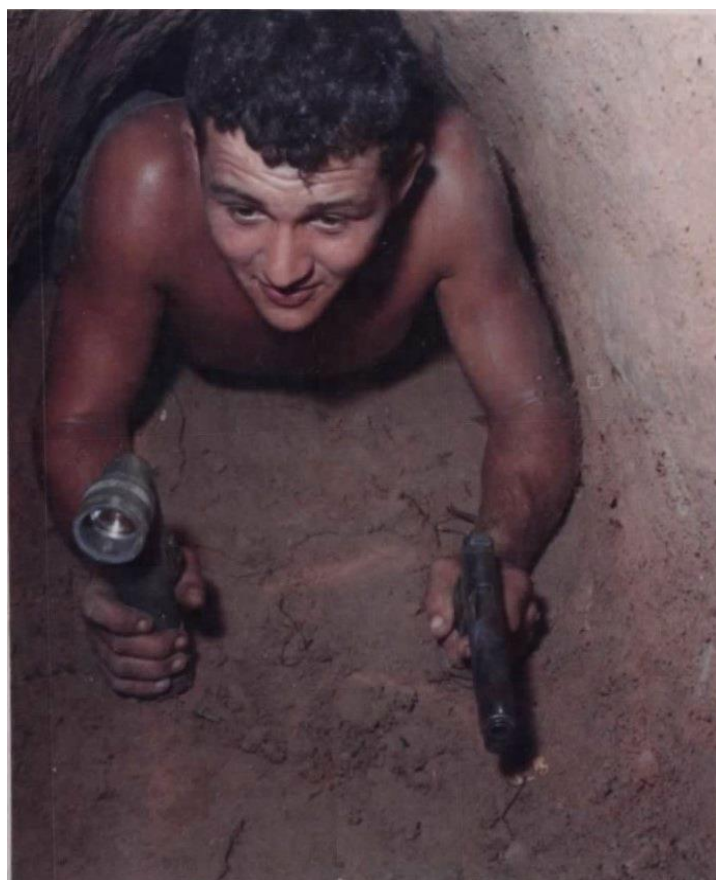
#### Tunnel Tactics: Innovation on the Job

Tunnel rats moved from ad hoc discovery of best practices to writing a new set of tactics, techniques, and procedures for clearing tunnels. While only one tunnel rat could fit abreast in the tunnel, occasionally a second rat would enter behind to provide assistance to the lead rat (particularly when the lead rat was new). The rest of his unit provided security and at least one other Soldier remained at the entrance at all times. Many tunnel rats maintained communication with their partner, who recorded the tunnel rat's actions and attempted to sketch out the tunnel and any significant findings. When contact with Viet Cong soldiers was expected, many tunnel rats preferred to have nothing distracting them from the deadly game of hide and seek. Soldiers learned to never fire more than three shots before reloading in order to keep Viet Cong from rushing them while they reloaded. Underground the rats eventually switched to using red-lensed flashlights, since the Viet Cong only used white lights and candles. Upon leaving the tunnels they whistled an agreed-upon tune so their muddy figure would not be mistaken for a Viet Cong guerilla.

Sgt. Ronald Payne of the 25th Infantry Division, moves through a tunnel in Operation "Cedar Falls," January 24, 1967. Note the M1911 pistol and lack of red lens over the flashlight, both choices which would fall out of favor as the tunnel rats honed their craft. *National Archives and Records Administration*

While early tunnel rats entered the tunnels with a M1911 .45-caliber pistol, most found the standard sidearm unfit for the task. The .45-caliber round was too loud and the muzzle flash too bright. If he needed to fire, using a 1911 denied a tunnel rat of two crucial senses for critical seconds. Some used silencers, some did not; some carried shotguns and other revolvers. Soldiers learned what worked best in their area and with their techniques and stuck with them. Viet Cong in the tunnels rarely surrendered, so few tunnel rats wanted to experiment. The knife or bayonet was a perennial favorite: this simple blade was a bayonet probe, booby trap disarmer, snake dispatcher, and weapon in one hand that never jammed or malfunctioned.

Once the tunnel rats had retrieved any information, equipment, or prisoners they could find, they set out to destroy the tunnel or deny its use to the Viet Cong in the future. The hard-packed, layered clay of the tunnels made such an operation very difficult. Early on, Soldiers tried destroying the tunnels with



conventional explosives, with mixed results. Collapsing tunnel entrances by igniting a mix of acetylene gas and oxygen with small charges worked well for more shallow tunnels. This method was too slow, inefficient, and cumbersome to use unless the area was completely secure. To deny tunnels the rats filled deeper tunnels with riot control agents like a powdered form of tear gas while collapsing the entrances with explosives. Denial generally made the tunnels unlivable for between two to six months. These deliberate operations all took time, a commodity most commanders lacked, so the tunnel rats' search was often the most impactful part of an anti-tunnel operation. Once done with their mission, the rats either returned to base or took a helicopter to the next tunnel in their area of operations.



[Hammas 500 km-long tunnels](#)

### Impact and Legacy

In the amorphous world of the Vietnam War the exact impact of the tunnel rats was sometimes difficult to determine but the rats found and exploited things no one else did. According to a former Viet Cong officer, the tunnel rats eliminated over 12,000 guerillas and captured many more. In a single operation in August 1968, the rats not only killed 3 Viet Cong but captured 153 more. Most captured Viet Cong weapons and equipment were uncovered by the tunnel rats. During one operation the tunnel rats found 6,000 pounds of rice and 40 pounds of salt in a 120-foot-long tunnel. Another underground complex covered 2,000 meters and yielded cameras, films, printing presses, and type, in addition to the usual cache of weapons and ammunition. One tunnel rat stumbled across a missing M-48 tank the Viet Cong were using as a command center and others routinely uncovered hidden artillery pieces and mortars. In 1970 tunnel rats uncovered a major signals intelligence node underground. Viet Cong codebreakers had been intercepting, decoding, and translating every transmission from the 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions; the sudden loss of information immediately made both divisions more effective and safer from deliberate ambushes. In addition to lists of spies passing information to the Viet Cong, the tunnel rats often uncovered maps, orders, and battle plans which helped save more American lives.

Soldiers sent down the tunnels disrupted the Viet Cong and found information their units could exploit. As the Army improved its ability to process and use the information the tunnel rats provided, the tunnels became more dangerous than useful for a Viet Cong decimated by the Tet Offensive and U.S. counteroffensive. The tunnel rats chose to go down into unfamiliar territory, without the benefits of modern technology, to deny the Viet Cong any sanctuary. In a complicated war with a painful history in American culture, the courage, skill, and nerve of the tunnel rats shone as they invented a military skill in the midst of mortal danger.

*Jonathan Curran  
Graduate Historic Research Intern*



# Hamas's 'Gaza Metro' tunnel system in 2021

## Israeli map showing tunnels allegedly destroyed in air strikes



Source: Israel Defense Forces

BBC

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## Footage shows use of chemical gas by the Turkish army in Avaşîn

Source: <https://anfenglishmobile.com/kurdistan/footage-shows-use-of-chemical-gas-by-the-turkish-army-in-avasin-54684>

**Sep 06, 2021** – Video footage by guerrillas shows the use of chemical gas by the Turkish army against the battle tunnels in Werxelê area of Avaşîn region in guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan, northern Iraq.



Smoke seems to be heavier than air

Apart from fighting the Turkish army, the guerrillas are making history by shooting each day of the resistance with their cameras and writing diaries. The Turkish army has been using chemical weapons and poisonous gas since June 8 when it launched a military operation in the Werxelê area. The guerrillas in the Avaşîn region are recording moments when Turkish troops use chemical weapons against the guerrillas resisting in the Werxelê battle tunnels. The smoke of poisonous gases coming out of the tunnels is clearly visible in the video recordings.

The Turkish army, which received serious blows in the first days of attacks on the Werxelê battle tunnels, have not been able to approach the positions where the guerrilla forces are positioned for almost two months. Explosives and chemical gases sent into the tunnels with ropes are just a few examples of the Turkish army's war crimes in this area. During this two-month period, chemical gases were used about 100 times against the Werxelê battle tunnels, and hundreds of explosions were observed in those tunnels. Despite all this, the Turkish forces could not break the resistance of the guerrilla. The guerrillas who recorded the events in the battle tunnels say that the Turkish army have used all kinds of chemical gases against these tunnels. The destruction caused by the explosions in the area where the tunnels are found is visible in videos recorded by the guerrillas at the scene.

## Spector on Ellison, 'Chemical Warfare during the Vietnam War: Riot Control Agents in Combat'

Reviewed by Daniel Spector (U.S. Army Chemical Corps Historian, retired) | May, 2013

Source: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=34531>

*Chemical Warfare during the Vietnam War* addresses the controversial topic of using chemical agents in war, particularly tear gas. D. Hank Ellison was an infantry soldier later commissioned as an officer in the



Chemical Corps. He has extensive experience with chemical equipment and chemical agents, and has been an instructor at Michigan State University training students in the safe handling of hazardous materials. He is very credible.

The author states his goals in the introduction. These are to discuss the history of riot control agents in combat, from the standpoint of international agreements, as well as the weapons and tactics used. He will evaluate how effective these agents were and whether their use could lead to use of lethal chemical agents. Ellison accomplishes this in a brief, but comprehensive text.

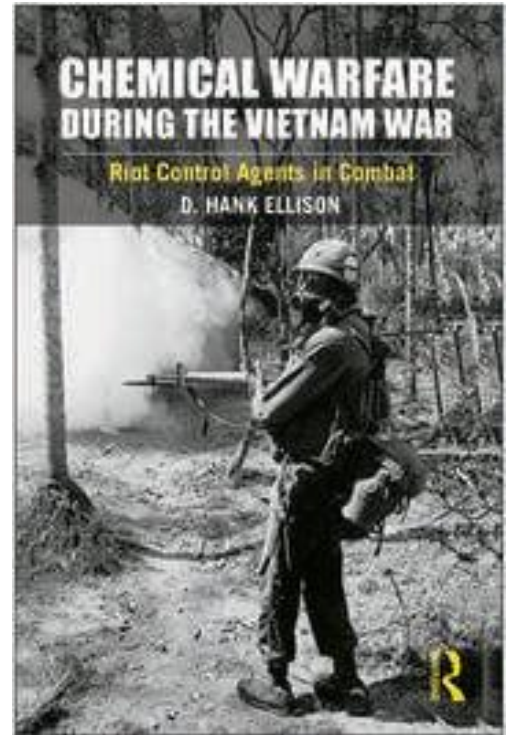
**D. Hank Ellison.** *Chemical Warfare during the Vietnam War: Riot Control Agents in Combat.* London: Routledge, 2010. 216 pp. \$125.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-87644-5; \$32.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-415-87645-2.

The “prelude” chapter notes that the first chemical agents used in Vietnam were herbicides to destroy vegetative cover for Viet Cong guerillas. This began with tests in 1961 that proved this would be a useful tactic, but Washington worried that widespread use would lead to charges that the United States was violating international agreements on chemical weapons. There was consensus that herbicides were not covered by the agreements. In 1962 Washington approved providing herbicides to the South Vietnam government, but limited American involvement to technical advice. Also in 1962 Washington decided to approve providing riot control agents to the South Vietnamese army, grenades containing the tear agent CN and vomiting agent DM. Both were considered nonlethal and not covered by international agreement. Both were commercially available and in the U.S. military inventory. Anxious to avoid communist propaganda charges, the United States banned use of these chemical agents by American forces.

The number of American forces in Vietnam expanded dramatically in 1965, but no change was made in use of chemical agents by those forces until Marines began operations around Qui Nhon. These involved searching areas from which the Viet Cong raided Marine bases and harassed civilians. Unaware of the ban on use of riot control agents the battalion commander responsible for this mission decided to use tear gas to root out Viet Cong in caves and tunnels in the region. The tear gas used was CS, which had replaced CN as more effective. This was Operation Stomp, and it began on September 5. It was a success and resulted in the capture of seventeen Viet Cong and rescue of three hundred civilian hostages. It did, however, generate a controversy when press observers noted the violation of U.S. rules of engagement. The Marine colonel who authorized use of CS faced charges, but discussions about the incident ended with his exoneration and the approval of tear gas as a nonlethal weapon.

The next three chapters, “Tunnels,” “Escalation,” and “Niches,” describe the initially cautious U.S. approach regarding tear gas and its eventual widespread use. In late September the secretary of defense authorized a single use of CS in military operations to evaluate effectiveness. The International Red Cross had scheduled a conference that would address the use of riot control agents, so there was pressure to use CS quickly. The United States selected an area twenty-five miles northwest of Saigon, the “Iron Triangle,” as the target area. The Viet Cong had extensive tunnel complexes there from which they launched attacks. U.S. forces only used two CS grenades in two tunnels later found to be empty, but the mission was declared a success. A year later Operation Cedar Falls in the same area saw extensive use of CS and smoke grenades to drive the Viet Cong out of tunnels, using a commercial blower called the “mighty mite” to push the gas and smoke farther into the tunnels. The legendary “Tunnel Rats” began with this operation. These were Chemical Corps soldiers who fought any remaining guerillas in the tunnels and destroying the complexes when cleared. As the war proceeded, employment of tear gas became more sophisticated and varied. Research resulted in the development of variations of CS to make it more persistent and available for use in artillery and distribution by air. Researchers also studied the benefits and drawbacks of tear gas in various scenarios and in combination with other weapons systems. Soon after withdrawal from Vietnam the United States used the lessons learned in Vietnam during the Mayaguez incident in 1975. Tear gas helped with the rescue of this merchant ship off the coast of Cambodia.

The chapter on urban warfare may have the most relevance to twenty-first-century conflict, which likely to occur in built-up areas. Ellison describes the experience in Saigon and Hue during Tet in 1968 in detail. Employment by the Marines in Hue of 4,700 CS grenades and 350 E\* rocket launchers, each armed with 16 CS rounds, demonstrates the effectiveness of tear gas. The United States and its allies were not the only ones to use chemical agents in Vietnam, as



discussed in the chapter “Communist Chemical Operations.” These not only involved use of tear gas, but also programs for chemical defense training, decontamination efforts, and making bunkers safe against chemical attacks.

Ellison addresses the questions posed in the introduction in the conclusion. He notes the effectiveness of tear gas in tactical operations. Moreover, the war provided important modifications in the composition of tear gases, delivery means, and use with other weapons and tactics. He also concludes that tear gas use did not lead to employment of more lethal chemical weapons. The controversy over herbicides like Agent Orange, however, overshadowed discussion of tear gas. The result was a 1975 decision to limit use of tear gas to riot control, prevention of the use of civilians to shield attackers, protection of convoys, and rescue missions. Besides the text, Ellison provides four useful appendices. These deal with technical information on chemical agents, U.S. munitions and weapons systems, Viet Cong use of improvised chemical munitions, and protective masks. Each has a relevant bibliography. There is also a comprehensive bibliography and extensive endnotes to facilitate further study.

*Chemical Warfare during the Vietnam War* will be of interest to those studying the war or the history of tear gas use in military and police operations. It should be in the library of any institution with programs involving chemical weapons and defense.

## AGENT ORANGE: Painful legacy

Agent Orange, a combination of herbicides and defoliants, was used by the U.S. military, particularly during the Vietnam War. The substance caused extensive medical problems, including cancers and birth defects, among people exposed to it.

**In 1991, the Agent Orange Act** made veterans exposed to the chemical eligible for compensation and medical care. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes a “presumptive” link between Agent Orange and a range of illnesses:

- Type II diabetes
- Hodgkin's disease
- Soft-tissue sarcoma
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Spina bifida in children of veterans
- Various other forms of cancer, including prostate and respiratory cases

**Added to the list in August 2010:**

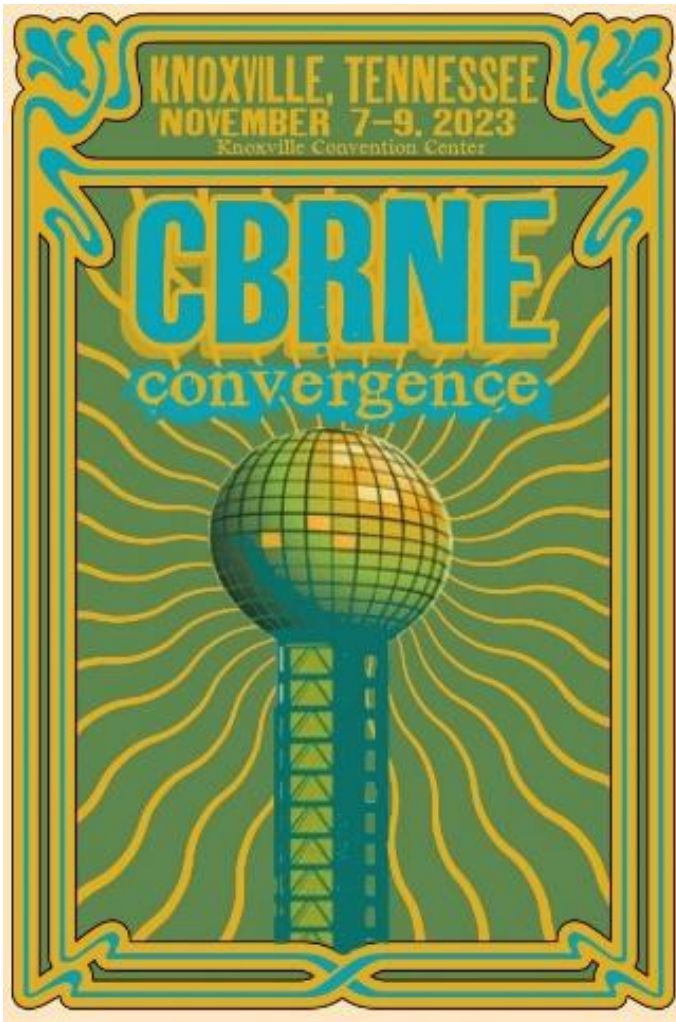
- B-cell leukemias
- Parkinson's disease
- Ischemic heart disease



# 2023 CBRNE-RELATED CONFERENCES



<https://nct-events.com/event>



<https://cbrneworld.com/events/knoxville>

2023 sees us back in the great state of Tennessee! 2019's Nashville event was a crowd favourite, and this year will see us move from the home of country music to the home of radiation detection – Knoxville! Knoxville is the host city to the world famous Oak Ridge National Laboratory/Y12 facilities, and we'll be bringing chemical and biological defence to match their nuclear excellence!

This will be our traditional two day conference and exhibition, with streamed sessions to allow delegates to choose their learning path. We're also planning on two pre-event workshops, more information will be announced soon, but one will be on 'Improved radiological response.'

The exhibition already promises to be the largest in the US in 2023, with space for over 70 vendors, covering all aspects of CBRN response. As usual the programme has some of the most knowledgeable CBRN speakers from around the world, more information on which can be found on the [speakers page](#).

We are excited to be working with the [Oak Ridge Enhanced Technology and Training Center \(ORETTC\)](#) for our pre conference workshop on the 7th November. Workshop attendees will have the rare opportunity to visit the Oak Ridge Enhanced Technology and Training Center (ORETTC)—part of NNSA's Y-12 National Security Complex. This is usually closed to international visitors, but CBRNe Convergence has negotiated a chance to be educated by some of the best rad/nuke professionals worldwide!

Delegates will learn about some of the latest radiological/nuclear response training methods and techniques being used in the newly-opened, state-of-the-art Emergency Response Training

Facility (ERTF) on the ORETTC campus. The \$15.1M facility enables the development of innovative approaches for emerging technological challenges and risk mitigation for critical infrastructure. ERTF provides local, state, national, and international organizations and government agencies with access to hands-on experience in high-consequence operations, emergency management, state-of-the-art technology, training evaluation and performance testing, and other advanced technical and tactical training areas.





<https://cipna-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.





**Defense & Security 2023** Tri-Service Asian Defense & Security Exhibition Conference and Networking Event



**Power of Partnership**

**6-9 November 2023**  
IMPACT, Muang Thong Thani, THAILAND

<p><b>IBMATA</b> INTERNATIONAL BORDER MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGIES ASSOCIATION</p> <p><b>BORDER MANAGEMENT &amp; TECHNOLOGIES SUMMIT</b> <b>MIDDLE EAST 2023</b></p> <p>Dubai, UAE   14 - 16 November 2023</p>	<p><b>IBMATA</b> INTERNATIONAL BORDER MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGIES ASSOCIATION</p> <p><b>BORDER MANAGEMENT &amp; TECHNOLOGIES SUMMIT</b> <b>EUROPE 2024</b></p> <p>Dublin, Ireland   27-29 February 2024</p>
<p><b>IBMATA</b> INTERNATIONAL BORDER MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGIES ASSOCIATION</p> <p><b>BORDER MANAGEMENT &amp; TECHNOLOGIES SUMMIT</b> <b>AMERICAS 2024</b></p> <p>Miami, USA   4-6 June 2024</p>	<p><b>IBMATA</b> INTERNATIONAL BORDER MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGIES ASSOCIATION</p> <p><b>BORDER MANAGEMENT &amp; TECHNOLOGIES SUMMIT</b> <b>ASIA-PACIFIC 2024</b></p> <p>Sydney, Australia   12-14 November 2024</p>

<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

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**DRONE THREATS  
AND COUNTERMEASURES**

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# BIO NEWS



The pandemic  
is OVER!



## Pandemic by numbers (as of October 22, 2023)

	CASES	DEATHS	COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES	MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES*
<b>COVID-19</b>	<b>(689,124,038)</b>	<b>(6,881,401)</b>	229	USA, India, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, S. Korea

\* over 30 million cases | numbers in parenthesis are patients of previous month

## Disease X: Causes, symptoms & severity of this global health threat

Source: <https://newsroompost.com/india/disease-x-causes-symptoms-severity-of-this-global-health-threat/5280479.html>

Sep 26 – Dame Kate Bingham, the former chair of the UK's Vaccine Taskforce, has issued a stark warning about a potential new pandemic known as "Disease X."

She believes it could claim as many as 50 million lives, making it 20 times deadlier than COVID-19. In an interview with the Daily Mail, Bingham emphasized the urgent need for global preparedness, including rapid mass vaccination efforts.



### What is Disease X?

"Disease X" is a term coined by the World Health Organization (WHO) to describe a hypothetical pathogen, either known or yet to be discovered, that could cause a large-scale, severe pandemic with widespread human disease. Dr. Neha Rastogi, a Consultant in Infectious Disease at Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, explains that Disease X could be caused by a "pathogen X," likely a zoonotic disease, possibly an RNA virus, originating in an environment that favors sustained transmission.

### Symptoms and Potential Threats of Disease X

There is concern that Disease X could result from various scenarios, including laboratory accidents or bioterrorism. Such a pathogen could pose a global catastrophic risk, highlighting the need for intense and ongoing surveillance and monitoring.

The symptoms of Disease X will include redness, pain, itchiness, and puffy or tearing of eyes.

### Prevention of Disease X

Dr. Rastogi outlines several key strategies for preventing and mitigating the impact of Disease X:

1. International Guidelines: The development and implementation of uniform international guidelines to control bioterrorism are essential.
2. Travel Restrictions: Immediate and appropriate travel restrictions, along with strict airport screening, should be in place to contain the spread of Pathogen X across borders.
3. Collaboration: A collaborative approach involving global leaders, scientists, epidemiologists, and infectious disease experts is necessary to investigate, control, and eliminate Disease X.
4. Testing and Surveillance: Widespread and mass testing, surveillance, and aggressive contact tracing are effective tools for containing outbreaks.
5. Medical Measures: Concentrated efforts to accelerate access to medical measures such as test kits, vaccines, and first aid are crucial for responding to the pandemic.
6. Vaccine Development: Ongoing research on vaccine development processes should be prioritized to combat the severe consequences of Disease X.
7. One Health Approach: A "One Health" approach, which aims to bridge institutional gaps, identify priority risk pathogens, and emphasize mitigation strategies for emerging diseases, is essential in preventing global catastrophes like Disease X.

In conclusion, the potential threat posed by Disease X underscores the importance of preparedness, international collaboration, and swift action in the face of emerging and re-emerging pathogens. The world must remain vigilant and proactive to mitigate the impact of future pandemics.



## Bioterrorism – Could Smallpox Return?

By Robert C. Hutchinson

Source: <https://domesticpreparedness.com/articles/bioterrorism-could-smallpox-return>



Sep 06 – The variola major virus, which causes smallpox, had a long and terrifying pathogenic history in the human population – the only natural host. Examinations of 3,000-year-old Egyptian mummies identified markings similar to smallpox scars. The smallpox-like disease has been documented worldwide in writings for over 1,000 years. With a mortality rate of approximately 30%, along with possible blindness and severe scarring experienced by the survivors, it was a greatly feared pathogen over recorded human time. The last natural smallpox outbreak in the [United States](#) was in 1949. The last documented naturally occurring case was in 1977 due to an aggressive and successful worldwide vaccination campaign. Due to a very effective global vaccination program, the [World Health Assembly](#) declared smallpox eradicated in 1980.

Although smallpox was eradicated from its human population and reservoir, it is still in designated stockpiles controlled by two nations. With the negative lessons learned and not learned from SARS-CoV-2 and possible laboratory leaks, suppose smallpox or a close variant returned to the human population. Immunity to the virus has faded with the end of the routine vaccination process and time, raising concern about how prepared the nation and world would be if smallpox re-emerged accidentally through a laboratory leak or intentionally through an act of bioterror or biowarfare.

### Biowarfare or a Naïve Population

It allegedly happened before. Reports state that, in 1763, British officers traded two [smallpox-infected blankets](#) to Native Americans during the French and Indian War. They were reportedly from the smallpox hospital inside Fort Pitt. There was a siege by Native Americans at the fort with over 500 settlers gathered inside. The plan was reportedly to reduce the number of Native Americans outside the walls by disease before the dreadful disease spread further within the fort.

The three items were reportedly from the smallpox hospital inside Fort Pitt – the British fort built on the confluence of the three rivers in current-day Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There was a siege by Native Americans at the fort with over 500 settlers gathered inside, some ill with smallpox. The plan was reportedly



to reduce the number of Native Americans outside the walls by disease before the dreadful disease spread further within the fort. The siege broke when the Indians moved their resources from the fort to intercept 500 British troops responding to rescue Fort Pitt. According to historical research, it was unknown if the exposed blankets could have transmitted the disease due to the [age of the blankets](#). The very contagious disease was reportedly already circulating in the Indian population since 1759 before the transfer of the blankets at the fort. There were additional allegations that smallpox was present in other items traded by early settlers. Either from intentional infection or interactions with infected settlers, smallpox most definitely entered the naïve population with horrifying consequences. It was estimated that between 500,000 and 1.5 million Native Americans died from smallpox. It was yet another example of how smallpox could ravage a population anywhere in the world.

### Eradication and Stockpiles

The Thirty-Third World Health Assembly formally declared the global eradication of smallpox. The [resolution](#) declared smallpox as a devastating disease sweeping in epidemic form through many countries since the earliest times causing disfigurement, blindness, and death. The World Health Organization (WHO) initiated the global program to eradicate smallpox in 1959 and intensified it in 1967. Success was achieved in just a couple of decades.

Four countries – South Africa, England, the United States, and Russia (Soviet Union) – retained the variola virus after its eradication for research purposes. By 1984, South Africa and England either transferred or destroyed their viral stocks. Currently, the variola virus is reportedly only stored at the State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology in Russia and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States (Atlanta, Georgia). According to the [CDC](#):

The goal of smallpox research is to address three areas that are essential for public health:

- Finding better antiviral drugs to treat smallpox disease.
- Making safer vaccines.
- Improving tests to detect variola virus.

In 1996, the Forty-Ninth World Health Assembly recommended destroying the remaining stockpiles of variola virus in 1999. The [declaration](#) recognized that the genome sequence information for the variola virus strains allowed scientific questions to be solved and permitted the diagnosis of suspected smallpox. The variola virus escaping laboratories would be a serious risk as an increasing proportion of the population lacks immunity. The World Health Assembly would again discuss or recommend destroying the variola virus stocks in 1999, 2007, 2011, 2016, and [2019](#).

A 2007 World Health Assembly resolution mandated WHO to inspect the variola virus storage locations every two years to ensure the highest biosafety and biosecurity requirements. In accordance, WHO biosafety inspection teams visit the repositories and inspect the Russian and American containment facilities. The same team reportedly conducts both inspections and provides reports made available on the [WHO website](#). No significant findings were observed in either nation's 2019 inspections, but there were recommendations for improvements in both countries.

### Vaccines and Antivirals

Immunity to the variola virus is likely very low. Routine smallpox vaccinations ended in 1972 after the disease was eradicated in the United States. The antibody levels were estimated to decline five to 10 years after vaccination. Before eradication, WHO recommended revaccination every five to 10 years for international travelers and three years if traveling to endemic areas. Research indicated that [decades-old](#) vaccinations would not protect from the disease but could prevent a fatal outcome.

The United States reportedly possesses sufficient smallpox vaccine in its Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) to vaccinate everyone who would need it for an outbreak if utilized as an agent of bioterrorism. Approximately three-quarters of the [federal funds](#) obligated for SNS medical countermeasures (MCM) between 2015 and 2021 were to purchase smallpox and anthrax MCM. The current smallpox vaccine does not contain the variola virus but a similar poxvirus. According to the CDC, the current smallpox vaccination [protects](#) for approximately three to five years.

CDC reportedly works with federal, state, and local officials to prepare for a smallpox outbreak. These public health officials would decide who would receive the vaccine, focusing on those directly exposed to the virus with prolonged face-to-face contact. After the challenges of the recent response to SARS-CoV-2, a smallpox outbreak response may not be as easy to execute as described by the CDC. There would likely be trust and confidence issues in the process, affecting outcomes.

The CDC is working with vaccine manufacturers to develop new smallpox vaccines. However, since the virus has been eradicated in humans, the ability to prevent the virus is not directly studied. The researchers use indirect methods by using vaccinated subjects' blood samples and testing the serum against the virus in a laboratory setting.

**The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved two antiviral drugs to treat smallpox –**



**teccovirimat and brincidofovir. However, the drugs have not been tested on humans with smallpox disease, so the actual benefit is unconfirmed.**

### Retention Failure

The smallpox storage and tracking process may not always meet expectations and requirements. The United States experienced the improper storage and handling of smallpox on at least one occasion. During the clean-up of FDA laboratories in 2014 to prepare for a move from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) campus, [six vials of variola virus](#) were discovered in a cold storage room. The vials were found among 327 unclaimed vials in the back of the storage area. The variola virus vials, along with a vial of Russian spring-summer encephalitis and nine unidentified vials, were turned over to the CDC. The 16 vials were destroyed in 2015. The remaining 311 vials were either destroyed or retained for research.

According to the FDA, the 327 vials were reportedly made between 1946 and 1964. It was unknown what entity created the vials and how they came to be placed in the storage room. The FDA laboratory shared the cold storage room from 1992 to 2014. An FDA researcher reported that the room was not empty when they started using the space in 1992. The CDC and the Federal Bureau of Investigation investigated the incident. The FDA conducted a review. The FDA identified six findings with corrective actions in 2016 to prevent a similar occurrence with hazardous biological agents and toxins (HBAT) in the future. Below are the [FDA review's](#) corrective measures:

- Enact policies and procedures to ensure that biological material is not orphaned when its owner departs the laboratory;
- Enact policies and procedures to ensure that a single individual is responsible for all contents, including HBATs, in shared storage areas;
- Conduct a full inventory of all units that store HBATs, and require periodic updates to ensure the inventory list remains current at all times;
- Enact appropriate policies and procedures to ensure that individuals are aware of the proper actions to take when they encounter a select agent or toxin in an unregistered facility or laboratory for which they are not trained to handle;
- Enact procedures to ensure that individuals are aware of the proper officials to contact immediately when there is a safety or security incident; and
- Communicate the best practices to ensure that individuals are aware of the proper way to store materials in a cold room.

These corrective actions should have already been in place for the sensitive FDA laboratories on NIH property. From the report, it was unclear how the variola virus was outside the designated CDC storage location – especially after its eradication in 1977 and declaration in 1980. The concerns remain that another vial could be sitting in an unauthorized area anywhere in the world pending accidental exposure.

### The Threat

The variola virus can be hardy if protected from heat and ultraviolet light but is relatively easy to kill with strong disinfectants. However, it can be a serious bioweapon since it is easy to grow and aerosolize for delivery. The Soviets reportedly produced massive bioweapon quantities for research and offensive biological warfare decades ago.

According to the CDC website, there is no immediate, direct threat of bioterrorist attack utilizing smallpox. However, even though it has not been used in modern times, the CDC identified that:

There is [credible concern](#) that in the past some countries made the virus into weapons, which may have fallen into the hands of terrorists or other people with criminal intentions.

There have been concerns that quantities of variola virus may have been taken or transferred from the Russian stockpile at the end of the Soviet Union. Some fear that then-unemployed scientists or former Soviet bloc nations may have retained, received, or transferred quantities of the pathogen. Also, Russia could possess uninspected covert stocks due to their enormous previous production. There also were [allegations](#) in 2002 that France, North Korea, Iraq, and Iran may have had undeclared stockpiles. The offshoring of sensitive or restricted biological research to other countries could be another danger. The actual amount of existing smallpox virus is quite likely unknown.

With the previous smallpox handling and storage violation and the possibility of [human error](#) in biosafety laboratories, the smallpox threat could be a public health concern for the United States. The concern could be more significant from unauthorized and undeclared virus possession and research. The possible access by unfriendly actors and gain-of-function or directed evolution research and technology would support current and enhanced planning and considerations. The recent identification of a suspicious biological [research site](#) in California with at least 20 potentially infectious agents only highlights these concerns.



Although naturally occurring smallpox was eradicated from the human population, that does not mean it can never return from a bio-leak or bioweapon. The efficacy of current vaccines and MCM may not be sufficient for smallpox or a newly enhanced variation. SARS-CoV-2, with a mortality rate of approximately one percent, would appear quite manageable compared to a virus with a 30 percent death rate – 30 times greater. Although there are numerous other significant biological concerns to consider and plan for, smallpox should continue to be high on that list.

U.S. pandemic preparedness strategies and plans appeared sufficient until SARS-CoV-2 emerged in early 2020. Existing smallpox planning and preparedness levels could be in the same position with much more serious consequences. The strategy looks good on paper, but the vaccines and MCM may not be readily available and sufficiently effective for an entire nation. Smallpox could return.

**Robert C. Hutchinson** was a former police chief and deputy special agent in charge with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Homeland Security Investigations in Miami, Florida. He retired in 2016 after more than 28 years as a special agent with DHS and the legacy U.S. Customs Service. He was previously the deputy director of the agency's national emergency preparedness division and assistant director for its national firearms and tactical training division. His numerous writings and presentations often address the critical need for cooperation, coordination, and collaboration between public health, emergency management, and law enforcement, especially in the area of pandemic preparedness. He received his graduate degrees at the University of Delaware in public administration and Naval Postgraduate School in homeland security studies. He is a long-time contributor to Domestic Preparedness and serves on the Advisory Board.

## Merck's COVID drug may be creating transmissible mutated viruses

By Matt Field

Source: <https://thebulletin.org/2023/09/mercks-covid-drug-may-be-creating-transmissible-mutated-viruses/#post-heading>



A nurse works with a patient during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Credit: US Navy/Sara Eshleman.

Sep 27 – A drug used to [treat patients](#) at risk of severe COVID-19 infection may have led to the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 viruses bearing a distinct pattern of mutations, researchers reported Monday in *Nature*. The new paper raises the stakes over concerns about whether molnupiravir use could lead to the emergence of new dangerous variants and extend the pandemic. **Molnupiravir, which is sold as Lagevrio,** works by [mutating](#) SARS-CoV-2 and causing changes that should knock out the virus's functionality. The mutated viruses aren't





supposed to replicate further, but researchers who [looked](#) at more than 15 million viral genome sequences found that a recognizable pattern of mutations emerged in 2022, when several countries began using the drug. They found this pattern in sequences from countries that used molnupiravir and in the age groups likely to have used the medication.



“We definitively demonstrate that molnupiravir has resulted in viable SARS-CoV-2 viruses with significant numbers of mutations, in some cases with onwards transmission of mutated viruses,” [wrote](#) Theo Sanderson, a fellow at The Francis Crick Institute in London and one of the new study’s authors.

New viral strains are an ever-present concern, and public health experts continuously worry that a more virulent or infectious COVID variant could evolve. When the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the use of molnupiravir in late 2021, Michael Z. Lin, a Stanford bioengineer, penned an opinion piece in *The Washington Post* calling the drug “[ineffective and dangerous](#).” Molnupiravir, he argued, could spawn new versions of SARS-CoV-2 that evade the immune system and prolong the pandemic.

“In 2021, I wrote ‘A new drug to treat covid could create a breeding ground for mutant viruses,’” Lin [wrote](#) on the X social media site on Monday. “We can now write ‘A new drug to treat covid has created a breeding ground for mutant viruses.’”

A statement from Merck defended its product: “The authors assume these mutations were associated with viral spread from molnupiravir-treated patients without documented evidence of that transmission.” The paper relied on “circumstantial associations between the region from which the sequence was identified and timeframe of sequence collection in countries where molnupiravir is available to draw their conclusions,” the statement said.

The new study represents a blow for a drug that seemed to squeak through to federal authorization. An FDA advisory committee “narrowly endorsed” the drug in November 2021, “despite questions about the drug’s effectiveness, safety, and whether it would help the virus mutate into even more dangerous variants,” CNBC [reported](#) at the time. The FDA authorized the drug that December, a day after it also okayed Pfizer’s paxlovid, another COVID antiviral. But data showed that the two drugs had vastly different levels of efficacy. Patients who took molnupiravir had a 30 percent reduced risk of death or hospitalization, [compared](#) to an 89 percent lower chance for those on Pfizer’s drug.

### Biodefense origins

Safety concerns about molnupiravir also came up during the COVID-era whistleblower complaint of Rick Bright, who headed the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) from 2016 to 2020, when he was removed from his post at the agency tasked with developing and acquiring medical countermeasures. Bright claims he faced pressure from the Trump administration to back unproven therapies, including a Trump-favored antimalarial drug called hydroxychloroquine. In the case of molnupiravir, Bright [alleged](#) he was pushed to approve millions of dollars in funding to help manufacture the drug (at the time known as EIDD-2801) before safety data had been collected.

Before being reincarnated as a COVID therapeutic, EIDD-2801 was developed as a treatment for threats [soldiers might face](#) on the battlefield, namely equine encephalitis viruses. Emory University chemist George Painter worked on EIDD-2801 as part of a 2016 contract for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency to create a countermeasure to the mosquito-borne viruses, which had been [weaponized](#) during the Cold War. Painter’s team thought the drug might also work against other viruses, including influenza, according to an [Emory news release](#).

In November 2019, Painter, who is the CEO of an Emory nonprofit drug development firm, met with Bright, the influential biodefense official Robert Kadlec, and others. According to Bright’s complaint, Kadlec, former President Donald Trump’s top public health preparedness official, was eager to green light the government investment in Painter’s drug, but Bright wanted to wait for more data. “Bright knew that similar experimental drugs in this class had been shown to cause reproductive toxicity in animals, and offspring from treated animals had been born without teeth and without parts of their skulls,” Bright’s complaint said.

Bright’s reticence allegedly irked Kadlec and Painter, who according to the complaint, “countered that Emory needed BARDA funding to start manufacturing as soon as possible. He insisted that EIDD-2801 could be a great asset to American national security, and warned that if BARDA did not fund its manufacturing immediately, Emory would take the drug to another country to manufacture it.” The complaint noted that Painter acknowledged, “sheepishly,” that the drug was already being manufactured in China.



The US government did end up investing heavily in molnupiravir. Emory [licensed](#) the drug to Ridgeback Biotherapeutics in March 2020, which then [entered](#) an agreement with the pharmaceutical giant Merck that May. The company announced that pending an emergency use authorization from the FDA, the government would buy \$2.2 billion worth of the drug by early 2022. NPR reported last winter that due to low efficacy, doctors were reluctant to prescribe molnupiravir. Many doses [were left](#) “sitting unused.”

**Matt Field** is editor, biosecurity at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Before joining the Bulletin, he covered the White House, Congress, and presidential campaigns as a news producer for Japanese public television. He has also reported for print outlets in the Midwest and on the East Coast. He holds a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University.

## Appili Therapeutics Presents at the 10th International Tularemia Conference

Source: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20230926093626/en/Appili-Therapeutics-Presents-at-the-10th-International-Tularemia-Conference>



Sep 27 – Appili Therapeutics Inc. (TSX: APLI; OTCQB: APLIF) (the “Company” or “Appili”), a biopharmaceutical company focused on drug development for infectious diseases and biodefense, today announced that Carl Gelhaus, Ph.D., Director of Non-Clinical Research, and key members of Appili’s scientific team, will participate at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Tularemia Conference, from September 24 to 26, 2023. Dr. Gelhaus will

present an update on Appili’s biodefense vaccine program [ATI-1701](#).

“The International Tularemia Conference is the premier tularemia conference in the world, and we look forward to sharing the progress we have made on ATI-1701 over the past several years and strengthen relationships with leading tularemia clinicians and researchers,” said Dr. Gelhaus. “We remain encouraged by recently announced U.S. government funding commitments for ATI-1701 and look forward to collaborating with other tularemia experts toward the first approved vaccine for the prevention of weaponized tularemia.” The presentation will include an overview of ATI-1701, Appili’s potential first-in-class vaccine candidate for the prevention of infection with *F. tularensis*, the causative agent of tularemia and a top-priority biothreat. Since it is a highly infectious pathogen capable of causing severe illness, medical counter measures for *F. tularensis* are a top biodefense priority for the United States and governments around the world. In May 2023, Appili announced a commitment of funding for ATI-1701 from the U.S. Air Force (“USFA”), who is working in partnership with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (“DTRA”), the funding agency.

### About ATI-1701

Appili is developing [ATI-1701 as a vaccine](#) to combat *Francisella tularensis*, which is classified by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) as a Category A pathogen, an organism that poses the highest risk to national security and public health. Estimated to be **1,000-fold more infectious than anthrax**, experts consider the aerosolized form to have a high potential for use in a bioterrorism attack.

### About Triennial International Tularemia Conference

The International Conferences fulfill a major purpose of the Tularemia International Society, namely to facilitate the assembly, acquaintance, and association of scientists engaged in tularemia research. Tularemia meetings focus on fundamental, clinical, and applied research regarding any aspect of *Francisella tularensis*. Research uncovers not only the biology of this fascinating bacterium, but also provides the basis for future development of treatments, preventive interventions, and disease diagnosis.

## Preparing for the Next Pandemic: Improved Method for Tackling Bird Flu

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230929-preparing-for-the-next-pandemic-improved-method-for-tackling-bird-flu>

Sep 29 – Researchers from the [University of Pittsburgh](#) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Vaccine Research Center have developed an improved way to test potential vaccines against bird flu. The report was published this week in the journal [iScience](#).

Concerning reports about avian flu outbreaks at poultry facilities across the country and abroad highlight the increasingly urgent need for a safe and effective vaccine that could thwart a possible spread of the virus from human to human. To be ready to safely and efficiently test promising vaccine candidates,



researchers developed an animal model that more closely mimics the typical symptoms of human infection than any such model so far. This proactive work minimizes the steps needed to quickly validate and deploy a new vaccine in a crisis.

“The COVID-19 pandemic got people to realize that it is not enough to respond to a pandemic when it happens. We really need to make sure that we are ready before it is here,” said co-senior author Doug Reed, Ph.D., associate professor of immunology at Pitt’s Center for Vaccine Research.

Bird flu, caused by H5N1 influenza virus, is primarily spread by migratory wild birds and can decimate poultry populations, including chickens and ducks. Although the virus has infected people, previous infections have not spread efficiently from human to human. However, there are documented cases of H5N1 spreading in mammalian populations, ranging from minks to sea lions and dolphins, raising concern about human-to-human spread.

People infected with H5N1 virus can develop acute respiratory distress syndrome, or ARDS, manifesting in short and labored breathing. H5N1 kills more than half of those infected.

To ensure that a future vaccine will be protective, the researchers turned to macaques, which have close anatomy and physiology to humans, making them a choice model for the testing of life-saving medicines.

Reed and his coauthor, Simon Barratt-Boyes, Ph.D., professor of infectious diseases and microbiology at the Pitt School of Public Health, reasoned that delivering H5N1 virus by small particle aerosol would make it more likely to reach deep into the lung and mimic natural exposure.

They first demonstrated this aerosolized infection model in research published in 2017. In the new paper, they refined their model and evaluated whether a seasonal flu vaccine, which protects against human influenza A and B viruses, when given three times with an experimental adjuvant could prevent ARDS upon exposure to aerosolized H5N1 virus.

All monkeys that received adjuvanted seasonal flu vaccine were protected from death, and there were low but measurable neutralizing antibodies against H5N1 in their blood samples, the quantity of which was inversely correlated with the severity of their symptoms.

While the researchers caution that their findings do not mean that a seasonal flu vaccine can efficiently protect against bird flu, they are optimistic that protective efficacy of future vaccines that target H5N1 can be tested using this model and deployed faster.

“The original idea behind this work was more than 20 years in the making,” said Reed. “Now there is a path forward to get people protected against this devastating disease.”

## Revisiting Aum Shinrikyo: New Insights into the Most Extensive Non-State Biological Weapons Program to Date

By Philipp C. Bleek (The James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies)

Source: <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/revisiting-aum-shinrikyo-new-insights-most-extensive-non-state-biological-weapons-program-date-1/>

Dec 2011 – Among the chilling details unearthed in the manifesto of Norwegian domestic terrorist Anders Behring Breivik were passages advocating the use of biological weapons and especially *Bacillus anthracis*, the bacterium that causes anthrax. Most commentators rightly downplayed the issue, since no evidence has emerged that Breivik obtained the bacterium or the capability to produce and disseminate it. [1, 2] At the same time, Breivik’s manifesto is yet another data point highlighting the appeal that biological weapons generally, and *B. anthracis* in particular, have to extremist groups and individuals seeking to cause mass casualties.

The most extensive non-state biological weapons program unearthed to date was organized in the 1990s by the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo cult. [3] Together with the 2001 letters containing *B. anthracis* mailed to the media and U.S. Congress, it is one of only two known non-state efforts to try to manufacture and disseminate aerosolized biological weapons or *B. anthracis*. Especially with so few cases on which to base analysis, Aum provides a key data point for assessing bioterrorism risks. But while much has been written about the group, most analysis has focused either on its successful chemical weapons attacks or the cult’s bizarre characteristics more generally. Aum’s failed biological weapons program has received far less attention, presumably in part because of a paucity of information. [4]

A recent report based on extensive interviews with key cult members, including some imprisoned and on death row in Japan, sheds new light on Aum’s biological weapons-related activities. The research effort that culminated in the publication of *Aum Shinrikyo: Insights Into How Terrorists Develop Biological and Chemical Weapons* was spearheaded by Richard Danzig, who served as Secretary of the Navy in the Clinton administration, and is a longtime advocate in Washington’s inner sanctums of more robust efforts to counter bioterrorism. [5] For full disclosure, this



author worked on the early stages of the multi-year research effort that culminated in the report, though not the drafting of the final paper. The following draws on that work generally and the recently released report specifically.

Prior to the Danzig et al. study, key cult members had apparently never been debriefed in any detail about their biological weapons program. Japanese authorities were more interested in the chemical weapons program, because it produced casualties, than the biological weapons program that appears to have failed. It is unclear whether outside analysts had previously tried to gain access to imprisoned cult members, which would have required the cooperation of the Japanese government.

Newly available information about Aum's biological weapons efforts provides grounds for both comfort and concern. The group grappled with challenges that will confront many non-state actors that might hope to employ biological weapons. Yet Aum's struggles appear to have had as much to do with its often bungling approach as with the inherent challenges of deploying biological weapons, and future groups may navigate these challenges less ineptly. The ways in which Aum failed, and the trade-offs it confronted, provide lessons for policymakers looking to disrupt the efforts of future non-state actors that aspire to wield biological weapons.

### From Yoga, Massage, and Alternative Medicine to Catalyzing the Apocalypse

Aum Shinrikyo began as a peaceful group before gradually morphing into an apocalyptic millenarian cult. The group evolved from a yoga studio founded in Tokyo in the mid-1980s by Chizuo Matsumoto (who later renamed himself Shoko Asahara), a semi-blind acupuncture, massage, and Chinese medicine practitioner. [6] Aum drew members stifled by a lack of purpose and spirituality in their lives, an early core of whom became Asahara's inner circle.

The group grew rapidly; by 1989, it comprised about 4,000 members, and by 1995, when the cult carried out the sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway and Asahara and other key cult members were consequently arrested, it had about 10,000 members in Japan. [7] The cult controlled about two dozen properties in Japan and had foreign offices in the United States, Germany, and Russia. [8]

As early as 1985, Asahara predicted a coming apocalypse and identified himself and his acolytes as key to averting it. Over time, this prediction morphed into a belief that the apocalypse was inevitable but cult members alone would survive it, and finally that the cult should hasten the apocalypse by launching attacks, including with biological weapons. [9]

The group's descent into violence was gradual. In late 1988, a follower accidentally drowned during ritual exercises, and fearing attention from authorities Asahara ordered his corpse burned and remains disposed of surreptitiously. When the deceased's best friend became disillusioned with the cult and attempted to leave it early the following year, he was killed. A few months after that, Asahara ordered the killing of a lawyer representing families of cult members, and cult members also killed the lawyer's wife and one-year-old son. [10]

One striking aspect of the Aum case is that roughly a dozen members of the inner circle personally carried out various criminal acts, including assassinations and the dissemination of biological and chemical agents. Cult rank-and-file appear to have assisted, likely often unknowingly, for example by staffing chemical and biological weapons production facilities, but appear not to have been directly involved in carrying out attacks. For members of the inner circle, crossing lesser thresholds to illegal action and violence appears to have reduced inhibitions to carrying out subsequent, more transgressive acts, and also made it difficult for members to contemplate leaving, since they were criminally implicated.

The trigger for the cult's shift from apocalypse survival to apocalypse initiation appears to have been its unsuccessful attempt to compete in Japan's 1990 parliamentary elections, on which it spent millions of dollars but garnered only a token number of votes. [11]

The group's efforts to develop apocalypse-hastening weapons melded science and science fiction; members were fascinated by futuristic weapons concepts such as plasma guns that could atomize human bodies or mirrors several miles across that would float in space and reflect the sun's rays. [12] Several cult members visited the archive of Nicolai Tesla in Serbia to research his writings about earthquake-generating machines. [13] The cult purchased land in Australia with the intention of prospecting for uranium to build nuclear weapons. [14] And Aum purchased military hardware from the former Soviet Union, including AK-47 assault rifles, production equipment to manufacture its own versions in Japan, and a surplus MI-17 military transport helicopter, although its procurement efforts—like its later biological weapons efforts—were characterized by short attention spans and short shrift to technical challenges. [15]

While some of Aum's efforts are best characterized as science fiction, the cult's pursuit of chemical and biological weapons was substantially grounded in science. Chemical weapons were pursued in parallel with and ultimately as a substitute for failed biological weapons efforts. The cult reportedly manufactured small quantities of phosgene, hydrogen cyanide, soman, GF and VX nerve agents, and attempted to employ some of these in targeted assassinations, consistently without success. [16] It produced and disseminated larger quantities of sarin, with which it was able to kill and injure on several occasions. [17] Although Aum apparently dabbled with a variety of biological agents, it only seriously attempted to obtain and disseminate two, botulinum neurotoxin (BoNT), obtained from the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*, and *B. anthracis*.



The focus of this brief is Aum's biological weapons efforts, which have received relatively little attention to date and on which the Danzig et al. study sheds more new light.

### **Botulinum Neurotoxin: Trying to Deploy the Most Potent Poison**

After deciding that the lawyer representing cult members' families should be killed, Asahara asked his disciples what the most potent poison was, and one replied, "botulinum." Although not employed to assassinate the lawyer, after the humiliating 1990 electoral defeat Asahara ordered the toxin's acquisition. [18]

As with *B. anthracis*, the cult chose not to try to obtain *C. botulinum* from legitimate culture collections, presumably fearing such a mode of acquisition could be traced back to Aum following any attacks. [19] Instead, cult members gathered soil from an area known to contain the bacterium with the intention of culturing it. [20] The cult may also have obtained material from a South American culture collection. [21] One key cult member recalls the group worked with at least five distinct strains of *C. botulinum*, suggesting that some effort was made to isolate *C. botulinum* from the thousands of other bacterial and fungal species a soil sample would contain, though no information sheds light on the methods by which the cult attempted this task. [22] If no isolation was attempted, that would provide one clear explanation for the apparent abject failure of Aum's *C. botulinum* efforts, since a soil sample would contain thousands of living bacterial and fungal species that would crowd out any desired *C. botulinum* the samples might have contained.

Cult members cultivated material in two very large, crude, homemade fermenters; whether these were capable of maintaining the anaerobic (oxygen-free) environment or temperatures required is unclear. No efforts were made to purify the resulting yellow liquid, a mixture of growth media and bacteria. According to a key cult member, at least some of the product was contaminated with *Bacillus [subtilis] natto*, an aerobic bacterium used in Japan to ferment soybeans, although how the contaminant was identified remains unclear. [23] Enormous volumes of the yellow liquid were supposedly produced; based on data provided by interviewed cult members Danzig et al. estimate total production at a remarkable 450 metric tons. [24]

Given the challenges Aum faced and its crude approach, the cult's efforts to produce BoNT unsurprisingly appear to have been unsuccessful. Mice on which the yellow liquid was tested showed no toxic effects, and one cult member reportedly slipped into a fermenting tank and nearly drowned, but subsequently showed no signs of illness. [25] In early 1990 the cult nonetheless disseminated large volumes of the liquid from trucks fitted with crude spray devices, deploying these in the vicinity of two U.S. Naval bases, the Narita airport, the Japanese Diet, the Imperial Palace, and the headquarters of a rival religious group. [26] No one appears to have been affected (including cult members who accidentally exposed themselves during the dissemination process), and the efforts went unnoticed by legal authorities.

In fall 1990, three Aum leaders were arrested for fraudulently purchasing land for a new compound; unbeknownst to the police, chemical weapons production facilities were under construction on the new land. According to a key cult member, the arrests were interpreted as a sign that a police raid was imminent, and Aum responded by dismantling its chemical and biological weapons facilities. [27] In 1992 the cult reinvigorated its efforts with a new focus on *B. anthracis*, detailed below. When these efforts failed to produce any casualties, in 1993 the group again attempted to produce BoNT and used small quantities of material it produced to unsuccessfully attack individuals and a subway station. [28]

A variety of factors may have contributed to the failed BoNT efforts. Several analysts have speculated that Aum may not have acquired a strain of *C. botulinum* capable of producing significant toxin. [29] Available information suggests the cult may simply have cultured a soil sample without attempting to isolate *C. botulinum*, which would not have yielded meaningful quantities of toxin even if the sample had contained a toxin-producing strain alongside thousands of other organic contaminants.

Even if the group did acquire and isolate a toxigenic strain, conditions for appropriate anaerobic fermentation may not have been achieved. Two cult members indicated the presence of bacterial contamination, and this would have interfered with the growth of *C. botulinum*. [30] It is also possible that some toxin was successfully produced but degraded or destroyed during processing, storage, or dissemination, or that whatever toxin was present was too dilute to have an effect. The most likely hypothesis remains that the cult failed to obtain or isolate the requisite bacteria.

### **Bacillus Anthracis: "Genetic Engineering" to Produce Lethality?**

In 1992, Aum reinvigorated its biological weapons efforts in the context of more robust militarized interaction with the outside world, the trigger for which seems to have been leader Asahara's whims rather than any particular external event. [31] Efforts now focused on *B. anthracis*, the bacterium that causes anthrax. As with the *C. botulinum*, Aum decided not to try to obtain material from a culture collection for fear the acquisition could be traced. An unsuccessful effort was apparently made to steal a strain from a laboratory, after which a cult sympathizer provided access to a vaccine strain of the material, although the details remain murky. [32] Perhaps the most important puzzle on which the Danzig et al. report sheds potential light is with its alternative theory about how the cult ended up with a vaccine strain



of *B. anthracis*. The conventional wisdom is that this represented bungling, possibly as simple as a clerical error when ordering material from a culture collection. Others have suggested that the anthrax dissemination was only intended as a trial run, or that the effort was sabotaged. [33] Danzig et al. advance a plausible, if still speculative, alternative explanation.

The cult member in charge of biological weapons efforts had completed undergraduate studies in agricultural and veterinary medicine at a university with a substantial anthrax collection, including both Sterne and Pasteur vaccine strains, before going on to PhD studies in virology. [34] Danzig et al. speculate that a contact at his old university provided him with *B. anthracis*, a supposition supported by new analysis of the samples gathered by the Japanese police, which suggest that the cult's material closely matched the particular strain of Sterne held by the university. [35]

Two key cult members indicated that Aum members working on the project were aware they had a vaccine strain but planned to use "genetic engineering" to convert it to a more lethal form. While other analysts have dismissed this as more science fiction than science, Danzig et al. speculate that the cult may have obtained both Sterne and Pasteur strains and sought to combine them to produce a virulent strain. [36] It turns out that Russian scientists had published a paper detailing such an effort in 1989, and scientists at the Japanese agricultural and veterinary university had been working on the technique around the same time. [37] It bears emphasizing that no concrete evidence suggests the cult obtained a Pasteur strain, and even if it had, employing Sterne and Pasteur strains to create a virulent pathogen is a challenging task almost certainly beyond cult members' capabilities.

As with BoNT, in 1993 the cult began attempting to mass produce *B. anthracis* without evidence that it had successfully obtained a pathogenic strain. Material was prepared in crude drum fermenters. No efforts were made to purify the 10-20 metric tons of liquid slurry produced, which was dispersed using a homemade sprayer, first from the roof of a cult building located in a residential neighborhood and later from a modified truck.

In the former case, some birds and neighborhood pets were apparently killed, though whether by the substance released remains unclear. Neighbors complained of the foul odor and gelatinous substance that rained down in the building's vicinity, leading the police to visit and gather samples, but these were not tested until after the 1995 sarin subway attacks. [38] After attacks with liquid slurry failed to produce any casualties, the group began to employ crude drying devices to produce a powder, an unknown quantity of which was disseminated by truck in Tokyo. [39]

Although some neighborhood birds may have perished, it appears no humans were harmed as a result of Aum's *B. anthracis* efforts. In fact, multiple cult members apparently inadvertently inhaled the material produced and subsequently reported no ill effects. [40] As with BoNT, a variety of factors appear to explain Aum's lack of success. If the cult was indeed attempting to produce a virulent strain of *B. anthracis* using two vaccine strains, this remarkably ambitious effort unsurprisingly failed. Even in the unlikely event that the effort had been successful, the resulting strain might not have been sufficiently robust for subsequent production, storage, and dissemination. In the even more unlikely event that Aum had produced and successfully stored volumes of a virulent strain, it is possible that poor dissemination capabilities might have damaged the material or failed to aerosolize it so that sufficient quantities could be inhaled. For example, the cult employed a homemade nozzle that reportedly spouted rather than sprayed and dispersed material during the day, exposing it to UV radiation and thermal updrafts that would have reduced concentrations at ground level. [41] But the most plausible hypothesis remains that Aum failed to obtain a virulent strain of *B. anthracis*.

### Learning from Aum's Failed Efforts

Especially in light of the paucity of bioterrorism cases, Aum's failed efforts to deploy effective biological weapons are a rich data point for assessing the threat and identifying policies to ameliorate it. Every case has its idiosyncrasies, and perhaps none quite so much as Aum, which really was "stranger than fiction." But with that caveat in mind, the case does suggest three generalizations about the bioterrorism threat.

### Putting the bioterrorism threat in perspective

Cult leader Asahara took a key lesson from his acolytes' repeated failures to mount an effective biological weapons attack: American hyping of the bioterrorism threat was intended to mislead groups like his into pursuing this unproductive path in lieu of other, potentially more effective weapons. [42] Although to this observer it appears unlikely Washington's public diplomacy efforts are quite so crafty (at least not intentionally so), Aum's struggles do suggest that successful bioterrorism is more challenging than it is often portrayed.

Generalizations from one case should be taken with a grain of salt, all the more so when the case is as idiosyncratic as this one. But the cult brought to bear both some degree of relevant expertise and very substantial resources. The head of the biological weapons program had completed undergraduate studies in agricultural and veterinary medicine and conducted PhD studies in virology, albeit was not a microbiologist and lacked tacit knowledge regarding working with bacteria. [43] Another senior member was a medical doctor. As for



resources, the cult possessed and was willing to spend millions of dollars on its unconventional weapons programs and constructed substantial infrastructure to support it.

The Aum case particularly highlights the importance of specialized, tacit knowledge to be able to isolate, manipulate, cultivate, and sustain living organisms, somewhat in contrast to chemical weapons development efforts. [44] The cult's failure to successfully deploy biological weapons appears to be over determined. Whatever the causes of its failures—and these remain somewhat ambiguous—it appears that plenty of others stood between the cult and a successful bioterrorism attack. For example, the cult appears to have failed to obtain a pathogenic strain of *B. anthracis* or a toxigenic strain of *C. botulinum*. But had it succeeded, it appears likely the cult would have struggled to cultivate those strains. Had it overcome that hurdle, cult members would almost certainly have exposed themselves during the production and dissemination process. Had they avoided those hurdles, Aum's crude production and dissemination techniques would have meant that few if any non-cult members would have been sickened by the crudely disseminated slurry, even if it had contained BoNT or a virulent strain of *B. anthracis*.

### Effective dispersal is a significant hurdle

Discussions of bioterrorism tend to focus on the possibility that individuals or groups might obtain agents they could use to conduct attacks, but often give short shrift to how readily such agents could be disseminated if they were obtained. The evidence suggests that Aum likely failed to obtain potent agents, and that its struggles to distribute what it did obtain effectively are therefore not necessary to explaining its failure to cause harm via biological weapons.

Nonetheless, Aum's struggles to effectively disseminate the material it produced highlight an important finding. Obtaining agents is likely the greatest hurdle to successful bioterrorism, but disseminating them to cause large numbers of casualties, and simultaneously avoiding exposure of those doing the disseminating, is a non-trivial secondary challenge that popular discussions of bioterrorism often overlook.

### Where there is smoke, there may later be fire

Aum's efforts were characterized by steadily escalating levels of attempted violence, a relatively seamless transition from individual to mass attacks, and from conventional to unconventional weapons, and a trial-and-error process of repeated errors but persistence and attempts at correction in the face of failure.

Like other non-state groups, Aum engaged in steadily escalating levels of illegal action and violence. The group began with the illegal disposal of the body of a cult member who had been accidentally killed and escalated to attacks on individuals perceived to be antagonistic to the cult and ultimately the general populace. Initial transgressions appear to have cemented group affiliation, emboldened cult members and especially the leader Asahara, and made it difficult for members to back out as violence escalated. One striking element of the case is the relatively seamless transition from individual to mass attacks, and from more to less conventional ones, (i.e., from killing a lapsed cult member by strangling him with a rope to attempting to expose large populations to BoNT and *B. anthracis*). Normative inhibitions appear to have played little role, although it is hard to know how far that can be generalized beyond the case.

Relatedly, the cult was not dissuaded by repeated failures, and it was emboldened at the lack of consequences for its earlier actions. This suggests that where there is smoke there may be fire, in other words, failed attacks may be harbingers of future, and potentially more successful, ones. The pattern of trial, error, and potential later success also provides support for a "broken windows" theory of counterterrorism: responding robustly to more modest initial transgressions may make subsequent greater transgressions less likely. [45]

### Sources:

[1] Philipp C. Bleek is assistant professor of Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies in the Graduate School of International Policy and Management at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, a Graduate School of Middlebury College, and fellow at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. He thanks Richard Danzig, Jessica Varnum, and Ray Zilinskas for helpful comments on earlier drafts.

[2] One striking thing about Breivik's manifesto is the sobriety of its analysis of anthrax, especially given the author's apparent lack of relevant expertise. However, since much of the manuscript was plagiarized from various sources, whether Breivik deserves much credit for the analysis is debatable. "Theoretically," the manifesto says (in this case channeling Wikipedia), "anthrax spores can be cultivated with minimal special equipment and less than a first-year collegiate microbiological education." But in practice, the document notes, the procedure "is difficult and dangerous." Andrew Berwick (pseudonym), *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* (self-published, 2011), accessed November 4, 2011, [www.kevinislaughter.com](http://www.kevinislaughter.com), pp. 952-954, 957, 959, 961-965.



[3] As William Rosenau notes, “Aum is the only example of a terrorist group that has attempted to carry out mass murder with biological toxins and human pathogens. Other terrorists have attempted to acquire human pathogens, and one religious cult has succeeded in poisoning food with dangerous bacteria. But to date only Aum has attempted to create and use bioweapons on a large scale. In short, Aum is an important source of empirical information on sophisticated terrorist efforts to acquire these weapons.” William Rosenau, “Aum Shinrikyo’s Biological Weapons Program: Why Did It Fail?” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Volume 24, Number 4 (2001), p. 290.

[4] John Parachini wrote in 2005, “Aum’s research about biological weapons remains remarkably obscure in official, journalistic, and scholarly accounts...These activities warrant considerably more thorough examination than they have received thus far.” John Parachini, “Aum Shinrikyo,” in Brian Jackson et al., *Aptitude for Destruction, Volume 2: Case Studies of Organizational Learning in Five Terrorist Groups* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005), p. 19.

[5] Richard Danzig et al., *Aum Shinrikyo: Insights Into How Terrorists Develop Biological and Chemical Weapons* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2011). Danzig’s prior work on the topic includes Richard J. Danzig, Rachel Kleinfeld, and Philipp C. Bleek, *After an Attack: Preparing Citizens for Bioterrorism* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2007); Richard J. Danzig, *A Policymaker’s Guide to Bioterrorism and What to Do About It* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2009); Richard Danzig, *Catastrophic Bioterrorism: What Is To Be Done?* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2003). Subsequent references to “Danzig et al.” refer to the Aum Shinrikyo report.

[6] Aum appears to refer to the “ohm” sound yoga practitioners make; Asahara (then Matsumoto) called his yoga school Aum, Inc. Shinrikyo means teaching of truth. An earlier iteration of the group was called Aum Shinsen no Kai, or Aum Mountain Hermit’s Society, based on a prophecy that survivors of the coming apocalypse would be benevolent *shinsen*, or mountain hermits. Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), p. 89.

[7] Reader, pp. 63, 92. Only a modest fraction of these were “monks” or “nuns” who had fully rejected all ties to the outside world. The group also attempted to open branches in Germany, the United States, and Sri Lanka, and was apparently most successful in Russia, where it attracted approximately tens of thousands of followers after Asahara visited the country with several hundred Japanese members on a “Salvation Tour,” including “spectacular” events and considerable radio and television advertising. Parachini, pp. 29-31.

[8] Appendix C: Aum Shinrikyo Facilities in *Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo* Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, October 31, 1995, accessed November 4, 2011, [www.fas.org](http://www.fas.org).

[9] Reader, pp. 88-93. Although the cult’s often-inept violence attracted police attention, a combination of equally-inept policing and strict laws protecting religious organizations allowed it to act with relative impunity.

[10] Reader pp. 143-145, 148-151; Danzig et al., pp. 9, 12, 14.

[11] Reader, pp. 148, 153-158.

[12] Reader, p. 180.

[13] Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It: Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence, and the New Global Terrorism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999), pp. 119-120. One can imagine the elderly archivist’s bafflement at the strange Japanese visitors who spent day after day digging through the archives for earthquake generation-related material.

[14] Parachini, p. 23

[15] Parachini, p. 26; Reader, p. 217; Lifton, p. 181.

[16] Danzig et al., p. 29.

[17] The Danzig et al. study also includes a rich account of Aum’s chemical weapons efforts with some new details about the cult’s activities, including the most thorough discussion of the cult’s crude but effective sarin dissemination techniques published to date.

[18] Danzig et al., p. 16.

[19] Since the cult operated a hospital, it could plausibly have obtained the bacterium from a commercial culture collection.

[20] What was gathered remains unclear, but a key cult member told Danzig et al. that the cult worked on at least five strains or variants of *C. butulinum*, although some material may later have been obtained from a South American culture collection. How the cult isolated and identified the strains on which it supposedly worked remains unclear. Danzig et al., p. 16.

[21] The Danzig et al. study notes this possibility but does not attribute it to a source; see endnote 68, p. 54.

[22] Danzig et al., p. 16.

[23] Danzig et al., p. 17.

[24] A key cult member described to Danzig et al. two or three cube-shaped steel boxes, with dimensions of 2 x 2 x 2.5 meters, used as fermenters, and approximately 50 batches of yellow liquid produced. The total volume supposedly produced would be sufficient to fill dozens of full-size fertilizer transport trucks,





suggesting that perhaps the cult member's recollections should be taken with a grain of salt. That said, Aum had both very substantial financial resources (a study by the U.S. Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations estimated Aum's total resources in 1995 at more than \$1 billion), and the land and manpower for substantial facilities. *Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo*, Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, October 31, 1995, accessed November 4, 2011 at [www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995\\_rpt/aum/index.html](http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/index.html).

[25] Mice were apparently injected with the yellow liquid; whether ingestion and aerosol inhalation were also employed is unclear. There appears to have been some uncertainty about whether some mice were affected; some did die, but it was unclear whether this was linked to the administration of the botulinum. Danzig, p. 16 and endnote 76, pp. 54-55.

[26] Danzig et al., p. 17.

[27] Danzig et al., pp. 17, 20.

[28] Danzig et al., p. 21.

[29] W. Seth Carus, *Bioterrorism and Biocrimes: The Illicit Use of Biological Agents Since 1990* (National Defense University, 2002), p. 50; Gregory D. Koblenz, *Living Weapons: Biological Warfare and International Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 213; Milton Leitenberg, *Assessing the Biological Weapons and Bioterrorism Threat* (U.S. Army War College, 2005), p. 60.

[30] Danzig et al., p. 17.

[31] Danzig et al., pp. 20-21.

[32] Some of the uncertainty stems from the fact that the individual in charge of the cult's biological weapons efforts declined interview requests from Danzig et al., and other key cult members disclaim knowledge of his bacillus anthracis source(s). Danzig et al., pp. 21, 23.

[33] Parachini, p. 21.

[34] Unfortunately, the cult member in charge of the biological weapons program declined to meet with Danzig and his colleagues.

[35] Paul Keim, who with colleagues had analyzed a sample from Aum's 1993 attempted *B. anthracis* attack and identified it as a benign Sterne vaccine strain, conducted further analysis in 2010 in response to a request from Danzig et al. and determined that, "The genome sequence was extremely similar not just to Sterne but specifically to the 34F2 strain then available at Obihiro," the university where the cult member in charge of the biological weapons program had conducted his undergraduate studies. Danzig et al., p. 23.

[36] Virulent *B. anthracis* possesses two plasmids, while the Sterne and Pasteur strains each possess only one of the two and can consequently stimulate immune reactions without being lethal. The two strains can be employed to yield virulent bacteria via either cell-to-cell "mating" (conjugation), or the use of a virus that infects bacteria (transduction). The technique is challenging and likely beyond the abilities of Aum's members, but Danzig et al.'s speculation that it was being attempted finds considerable support from the accounts of cult members and other information. Danzig et al., pp. 23-25.

[37] The speculation is further reinforced by the recollection of one key cult member that a microscope was used to confirm success in transforming the vaccine strain to a more virulent one. The second plasmid found on a virulent anthrax strain generates a capsule that can be viewed after staining under a light microscope. Danzig et al., p. 24. The Russian paper cited is A.S. Stepanov, "Transduction and Conjugation Transfer of the pX02 Plasmid in *Bacillus anthracis*" *Molekuliarnaia Genetika, Mikrobiologia, I Virusologia* 12 (1989), pp. 39-43.

[38] Raymond A. Zilinskas, *Biological Warfare: Modern Offense and Defense* (Lynne Rienner, 2000), p. 81; Lifton, p. 188; Danzig, p. 25.

[39] Danzig et al., p. 25.

[40] Danzig et al., p. 25.

[41] Gregory D. Koblenz, *Living Weapons: Biological Warfare and International Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 213.

[42] Danzig et al., p. 26, based on Danzig interview with Fumihiro Joyu, April 21, 2008. One can imagine Al Qaeda operatives similarly grumbling about chemical, biological, and especially nuclear terrorism risk assessments; the online humor magazine *The Onion* nicely captured that scenario in a story headlined "Terrorist Has No Idea What To Do With All This Plutonium" a few years ago. November 30, 2005, accessed October 2, 2011 at [www.theonion.com](http://www.theonion.com).

[43] Tacit knowledge is knowledge that cannot be conveyed in words or symbols, but must be learned by doing, often through a process of trial-and-error. A paradigmatic example is learning to write a bicycle; a textbook on bicycle-riding would presumably be of little use to mastering the core skill of balancing while operating the bicycle.

[44] Successfully mounting a *B. anthracis* attack requires skills associated with obtaining, growing, processing, sporulating, drying, pulverizing, testing, and disseminating, posing major challenges even for those trained as, for example, medical doctors or veterinarians.



[45] The “broken windows” strategy of policing was first articulated by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in a 1982 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, in which they suggested that not fixing broken windows would encourage greater transgressions. The approach was famously implemented in New York in the early 1990s, first by the head of the city’s Transit Police, William Bratton, and then by Major Rudy Giuliani and his police commissioner, Howard Safir. As implemented in New York, one notable example of “broken windows” were the “squeegee men” who cleaned car windshields at intersections and then demanded payment. James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety” *The Atlantic Magazine* (March 1982), accessed November 4, 2011, [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com).

## Biotechnology and AI Advances, Disinformation Campaigns Compound Increased Risk of WMD Attacks

By Bridget Johnson

Source: <https://www.hstoday.us/featured/biotechnology-and-ai-advances-disinformation-campaigns-compound-increased-risk-of-wmd-attacks/>

Oct 02 – Countering the development and potential use of weapons of mass destruction has grown more complex with biotechnology advances that could be exploited by bad actors as well as rampant disinformation campaigns that could hamper the ability to prevent or respond to an attack or other incident.

The unclassified version of the [2023 Department of Defense \(DoD\) Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction \(CWMD\) Strategy](#) released Thursday says that the risk of the United States or allies and partners “facing a military confrontation that includes chemical, biological, radiological, and/or nuclear (CBRN) weapons has increased since 2014.”

The WMD strategy expands upon the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) guidance by outlining four CWMD-specific priorities: defending the homeland from WMD attack, deterring WMD use against the United States and its allies and partners, enabling the Joint Force to prevail in a CBRN-contested environment, and preventing new WMD threats.

DoD said the strategy has six ways of implementation: “develop credible options to deter WMD use and assure Allies and partners,” “build a Joint Force that can campaign, fight, and win in a CBRN environment,” “enable Allies and partners to counter WMD proliferation and use,” “degrade actor capability to develop, acquire, or use WMD,” “take action, as part of whole-of-government efforts, to prevent proliferation and respond to use of WMD,” and “pursue advanced research and development efforts to counter future chemical and biological threats.”

“In order to address the challenges of the current and future security environment, the Department must now recapitalize, and in some cases reconstitute, its ability to conduct large-scale joint operations within a WMD-contested battlespace,” the strategy states. “The Department must also account for evolving factors in relevant DoD operations, activities, and investments to prevent potential adversaries from developing and exploiting an area of perceived asymmetric advantage across the spectrum of conflict.”

As major nuclear powers “armed with a suite of nuclear, chemical, and biological capabilities,” China is called the “pacing challenge” making significant investments in its WMD programs and Russia is referred to as an “acute threat.” North Korea, Iran, and violent extremist organizations “remain persistent regional threats that must also be addressed.” The WMD ambitions of state and non-state actors are “compounded by rapid advancements in technology, including the life sciences, artificial intelligence, automation, nanotechnology, hypersonic delivery systems, and defensive systems, such as hardened and deeply buried structures.”

“The global availability of dual-use technologies, particularly in the biotechnology space, may erode traditional barriers to proliferation and reduce opportunities to deny or disrupt development of offensive WMD programs and delivery systems,” the strategy says. “Meanwhile, potential adversaries have learned from and are adapting to traditional U.S. counterproliferation tools and approaches, including by indigenizing their supply chains and procurement mechanisms.”

The proliferation of mis-/disinformation also influences the WMD landscape, as China and Russia have “proven adept at manipulating the information space to inhibit attribution of its activities, to reduce trust and confidence in the effectiveness of countermeasure, and to potentially slow decision-making following WMD use.”

China likely intends to deploy at least 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030 and 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035, DoD says, and “has engaged in research and activities with potential dual-use applications, which raise concerns regarding its compliance with the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).”

“The United States has compliance concerns with respect to PRC military medical institutions’ toxin research and development given their potential as a biological threat,” the strategy notes. “Further, the United States cannot certify that the PRC has met its obligations under the CWC regarding the PRC’s



research of pharmaceutical-based agents and toxins with potential dual-use utility for chemical weapons applications.”

Russia is “expanding and modernizing its large and diverse arsenal of nonstrategic nuclear weapons to create effects in the air, land, and maritime domains” and made clear that the country “retains an undeclared chemical weapons program” through 2020 and 2018 assassination attempts by Russian operators using the novichok nerve agent. “The United States is concerned that Russia has a pharmaceutical-based agent program intended for purposes inconsistent with the CWC. Furthermore, the United States assesses that Russia retains an offensive biological warfare program.”

North Korea is “developing and fielding mobile short-, intermediate-, and intercontinental- range nuclear capabilities that place the U.S. homeland and regional Allies and partners at risk,” and “maintains up to several thousand metric tons of chemical warfare agents and the capability to produce nerve, blister, blood, and choking agents.” The DoD strategy assesses that Iran “is not pursuing a nuclear weapons program at this time, but has the capacity to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear device in less than two weeks.

“The United States is also concerned that Iran is pursuing dual-use central nervous system-acting chemicals for offensive purposes,” DoD adds.

The strategy stresses that “the same biological and chemical science advancements created to develop life-saving medical countermeasures could also be used by potential adversaries to develop new or enhanced agents,” while “reservoirs of naturally occurring pathogens of high consequence are potential avenues for biological weapons research.”

“Adversaries can also leverage this more complex operating environment to constrain U.S. strategic choices by masking an attack, augmenting other activities, or conducting an opportunistic disinformation campaign,” the document adds.

The strategy cites intelligence and information sharing, the engagement of leaders prior to crisis and conflict, investment in human capital, investment in research and development, and “an adaptive and responsive acquisition system” as critical to executing implementation of the strategy’s priorities.

“DoD must maintain and, where necessary, establish scientific and technological advantage to prepare for and respond to ever-evolving threats, particularly in biotechnology and chemistry that could produce new strategic or operational impacts,” the strategy says. “...The Department must leverage public-private partnerships focused on chemical and biological defense to reduce risk to the Joint Force and to prepare to respond to and mitigate future threats.” Managing that risk includes understanding and predicting threats, monitoring exposure to chemical and biological agents and having real-time detection and diagnostic tools, having therapeutic countermeasures, and fielding better protection for those who could be exposed.

WMD challenges should be “actively” featured in service, joint, interagency, and multinational exercises and “U.S. force design should assume adversary CBRN use and capabilities consistent with the best and latest intelligence assessments.”

“For established WMD programs, disruption efforts will seek to inhibit the advancement of existing or planned capabilities,” the strategy states. “...As potential adversaries expand and modernize their capabilities, it is critical that the Department strengthen its ability to deter and, should deterrence fail, achieve our objectives in the face of WMD use.”

**Bridget Johnson** is the Managing Editor for Homeland Security Today. A veteran journalist whose news articles and analyses have run in dozens of news outlets across the globe, Bridget first came to Washington to be online editor and a foreign policy writer at The Hill. Previously she was an editorial board member at the Rocky Mountain News and syndicated nation/world news columnist at the Los Angeles Daily News. Bridget is a terrorism analyst and security consultant with a specialty in online open-source extremist propaganda, incitement, recruitment, and training. She hosts and presents in Homeland Security Today law enforcement training webinars studying a range of counterterrorism topics including conspiracy theory extremism, complex coordinated attacks, critical infrastructure attacks, arson terrorism, drone and venue threats, antisemitism and white supremacists, anti-government extremism, and WMD threats.

## Entomological Evil

Last Updated on Sun, 06 Aug 2023 | [Biological Weapons](#)



## Beetle Bombs

Last Updated on Tue, 30 May 2023 | [Biological Weapons](#)



## Climate or conflict? Legionnaire's outbreak in Poland raises questions

By Filippa Lentzos, and Gemma Bowsher

Source: <https://thebulletin.org/2023/10/climate-or-conflict-legionnaires-outbreak-in-poland-raises-questions/>



*Legionella pneumophila* bacteria, which cause Legionnaire's disease. Credit: CDC/Margaret Williams/Claressa Lucas/Tatiana Travis.

Oct 05 – An outbreak of Legionnaire's disease in the Polish city of Rzeszow this summer raised uncomfortable questions for the Polish government about the source of the sometimes-deadly illness that was spreading through the city's water. The infection, caused by the *legionella* bacterium, isn't particularly rare; it crops up all over Europe on occasion, but this outbreak came with a startling statistic—two years' worth of infections and deaths in just a three-week period. And it happened to occur in a curious location: a key hub for the Western effort to aid Ukraine in its defense against Russia.

It's generally a good assumption that disease outbreaks are naturally occurring and not the result of deliberate attempts to create them. Every year, people get sick from bacterial infections like *salmonella* that can be traced back to a source of contamination or from seasonal viral infections like influenza that happen each year at about the same time. But sometimes, a natural origin shouldn't be taken for granted. A conflict setting would be one such situation.

That may be particularly true in the context of a war that has included regular rhetoric about biological weapons. [Predictions from across civil society](#) have highlighted the potential for Ukrainian public health and biological research efforts to become targets of Russian disinformation. And from the beginning of Russia's war on Ukraine, Russian officials and media networks have sought to raise [unfounded suspicions](#) about illicit activities in Ukrainian biological research labs. Russia has taken its



accusations to the [UN Security Council](#) and [other international fora](#), so far without success, as it seeks to justify its invasion. The United States, deeply involved in supporting Ukraine, has [assessed](#) that Russia maintains an offensive biological weapons program and has [raised concerns](#) about whether Moscow might launch an unconventional attack.

For governments, responding assertively to ambiguous outbreaks is critical. They need to move fast to establish the facts and to maintain public confidence in health services. But investigating ambiguous outbreaks is exceptionally difficult. Attributing an outbreak to a source is tricky—technically and diplomatically. Given factors that include climate change and rising global tensions, it's a task governments may need to confront more frequently.

### What happened

A city of about 180,000, Rzeszow is no ordinary Polish town. It sits just 60 kilometers from the Ukrainian border and serves as a major international logistics hub for Western military supplies destined for the conflict. It is a temporary home to roughly 1,700 US troops and is also set to host a [NATO-built logistics center](#) within the next year. When Legionnaire's started spreading, misinformation and disinformation about a deliberate attack or who was to blame spread, too.

Russia's state-owned RIA Novosti news outlet [claimed](#) the Legionnaire's outbreak may have been a US false flag operation designed to later accuse Russia of using biological weapons. And stopfake.org, a Ukrainian fact-checking organization, reported that Russian state media and anonymous social media channels [have worked](#) to pin the blame for the outbreak on Ukrainian refugees in Poland, which plays an important role as the primary receiving nation for Ukrainian refugees. According to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, about [1 million Ukrainian refugees](#) are in Poland.

Polish authorities' aggressive public health campaign, which included chlorination of the municipal water supply, appears to have contained the disease, which led to [160 cases and 23 deaths](#) between August 18 and September 11. Legionnaire's is [not uncommon](#), but authorities, reacting to the features and location of the Rzeszow outbreak, set out to investigate whether the outbreak may have been the result of deliberate sabotage.

Security services have remained tight-lipped, saying only that they are carrying out a routine investigation into "potential intentional action," and the results haven't yet been made public. Meanwhile, the head of a Polish epidemiology association told *The New York Times* the evidence likely points to an unusually severe natural outbreak, one that was perhaps [amplified by climate change](#). Hotter temperatures create more favorable conditions for bacterial growth.

### Increased ambiguity

The war in Ukraine, the assault on laboratories during Sudan's recent civil unrest, and earthquakes and floods in Syria, Morocco and Libya, highlight the [precarity of biological security](#) amidst the pressing concerns of conflict, climate change, and natural disasters. The Rzeszow outbreak highlights the challenge of a type of event that may become more common.

More disease outbreaks amid global conflicts are a recipe for ambiguous biological events.

Take anthrax—a disease caused by bacterial spores that live in soil and can sicken cattle and other grazing animals who breathe in or consume them. It's endemic in many countries, and small outbreaks are a relatively common feature of the disease landscape. But during a war, tensions and skepticism about the "other side" can run high. When [anthrax broke out in goats](#) in a part of Ukraine that didn't normally see anthrax infections, the incident demanded a heightened public health and communications response.

This altered risk landscape is certainly what raised the Polish Legionnaire's outbreak to an issue of international note. As a NATO member, Poland is a highly sensitive location for any allegations of deliberate unconventional weapon use, which, if proven, would in all likelihood trigger some sort of response by the Western alliance. The Polish government recognized this outbreak as a chance to demonstrate itself as a credible actor at the nexus of converging biological and security threats and was able, it appears, to deliver an effective response.

### International action

Assertive action from Poland appears to have contained both the epidemiological and security harms up to this point. But resources needed for such a response may not always be available in other areas of the world. The lack of robust platforms to address the risks of ambiguous biological events in less-developed locations remains a gap in global health security.

In high-level international bodies—including the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the UN General Assembly, and the governing body of the WHO—there are calls to strengthen international mechanisms to attribute alleged deliberate biological events to their sources. Although procedures exist within the bioweapons treaty for holding multilateral meetings to air allegations and evidence regarding treaty violations and for lodging complaints with the UN Security Council, no international investigation or attribution process has ever been launched under these auspices. The WHO's lack of formal authority to investigate ambiguous disease outbreaks has been critiqued



throughout the COVID-19 origins debates, and it remains a contentious issue within ongoing negotiations over a Pandemic Accord to improve the global response to disease threats.

Proposals for improving attribution approaches have included strengthening the capacities of the UN secretary-general to investigate allegations of biological weapons use, which are mandated directly by the UN General Assembly and sit outside of the Biological Weapons Convention. Other [propositions](#) emphasize the role of the WHO in acting as the focal point for investigations of disease events with unclear origins.

Ambiguous biological events span the domains of public health and biosecurity by invoking the overlapping international architectures of peace and war. As the global biorisk landscape evolves and security dynamics increasingly interface with the day-to-day work of public health, the need to strengthen international mechanisms to address ambiguous biological events is growing stronger.

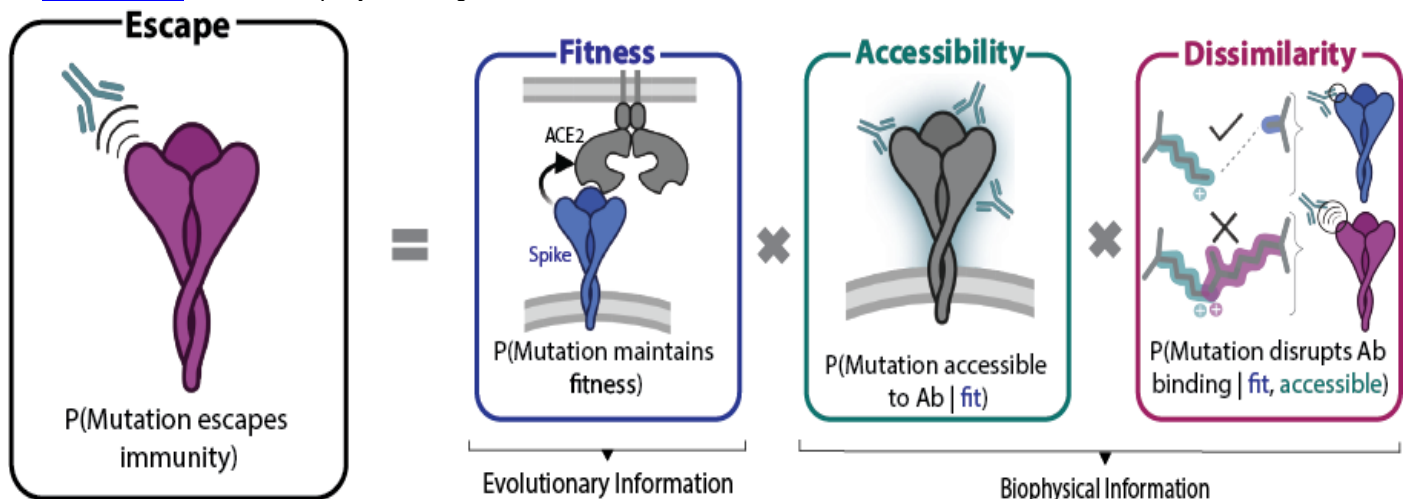
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**Gemma Bowsher** is a social scientist at the Centre for Conflict and Health, and the Department of War Studies at King's College London. Her work focuses on health security issues in conflict and other complex settings, and she leads operational and academic programs examining issues such as bio-disinformation, cyber biological risks, and health intelligence.

## SARS-CoV-2 Variants Predicted by New AI Tool, EVEscape

Source: <https://www.genengnews.com/topics/infectious-diseases/sars-cov-2-variants-predicted-by-new-ai-tool-evescape/>

Oct 11 – A new AI tool called [EVEscape](#) uses evolutionary and biological information to predict how a virus could change to escape the immune system. The tool has two elements: A model of evolutionary sequences that predicts changes that can occur to a virus, and detailed biological and structural information about the virus. Together, they allow EVEscape to make predictions about the variants most likely to occur as the virus evolves. Researchers say the tool can help inform the development of vaccines and therapies for [SARS-CoV-2](#) and other rapidly mutating viruses.



EVEscape is a method for the predicting the likelihood of antibody escape for viral mutations. EVEscape scores for individual mutations are found by combining three sources of information: a deep generative model for fitness prediction, structural information about the spike protein to estimate antibody binding potential, and chemical distances in charge and hydrophobicity between mutated and wild type residues. The fitness model used in this version of EVEscape is [EVE](#), a Bayesian variational autoencoder, trained on historical coronavirus sequences and SARS-CoV-2 sequences through August. EVEscape scores for strains are sums of individual mutations from Wuhan in that strain.



The researchers first developed EVE (evolutionary model of variant effect) in the context of uncovering mutations that cause human diseases. The core of EVE is a generative model that learns to predict the functionality of proteins based on large-scale evolutionary data across species. In a previous study, EVE allowed researchers to discern disease-causing from benign mutations in genes implicated in various conditions, including cancers and heart rhythm disorders.

“You can use these generative models to learn amazing things from evolutionary information—the data have hidden secrets that you can reveal,” said Debora Marks, PhD, associate professor of systems biology in the Blavatnik Institute at Harvard Medical School. During the pandemic, Marks and her team saw an opportunity to apply EVE. They took the generative model from EVE—which can predict mutations in viral proteins that won’t interfere with the virus’s function—and added biological and structural details about the virus, including information about regions most easily targeted by the immune system. “We’re taking biological information about how the immune system works and layering it on our learnings from the broader evolutionary history of the virus,” explained co-lead author Nicole Thadani, a former research fellow in the Marks lab. Such an approach, Marks emphasized, means that EVEscape has a flexible framework that can be easily adapted to any virus. In the new study, the team turned the clock back to January 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic started. Then they asked EVEscape to predict what would happen with SARS-CoV-2. “It’s as if you have a time machine. You go back to day one, and you say, I only have that data, what am I going to say is happening?” Marks said. EVEscape predicted which SARS-CoV-2 mutations would occur during the pandemic with accuracy similar to this of experimental approaches that test the virus’s ability to bind to antibodies made by the immune system. EVEscape outperformed experimental approaches in predicting which of those mutations would be most prevalent. More importantly, EVEscape could make its predictions more quickly and efficiently than lab-based testing since it didn’t need to wait for relevant antibodies to arise in the population and become available for testing. The researchers are now using EVEscape to look ahead at SARS-CoV-2 and predict future variants of concern; every two weeks, they release a ranking of new variants. Eventually, this information could help scientists develop more effective vaccines and therapies. The team is also broadening the work to include more viruses as they demonstrated that EVEscape could be generalized to other viruses, including HIV and influenza. “We want to know if we can anticipate the variation in viruses and forecast new variants—because if we can, that’s going to be extremely important for designing vaccines and therapies,” notes Marks. Additionally, EVEscape predicted which antibody-based therapies would lose their efficacy as the pandemic progressed and the virus developed mutations to escape these treatments. The tool was also able to sift through the tens of thousands of new SARS-CoV-2 variants produced each week and identify the ones most likely to become problematic.

“By rapidly determining the threat level of new variants, we can help inform earlier public health decisions,” said Sarah Gurev, a graduate student in the Marks lab from the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science program at MIT.

The team is now applying EVEscape to SARS-CoV-2 in real time, using all of the information available to make predictions about how it might evolve next. They are also testing EVEscape on understudied viruses such as Lassa and Nipah, two pathogens of pandemic potential for which relatively little information exists. Such less-studied viruses can have a huge impact on human health across the globe, the researchers noted.

The researchers publish a biweekly ranking of new SARS-CoV-2 variants on their website and share this information with entities such as the World Health Organization. The complete code for EVEscape is also freely available online.

Another important application of EVEscape would be to evaluate vaccines and therapies against current and future viral variants. The ability to do so can help scientists design treatments that are able to withstand the escape mechanisms a virus acquires.

► This work is published in *Nature* in the paper, “[Learning from prepandemic data to forecast viral escape.](#)”

## How the ecological crisis of bird flu could become a human pandemic

By Georgios Pappas

Source: <https://thebulletin.org/2023/10/how-the-ecological-crisis-of-bird-flu-could-become-a-human-pandemic/>

Oct 12 – In early 2022, almost 10 percent of the global Dalmatian pelican population [perished](#). The near-threatened species, one of the world’s largest freshwater birds, was not particularly susceptible to avian influenza in the past, but as soon as the pelicans arrived in their colonies in northwestern Greek lakes, they began to die—first by the hundreds and then the thousands as “bird flu” took hold. The disease has caused similar [massive die-offs](#) in other wild birds; it’s led officials in various countries to cull tens of millions of farm poultry; and it’s spread among and killed huge numbers of wild and farmed mammals—3,000 dead sea lions in Peru, 120,000 culled fur animals in Finland. The toll in domestic poultry has led many national



## ICI C<sup>2</sup>BRNE DIARY – October 2023

organizations to employ the controversial technique of [vaccinating farm birds](#) against avian influenza, which some fear could—by not completely preventing infections—allow the virus to mutate in domestic flocks.



Rangers wear protective equipment last year on Inner Farne Island, an English seabird sanctuary, amid concerns over avian influenza. Credit: Ken Jack/Getty Images.

All these events, evolving in succession, may sound like the beginning of an apocalyptic fiction novel or film. Instead, they're real-life ecologic emergencies. They haven't yet had a large-scale direct impact on people, but scientists are racing to evaluate how likely an adapted-to-humans avian influenza strain is, and how soon such a virus may evolve. There are several key points to consider in analyzing the threat of avian influenza as the virus continues its global spread.

### Knowing your virus

Avian influenza viruses have their reservoirs in aquatic birds like ducks, geese, swans, and gulls. Traditionally, these species exhibited mild disease, but they could still transmit the virus to poultry, where infections could be far more lethal. Depending on how a viral strain affects poultry, it's characterized as either highly pathogenic or low pathogenic. Strains can re-assort (swap parts of their genomes with other influenza viruses in the same animal) in farm birds, giving rise to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) viruses that can subsequently spill back to wild aquatic birds.

A lineage of HPAI detected in 1996 in geese in Guangdong, China, has repeatedly caused outbreaks. Identified using the nomenclature for influenzas as an H5N1 virus due to the proteins on its surface, the strain took a concerning leap in 2020, after the so-called 2.3.4.4b subclade (variety) emerged.

What had been occasionally recurring epizootics (outbreaks in animals) morphed into a panzootic (or animal pandemic) that now persists year around.





### The route to a panzootic

The new 2.3.4.4b subclade has expanded H5N1's geographic range as it has targeted a widening range of wild bird species. Outbreak events are not only taking place at the site of initial infection, but, through travel, also in distant colony-breeding sites. Following migratory routes, the virus is affecting Asia, Africa, and also northern Europe, where Iceland and Norway are facing it for the first time. The former served as [a stepping stone](#) when the new subclade made it to North America in December 2021, and subsequently, in 2022, to South America. During its expansion in the Americas, the introduced HPAI continued to evolve. It [encountered](#) low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) strains, leading to genetic re-assortment. These may have led to variants with increased infectiousness and pathogenicity in mammal species.

### The risk profile

From forest dwellers like foxes and bears to marine species like porpoises and dolphins, mammals are typically infected with avian influenza through environmental pollution by wild avian species, or through consumption of dead birds. Most of the infected mammals are isolated scavengers that likely don't further transmit influenza. But when the new HPAI H5N1 subclade has entered animal colonies, outbreaks of complex significance have emerged.

A concern now is that the virus could gain the ability to transmit from mammal to mammal, which may have already happened in outbreaks at fur farms and among the Peruvian sea lions, though researchers have not consistently observed this. A [recent preprint](#) also reported efficient experimental ferret-to-ferret [transmission](#) of the naturally occurring H5N1 subclade.



South American sea lions rest on a rock. Avian influenza has killed thousands of the animals in Peru. Credit: Carlos Ponte. GNU Free Documentation License 1.2.

Historically, avian influenza has been a dangerous disease in humans. Of the 868 cases recorded since 1997, 457 have resulted in death, although under-documentation of mild or asymptomatic cases renders this percentage unreliable. Eleven (or 12, depending on the source) people have [tested positive](#) for the 2.3.4.4b subclade of H5N1, with one death. This does not necessarily imply that avian influenza has become more benign, since surveillance has improved to the point where researchers have a better picture of who has and hasn't



been exposed and infected. Finally, one should note another H5N1 subclade continues to circulate in parallel to 2.3.4.4b. It's led to [two cases](#) in Cambodia, one of which was fatal.

The risk of people becoming infected with HPAI remains inherently low. Surveillance of more than 4,000 exposed (without adequate personal protective equipment) people in the United States, including farm workers, emergency responders, veterinarians, and laboratory personnel, [detected](#) only a single case. The virus could become more worrisome in the future.

### The future risk to people

HPAI H5N1 would need to undergo at least four shifts to become a major threat to people: [effective attachment](#) to human cells, such as those in the lungs; effective replication in human cells; evasion of human immune defenses and induction of disease; and the ability to cause human-to-human [spread](#). Knowledge about the evolutionary steps that could lead to these shifts has come from studies focusing on the [effects of point mutations](#) (substitutions of a single letter of DNA or RNA) to the viral genome, including much debated [gain-of-function ones](#) aiming at clarifying which genetic changes would allow H5N1 to spread by air among ferrets.

Several of the mutations have been found during the current panzootic.

Two mutations have been isolated, separately, in Canadian carnivores, on Finish fur farms, and among seals, foxes, and Polish cats. These are known as the E627K and T271A mutations. Other important point mutations include two others, (Q226L and G228S) which, in combination with E627K, have [experimentally](#) led to airborne transmission between ferrets.

A protein in human airways appears to [prevent](#) avian influenzas from replicating in people, but researchers have recently noted point mutations in the virus that would evade this protection.

The expanded circulation of the virus and wide range of vulnerable species definitely increases the chances of mutations that make the virus more of a human-health risk occurring in the same strain. This could happen quickly. Researchers recently demonstrated that in Canadian carnivores, such as red foxes and mink, viral infections were followed by a [swift process](#) of mammalian adaptation. On the other hand, even if a strain contained all the necessary mutations to make it a human threat, it still may not start an outbreak. If sick people isolate, for example, they would represent a dead end for the virus. Also, given the similarity in the neuraminidase protein of H5N1—the “N”—and the neuraminidase protein of the 2009 “swine flu,” humans may have already had some exposure to aspects of H5N1, calling into question whether people would be truly “naïve” (i.e., lacking all immunity) to the disease.

### Will H5N1 cause the next pandemic

Most pandemic influenza strains, including the 1918, the 1957, the 1968, and the 2009 strains, emerged, at least partly, from avian influenza viruses. A plausible scenario for how a future pandemic might begin would include the co-existence of H5N1 with a human influenza strain in one person, allowing for crucial re-assortments. This could provide the mutational fuel the virus needs to adapt to people.

Historically pigs have been vessels for re-assortment, since they harbor receptors for both human and avian influenzas, making them vulnerable to both infections. Fortunately, they are [less susceptible](#) to the avian influenza virus currently wreaking havoc and are not, therefore, [candidate](#) mixing vessels. But mink theoretically are. Society can't afford to find out how efficiently they can host the birth of the next pandemic influenza strain.

Mink farms were epicenters of novel SARS-CoV-2 variant development, with officials in Denmark resorting to mass culling in order to avert secondary spillover to humans. Mink farming remains an ethically questionable and hygiene-challenged [industry](#). Many scientists advocate its permanent abolition.

People could also be mixing vessels. Thankfully they don't usually come into contact with infected birds or animals. This could change.

One of the recent human cases of H5N1 may have stemmed from an environmental source. An investigation outlined that [the patient's residence](#) was near a seashore where infected seabirds had been found, raising an uncomfortable consideration. If urban mammals, or urban bird species like pigeons, become susceptible to H5N1, the currently low risk that avian influenza poses to people could grow—environmental exposure could become common.

Regardless of the route (and its duration) the virus takes to human adaptation, the possibility of an H5N1-originating human influenza pandemic is tangible. The current avian influenza strain may seem distant to human hosts, but its wide circulation and mammal involvement may trigger a surprisingly brisk adaptational cascade. Can it be averted?

### Preventing (and preparing for) an H5N1 pandemic

It is probably impossible to prevent viral evolution of the HPAI H5N1 virus, since the virus is already evolving in wildlife. What can be done though, is to minimize the existence of “mixing vessels.” Mink and fur farms in general serve as such. If they aren't abolished, they should be located away from wetlands



that host aquatic birds and should implement structural changes that prevent wild birds from getting into the mammal area. (Similarly, all poultry farms and industries should conform to such structural requirements.) To mitigate the risk of a person becoming a mixing vessel for avian flu, professionals working with H5N1 susceptible animals should take biosafety precautions such as wearing personal protective equipment on the job.

Preparedness requires early recognition of an imminent spillover and the ability to deal with it if it happens. Governments should strengthen surveillance to catch concerning mutations among circulating viruses. They should also expand health care resources, like stockpiles of vaccines, antiviral medicines, or personal protective equipment as well as the ability to produce vaccines early and in abundance, conditions that were challenging earlier in the COVID pandemic.

Eventually, preparedness should entail equal access to health care, incorporating observations of inequality from the pandemic. This would include improvements to information and technology sharing and the development of vaccine hubs in the developing world, to state just two obvious examples.

Beyond human disease, a continuous dilemma for avian influenza watchers is whether to push for mass poultry vaccination and culling upon an infectious outbreak. Vaccination can exert evolutionary pressure if it doesn't completely prevent infection, and therefore can facilitate re-assortment of viruses from LPAI to HPAI strains. On the other hand, poultry vaccination was [efficient](#) in controlling outbreaks of H7N9, another type of avian influenza, in China in 2017-2018

The current HPAI H5N1 outbreak may affect the very existence of some species, like California Condors, for example, and the geographic distribution of many others. It may have indirect effects to seemingly unaffected species, for instance, through altering local food chains. For humans to avoid a potentially disastrous influenza pandemic, preparedness and surveillance should expand to an unprecedented degree in the physical, intellectual, and scientific worlds.

[Dr. Georgios Pappas](#) is a physician from Ioannina, Greece, his research focuses on zoonoses (brucellosis in particular), epidemic preparedness, and social aspects of infectious diseases.

## Managing risk: Pandemics and plagues in the age of AI

By David Heslop and Joel Keep

Source: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/managing-risk-pandemics-plagues-age-ai>

Oct 16 – Once a recurring scourge that blinded, scarred and killed millions, smallpox was eradicated by a painstaking public health effort that saw the last “natural” infection occur in 1977. In what some consider an instructive moment in biosecurity (rather than a mere footnote), Janet Parker, a British medical photographer, died of smallpox the following year, after being exposed to Variola virus – the causative agent of smallpox – while working one floor above a laboratory at Birmingham University. The incident in which she lost her life was referred to as an “unnatural” infection – one occurring outside the usual context of infectious disease.

The orthopox genus – of which Variola virus is part – holds a central role in the history of infectious disease and biodefence and has had a lasting impact on human society. Mousepox, cowpox, the clumsily named “monkeypox” and other pox viruses are all derived from the orthopox genus.

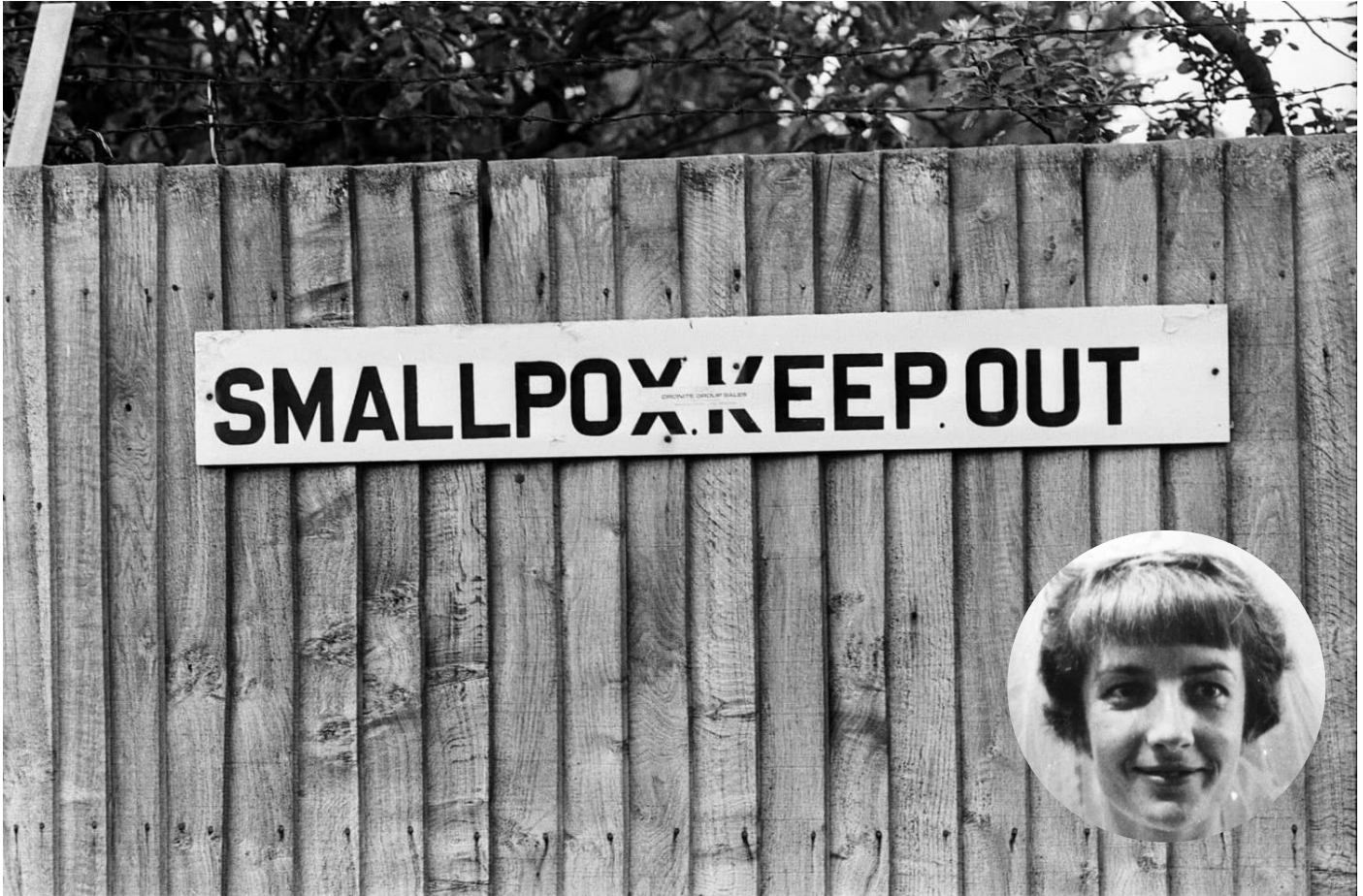
There are only two known places in which Variola virus remains: in a high containment laboratory in Russian Siberia, and at a secure Centre for Disease Control (CDC) facility in Atlanta in the United States. Neither the Russian Federation nor the United States have yet destroyed their smallpox stockpiles, for reasons that relate more to the strictures of geopolitics than the needs of ongoing research. At the end of the first Cold War, as a US-led Coalition was poised to launch Operation Desert Storm, fear of both biological and chemical warfare returned. Saddam Hussein had deployed mustard gas and other chemical agents against Kurdish civilians at Halabja, killing more than 5,000 people. In the years preceding that atrocity, scores of military personnel bore the brunt of blistering agents, nerve agents and other chemical weapons in Iraq's protracted war against Iran.

Biological weapons were the next presumed step on Saddam's ladder of escalation should he feel threatened by the US-led Coalition that gathered in the Saudi desert after his invasion of Kuwait. The weapons program Iraqi scientists had overseen since the 1980s had brought aflatoxins and botulinum toxin [to the point of weaponisation](#), if not deployment. *Bacillus anthracis*, the bacterium that causes anthrax, was a proximate concern to Coalition troops as a potential battlefield weapon. But whether Saddam had access to Variola virus was the biggest question. Smallpox, a disease with pandemic potential, was a *strategic* weapon with international reach, one that might even be deployed behind Coalition lines by a small team.

Fear of such a scenario returned with the onset of the global War on Terror in the early 2000s, and so governments from Europe to Australia began stockpiling smallpox vaccines for use in the event of a future attack. After the Islamic State in the Levant (ISIL) suddenly seized swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria in



mid-2014, the group [repeatedly deployed chemical weapons](#) against civilians, and reportedly made attempts at [acquiring biological weapons](#) as well. In 2016, as ISIL's caliphate reached its brief zenith, a Canadian scientist on the other side of the world was working to create a safer vaccine against smallpox. The researcher was engaged by a US biotech company that wanted a smallpox shot that did not carry the risk of reversion, a situation in which inoculation can cause active infection – something happily not possible with most vaccines – or death.



A smallpox laboratory breach in Birmingham in 1978 claimed the life of Janet Parker, a British medical photographer (Birmingham Post and Mail Archive/Mirrorpix/Getty Images)

As part of this effort, the researcher needed a related orthopox virus to use as a viral vector. To this end, their team embarked on *de novo* synthesis of horsepox, a less pathogenic orthopox virus. This step, the reconstruction of a hitherto eradicated pox virus, became known as a [“Rubicon in the field of biosecurity”](#). **For the first time, an orthopox virus was created from scratch using information and material derived from purely commercial sources – and it only cost around \$100,000.**

#### A new domain in counterproliferation

Horsepox was, of course, not the first virus to be rebuilt or enhanced in a laboratory setting. In 2005, a team reconstructed some of the H1N1 virus responsible for the “Spanish” influenza pandemic that killed between 20 and 50 million people in 1918-19, using reverse genetic techniques that were cutting-edge at the time. In 2002, another research group at the State University of New York created the first entirely artificial virus, a [chemically synthesised strain of polio](#). A year before, in 2001, an Australian team investigating contraceptives for use on the rodent population [accidentally amplified](#) a form of ectromelia, which causes mousepox, to a point that made it resistant to available pox vaccines.

What made the horsepox development such a watershed moment was the ease with which the necessary materials and genetic information were acquired. The team bought access to DNA fragments from a horsepox outbreak that occurred in Mongolia decades earlier, in 1976. A DNA synthesis company, GeneArt, was engaged to construct the DNA fragments. Hence, a small team seeking to obtain and



propagate a similar pox virus with pandemic potential – say, smallpox – need not physically get hold of it in full form. Nor did they need access to a government-run lab, or the certification of tightly restricted procurement channels to do so. Instead, the virus could be recreated using means and material easily available to any private citizen, for minimal cost.

Such techniques, which are well established now, undeniably have many beneficial uses. At the onset of the Covid pandemic, when authorities in China were less than forthcoming with information, the genetic sequence of SARS-CoV-2 was published on the internet – but only after some skittish [manoeuvring](#) by Western researchers and their colleagues based in China, who were under government pressure not to share the sequence. Belated though this development was, it allowed for scientists across the world to begin designing medical countermeasures. Similar processes are used to keep track of viral evolution during other epidemics, to monitor the emergence of new variants of concern, or to detect changes in a pathogen that could cause more severe disease.

### Synthetic biology in 2023

Much has transpired in the fields of chemistry and synthetic biology since 2017, and even more has happened in the field of artificial intelligence. When chemistry, biology and AI are combined, what was achieved with horsepox by a small team of highly trained specialists could soon be done by an individual with scientific training below the level of a doctorate. Instead of horsepox or even smallpox, any such person could soon synthesise something far deadlier, such as [Nipah virus](#). It might equally be done with a strain of avian influenza, which public health officials have long worried may one day gain the ability to spread efficiently between humans. Instead of costing \$100,000, such a feat will soon require little more than \$20,000, a desktop whole genome synthesiser and access to a well-informed large language model (LLM), if some of the [leading personalities in generative AI](#) are to be believed.

Some alarming conversation has been had in recent months over the potential for new artificial intelligence platforms to present existential risks. Much of this anxiety has revolved around future iterations of AI that might lead to a “takeoff” in artificial “superintelligence” that could surpass, oppress or extinguish human prosperity. But a more proximate threat is contained within the current generation of AI platforms. Some of the key figures in AI design, including Mustafa Suleyman, co-founder of Google’s Deep Mind, [admit](#) that large language models accessible to the public since late 2022 have sufficient potential to aid in the construction of chemical or biological weapons.

Details on such risks have so far been mostly vague in their media descriptions. But the manner in which LLMs could aid malicious actors in this domain is simply by lowering the “informational barriers” to constructing pathogens. In much the same way AI platforms can be used as a “wingman” for fighter pilots navigating the extremes of aerial manoeuvre in combat, an LLM with access to the right literature in synthetic biology could help an individual with minimal training overcome the difficulties of creating a viable pathogen with pandemic potential. While some may scoff at this idea, it is a scenario that AI designers have been actively testing with specialists in biodefence. Their conclusion was that [little more than postgraduate training](#) in biology would be enough.

This does not mean that (another) pandemic will result from the creation of a synthetic pathogen in the coming years. Avenues for managing such risks can be found in institutions that have already proven central to the control of biological and chemical weapons. One such forum – [the Australia Group](#) – could be the perfect place to kickstart a new era of counter-proliferation in the age of AI. Founded in 1984 at the height of the Iran–Iraq war, the Australia Group (AG) initially focused on controlling precursor chemicals that were used in the unconventional weapons that killed scores of people on the Iran–Iraq frontline. The AG has since evolved to harmonise regulation of many dual use “chem-bio” components via comprehensive [common control lists](#). But the dawn of a new age in artificial intelligence, coming as it has after 20 years of frenetic progress in synthetic biology, presents new challenges. As an established forum, the Australia Group could provide an opportunity for the international community to get ahead of this new threat landscape before it is too late.

### After the plague

It has been nearly four years since SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, went from causing a regional epidemic in the Chinese city of Wuhan to a worldwide pandemic. At the time of writing, the question of how the virus first entered the human population remains unresolved. There are several ingredients that make both a “natural” zoonotic event and an “unnatural”, research-related infection plausible scenarios. The first ingredients relate to the changing ecologies in which viruses circulate, the increasingly intense interface between humans and animals amid growing urbanisation, and the international wildlife trade. Regarding the latter possibility, that the virus may have emerged in the course of research gone awry, it is now a well-documented fact that [closely related coronaviruses](#) were being subjected to both in-field collection and laboratory-based experimentation in the years approaching the pandemic. (Whether or not a progenitor to SARS-CoV-2 was held in any nearby facility [remains in dispute](#).)

Whatever the case, the next pandemic may not come as a result of a research-related accident, or an innocent interaction between human and animal – it may instead be a feature of future conflict. Many of



the same ingredients that were present in 2017 remain in place across the world today, with the new accelerant of generative AI as an unwelcome addition. Added to this is a new era of great power competition, an ongoing terrorist threat, and the rise of new sources of political extremism. The Australia Group has the chance to act now, before we see the use of chemical or biological weapons at any of these inflection points, which are all taking place amid a new age of artificial intelligence.

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## Examining the Potential Role of Vaccines in Bioterrorism Preparedness

Source: <https://www.expresshealthcaregmt.com/news2/can-vaccines-be-used-for-bioterrorism-preparedness/165693/>

Oct 16 – In an era where the threat of bioterrorism looms large, scientists and policymakers are constantly exploring innovative strategies to enhance our preparedness. One such approach gaining attention is the utilization of vaccines as a defense against potential bioterrorist attacks. Vaccines, traditionally employed to prevent infectious diseases, are now being considered for their potential role in countering bioterrorism threats. However, the question remains: can vaccines truly be used as a tool for bioterrorism preparedness?

To understand the potential of vaccines in bioterrorism preparedness, it is crucial to define the term “bioterrorism.” Bioterrorism refers to the deliberate release of biological agents, such as bacteria, viruses, or toxins, with the intention to harm or instill fear among a population. These agents can cause severe illness, disability, and even death, making them a significant concern for national security. Vaccines, on the other hand, are biological preparations that stimulate the immune system to recognize and fight specific pathogens. By introducing harmless components of a pathogen into the body, vaccines train the immune system to mount a rapid and effective response when exposed to the actual infectious agent.

This immune response can prevent or mitigate the severity of the disease.

The potential use of vaccines in bioterrorism preparedness lies in their ability to provide pre-exposure or post-exposure protection against specific biological agents. Pre-exposure vaccination involves administering a vaccine to individuals before they are exposed to a potential bioterrorist threat. This approach aims to establish immunity in advance, ensuring a rapid and robust response if an attack occurs. Post-exposure vaccination, on the other hand, involves administering a vaccine after exposure to a biological agent, with the goal of preventing or reducing the severity of the disease.

Several vaccines have already been developed and approved for use against potential bioterrorism agents. For instance, the anthrax vaccine has been widely administered to military personnel due to the potential use of *Bacillus anthracis* spores as a bioweapon. Similarly, vaccines against smallpox and botulism have been stockpiled as a precautionary measure.

However, there are challenges associated with relying solely on vaccines for bioterrorism preparedness. Developing effective vaccines against all potential bioterrorism agents is a complex and time-consuming process. Additionally, the logistics of mass vaccination campaigns and the need for ongoing booster shots pose significant challenges. Furthermore, the potential for bioterrorists to modify or engineer pathogens to evade existing vaccines raises concerns about their long-term effectiveness.

To address these challenges, a comprehensive bioterrorism preparedness strategy should incorporate a multi-layered approach. This includes strengthening surveillance systems, enhancing public health infrastructure, improving diagnostic capabilities, and investing in research and development for new and improved vaccines. Additionally, close collaboration between government agencies, public health organizations, and the scientific community is essential to ensure a coordinated and effective response to bioterrorism threats.

While vaccines can play a crucial role in bioterrorism preparedness, they should be viewed as one component of a broader strategy. The development and deployment of vaccines must be accompanied by robust surveillance, rapid response capabilities, and effective communication strategies to minimize the impact of a potential bioterrorist attack.

In conclusion, vaccines have the potential to contribute significantly to bioterrorism preparedness by providing pre-exposure and post-exposure protection against specific biological agents. However, their effectiveness should be considered within the context of a comprehensive strategy that encompasses various preventive and responsive measures. By combining vaccines with other preparedness efforts, we can enhance our ability to mitigate the devastating consequences of bioterrorism and safeguard public health.





## The Operational Risks of AI in Large-Scale Biological Attacks

### A Red-Team Approach

By Christopher A. Mouton, Caleb Lucas, and Ella Guest

Source: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA2977-1.html?](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2977-1.html?)

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has far-reaching implications across multiple domains, including its potential to be applied in the development of advanced biological weapons. The speed at which AI technologies are evolving often surpasses the capacity of government regulatory oversight, leading to a potential gap in existing policies and regulations. Previous biological attacks that failed because of a lack of information might succeed in a world in which AI

tools have access to all of the information needed to bridge that information gap.

The authors of this report look at the emerging issue of identifying and mitigating the risks posed by the misuse of AI—specifically, large language models (LLMs)—in the context of biological attacks. They present preliminary findings of their research and examine future paths for that research as AI and LLMs gain sophistication and speed.

### Key Findings

- In experiments to date, LLMs have not generated explicit instructions for creating biological weapons. However, LLMs did offer guidance that could assist in the planning and execution of a biological attack.
- In a fictional plague pandemic scenario, the LLM discussed biological weapon–induced pandemics, identifying potential agents, and considering budget and success factors. The LLM assessed the practical aspects of obtaining and distributing *Yersinia pestis*–infected specimens while identifying the variables that could affect the projected death toll.
- In another fictional scenario, the LLM discussed foodborne and aerosol delivery methods of botulinum toxin, noting risks and expertise requirements. The LLM suggested aerosol devices as a method and proposed a cover story for acquiring *Clostridium botulinum* while appearing to conduct legitimate research.
- These initial findings do not yet provide a full understanding of the real-world operational impact of LLMs on bioweapon attack planning. Ongoing research aims to assess what these outputs mean operationally for enabling nonstate actors. The final report on this research will clarify whether LLM-generated text enhances the potential effectiveness and likelihood of a malicious actor causing widespread harm or is similar to the existing level of risk posed by harmful information already accessible on the internet.

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## The Biological Weapons Taboo

By Michelle Bentley

Source: <https://warontherocks.com/2023/10/the-biological-weapons-taboo/>

Oct 18 – COVID-19 has revitalized the debate on why biological weapons should not be used. International actors have expressed a new interest in the bioweapons threat — one that is focused on preventing and



stigmatizing that threat as a priority concern. Biowarfare is on the global political agenda to a greater extent than it has ever been before.

This fresh interest has often centered on the [biological weapons taboo](#). The taboo is the claim that bioweapons are so disgusting, immoral, and unacceptable that actors will not use them. The taboo has previously been dismissed as anemic and of little significance to both state and international security. The taboo was even [criticized](#) as a “potentially dangerous” way of doing arms control relating to biowarfare.

Yet the taboo is currently experiencing something of a second life in the wake of COVID-19. The pandemic has demonstrated the potential destruction of bioviolence in a whole new way. In doing so, the COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened the taboo and underpinned a renewed approach to biowarfare prevention that has the taboo at its core. This new shift in perception has significant implications not only for how we understand what actors think about bioweapons but also how we prohibit these armaments. The taboo is changing bioweapons policy in a major move further away from more traditional methods of arms control.

### The Taboo

The World Health Organization [defines bioweapons](#) as “microorganisms like virus, bacteria or fungi, or toxic substances produced by living organisms that are produced and released deliberately to cause disease and death in humans, animals or plants.” Biowarfare is not an active or normalized part of state military strategies. Even when states have approved the strategic option to use biowarfare, they have rarely actually done so (aside from some limited examples such as [Japan in World War II](#)).

Some analysts explain non-use as a [lack of military utility](#). Bioweapons are hard to make and difficult to control. Contagious agents are especially problematic in that disease can spread unintentionally and on a vast scale. The infection can rebound onto the attacker, known as the “boomerang effect.” It is also suggested that bioweapons are avoided out of a fear of like-for-like retaliation.

These explanations ignore the power of the biological weapons taboo. The taboo states that abhorrence of biowarfare shapes how humans understand and construct policy on the threat. The taboo exerts a forceful normative prohibition leading to the rejection and non-use of bioweapons. Taboos are already associated with other weapons of mass destruction including [nuclear](#) and [chemical](#) arms. The bioweapons taboo has not been analyzed in the same depth as those around the use of other weapons of mass destruction. The taboo has often been lumped together with the chemical weapons taboo — but these are very different types of weaponry and we should be more cautious about assuming that these taboos are the same.

Bioweapons are taboo in that they are potential mass killers that cause harm in disgusting ways. [Al Mauroni](#) said biowarfare is considered “a ‘dirty’ way to fight.” Disease is a repulsive threat and we fear the contamination of our bodies, especially when that contamination is deliberate. Biowarfare is not just a physical trauma but a psychological one. Bioweapons have been termed “[weapons of terror](#)” on that basis. [Mahatma Gandhi](#) famously said: “Fear of disease kills more men than disease itself.”

Biowarfare is also taboo in that this aggression seems very different to conventional violence. Bioweapons are effectively invisible (although there may be physical symptoms of disease). Disease is invasive to the body in a way that conventional armaments are not. Bodily infection also means that a target cannot escape a threat, whereas they could run away from an enemy with a gun or evacuate a burning building. The target carries their contamination around within them.

Bioweapons are taboo in that they can be contagious. Conventional weaponry cannot spread and replicate destruction as communicable infection can. Contagion connects to a further claim that biowarfare is taboo because it is indiscriminate. The claim is not flawless: Non-contagious agents (like [anthrax](#)) can be discriminate and conventional weapons can be indiscriminate — for example, [landmines](#). Yet the perception of biowarfare as indiscriminate and immoral remains a core factor as to why these weapons are set apart as taboo.

The stigmatization of bioviolence is evident in agreements like the [1925 Geneva Protocol](#) and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. The latter [states](#) in taboo-like terms that bioweapons are “repugnant to the conscience of mankind.” Officials negotiating the ban said they did so explicitly to codify the taboo. Then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, [James Leonard](#), said American approval of the convention was a case where the agreement would get the taboo “on the books.”

### COVID-19 and the Taboo

The taboo’s strength and significance have been questioned. The Biological Weapons Convention has also been criticized for [failing to fully uphold the taboo](#) and for not establishing [clear verification measures](#). This criticism risks overlooking how the taboo and the Biological Weapons Convention have been recognized as vital for preventing bioviolence. President Barack Obama’s 2009 [National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats](#) reaffirmed the convention’s importance and asserted that normative restraints are critical to stopping biological threats. The 2018 [National Biodefense Strategy](#) adopted a similar view and spoke of norms as a necessary means against biowarfare.





COVID-19 has reinforced the taboo to a whole new level. While some analysts were ready to write off the taboo before the pandemic, there is now more international interest in, and commitment to, the taboo. Attention to the taboo has increased thanks to the way in which COVID-19 has effectively demonstrated what a bioweapons attack could look like. Clearly a natural outbreak is not the same as a military attack. Yet the outbreak still provides a new picture of what biowarfare can look like. A former U.S. national security advisor, [John Bolton](#), said the pandemic was “a roadmap for the people who do control biological weapons, or aspire to biological weapons, what can happen.”

The picture isn't pretty. COVID-19 demonstrates not only the terrible threat of disease to life but also to our way of life as seen in lockdowns and closed borders. The world has experienced extreme disease outbreaks before, such as the [2014-16 Ebola epidemic](#). Yet COVID-19 has really hit home the perils of disease as a weapon. Biowarfare has turned from a relatively [unknown](#) threat into something that feels more real. This new perception plays directly into taboo feelings of disgust, rejection, and the prioritization of biowarfare as a major threat.

New concern over biowarfare has often been helped along by claims that COVID-19 was the result of China's bioweapons testing. China has [claimed](#) in response that it was the United States that brought biowarfare to Wuhan. The allegations are widely dismissed as [conspiracy theory](#). Yet even these allegations have reinforced the connection between COVID-19 and biowarfare as a taboo act. The taboo now plays a new and more prominent role not only in understanding why we are averse to biowarfare post-COVID-19 but how we stop the threat. The 2022 [update](#) to the *National Biodefense Strategy* and the 2022 [National Security Strategy](#) both prioritized the commitment to norms as a primary control against bioweapons. The updated 2023 U.K. [Biological Security Strategy](#) also refers to the need to strengthen “the global norms that underpin global non-proliferation.” The 9th Biological Weapons Convention [Review Conference](#) in 2022 highlighted the taboo as necessary for improving the convention. The taboo is now getting a lot more airtime in places where decisions are being made.

### Bioterrorism

Others are less optimistic. Skeptics say that COVID-19 might increase interest in developing bioweapons leading to the taboo's breaking. The fear is especially centered on actors who may have no commitment to the taboo, such as terrorist organizations.

The pandemic raised a concern that terrorist groups could use COVID-19 in attacks. The [FBI](#) issued a warning in March 2020 that white supremacist groups were using messenger apps to encourage members to spread the virus to Jewish people and police officers. The [Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism](#) said COVID-19 could be an inspiration to terrorists as it had revealed just how vulnerable societies are to disease. The new interest in pandemic disease as a major threat could also actually count against the taboo. The extreme media attention and fear generated by COVID-19 could be entirely what terrorists want.

Whether terrorists adhere to the same norms that restrain state actors has been questioned, including specifically in relation to weapons of mass destruction. Breaking accepted norms may comprise an intrinsic aim of terrorism itself. Terrorism can also disrupt the international expectations held by state actors. An example of this would be the way the [taboo against torture](#) has been violated in respect to the War on Terror.

Yet there is no evidence that terrorists have engaged in mass bioviolence or that such an attack would undermine state commitments to the taboo. Even major biological threats from other states have failed to undermine the taboo in the past. The Soviet Union maintained an extensive biowarfare program called [Biopreparat](#) during the Cold War in violation of the Biological Weapons Convention. The Soviet Union publicly admitted to the program in the early 1990s. The revelation did not cause others to abandon the taboo — for example, the U.S. did not restart its biowarfare program that it [renounced](#) in 1969. *Biopreparat* instead encouraged greater condemnation of bioviolence and strengthened the taboo.

### Biotechnology

Biotechnology advances might alter perceptions of the taboo. Scientists have attempted to develop so-called “designer” weapons which could be biologically engineered to attack only specific targets, such as [by ethnicity](#). If biological armaments become more destructive, more targeted, or more efficient, then this new capacity could erode the taboo.

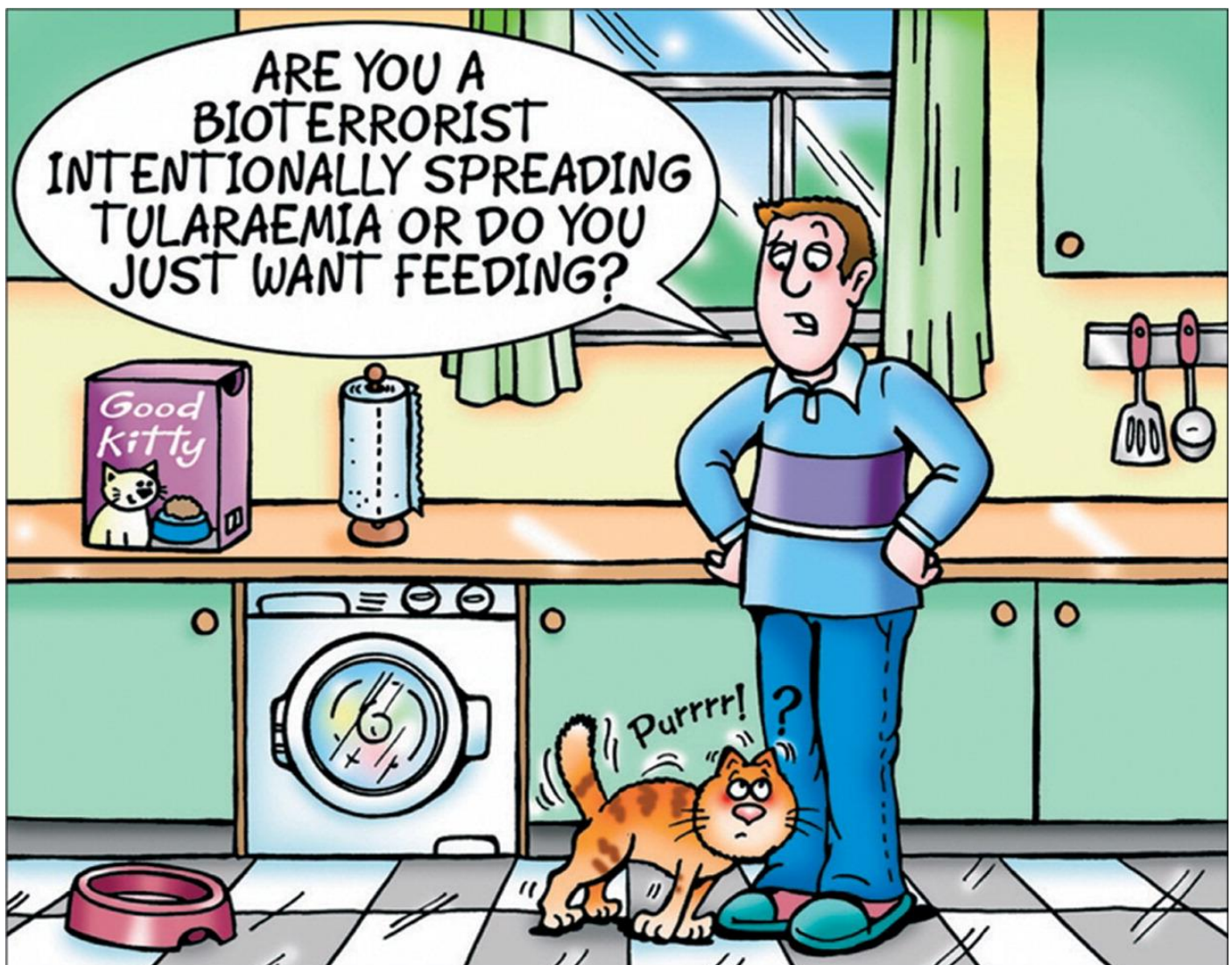
Biotechnology research has become even more prevalent in the COVID-19 era. There is now [new investment and interest](#) in biological research. Biological research has always been dual use — the same research to preserve health is often the same as that needed to create weapons. Could COVID-19 actually open up opportunities to build even more efficient bioweapons than ever before?

Such a view would be overly pessimistic. Biotechnology advances have often encountered significant resistance, which can be seen in the [opposition to genetic engineering](#). COVID-19 has also constructed disease as something to be stopped and not used offensively, in line with the taboo. Changes in biotechnology will not automatically challenge the taboo and may actually engrain the taboo further.



Overall, the taboo is not a perfect restraint. It is not the case that no one has ever thought or thinks about biowarfare as a realistic option. Yet biowarfare is not an active part of military strategy and the taboo has always been a major factor as to why. The response to COVID-19 has strengthened that taboo considerably. Seeing what disease can do has made biowarfare more taboo than ever before. Using that taboo to stop biowarfare has also now become a more important and integral aspect of international strategies to prevent this terrible threat.

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