

Contents

Arms Control	1
Disarmament	2
National and International	3
Science and Technology	6

ARMS CONTROL**All terror roads lead to Pakistan, says US report***10 December 2008*

New Delhi: Pakistan's danger quotient in the world is rising exponentially. A new report on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) proliferation and terrorism by the United States says, "Pakistan is an ally, but there is a grave danger it could also be an unwitting source of a terrorist attack on the US, possibly using WMDs."

The report of the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism, called 'World at Risk', says, "If one has to map terrorism and WMDs today, all roads would intersect in Pakistan."

The commission recommends that the US should secure Pakistan's nuclear and biological weapons sector. "The President must make securing biological and nuclear materials and weapons in Pakistan a priority."

The report says, "The new US strategy for Pakistan must emphasize working with the Pakistani military and with Pakistani and other foreign intelligence services to make certain that all threats to Pakistan's facilities can be minimized, anticipated, and countered. Moreover, Pakistan has biological research laboratories that possess stocks of dangerous pathogens, some of which may not be adequately secured. The US is currently funding

efforts to improve physical security and access control at such facilities."

Source: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/All_terror_roads_lead_to_Pakistan_says_US_report/articleshow/3814782.cms

China plays bigger role in proliferation control*Shen Dingli, 29 December 2008*

China's modernization drive has made great progress in the past 30 years of reform and opening up.

This is evident particularly in the economic buildup, as its foreign trade has grown to make it one of the world's largest in terms of both imports and exports. Meanwhile, its diplomatic and defense initiatives have been advancing as well, helping the nation to enhance its security and its image on the international stage.

There is an important area where foreign trade meets security. It is called proliferation control,

About This Issue

In the effort to streamline and collect recent information on topical security issues, IDSA has launched the newsletter, 'Chemical and Biological News Digest'. This newsletter assimilates open source literature on the subject on a monthly basis. Changing international scenario has heightened concerns regarding terrorism, in particular biological terrorism, given the linkage between dual use technologies and weaponry. In this context, political will of the States and international treaty mechanisms will be a strong barrier against the proliferation and use of chemical and biological weapons.

We welcome our reader's feedback.

Editor

which aims to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their delivery systems such as missiles.....

Containing the proliferation of WMD is a formidable challenge. Currently, biological and chemical weapons have been banned, but not nuclear arms. And it is even more difficult to restrict the delivery systems of WMD. However, none of all that is more challenging than containing the proliferation of dual-use technology and materials related to WMD.

In the past 30 years and particularly since the 1990s, China has made significant achievements in proliferation control. It has built a cross-department control and coordination mechanism to prevent proliferation through exports, clarified the specific responsibility of each government office involved - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense, and the General Administration of Customs - in their own areas of authority as well as in coordinated actions.

China has also set up the export control system where the Ministry of Commerce is the sole authority to handle applications for exports and give clearance. Thus, it has formed a complete export control system with a working mechanism to prevent proliferation.

In the last 15 years, the government has implemented a strict law and regulations on export control of nuclear, biological, chemical and missile technology and related materials and published a list of all dual-use items under proliferation control. The control level in some areas is more stringent than in any other country in the world.

China believes maintaining strict export control serves the purpose of delivering its promise to the international community. It contributes to regional and global security, provides a complete security foundation for the development of its foreign trade, improves in effect the cooperation between major powers and among all nations for that matter, and enhances its international image as a responsible country...

In the past 30 years, China joined and ratified the non-proliferation treaties for nuclear and chemical weapons, became a member of the International

Atomic Energy Agency and signed the treaty on the complete ban on nuclear weapons tests. It also joined the “group of nuclear supplier nations”, pledging full security guarantee for civilian nuclear energy cooperation with foreign nations.

It has also cooperated with the international community in strengthening the articles concerning inspections in the biological weapons non-proliferation treaty, while increasing dialogue on and cooperation in the “missile technology control system” with foreign countries.

Source: China Daily, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-12/29/content_10574321.htm

DISARMAMENT

Update on the Implementation of the Universality Action Plan

01 December 2008

On 20 November 2008 the Republic of Lebanon deposited its instrument of accession to the CWC with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Convention will enter into force for Lebanon on 20 December 2008, and it will become the 185th State Party of the Convention. Until now, Lebanon was among the five countries in the Middle East that have not joined the Convention. Therefore, Lebanon’s accession is an important step towards promoting in the region confidence in the Convention as a factor for advancing peace and security.

During this quarter, the Iraqi law on accession to the Convention was published on the Official Gazette of Iraq on 29 September 2008. The OPCW Secretariat was further informed that the instrument of accession had been signed and was in the process of being deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Iraq was also represented at the 13th Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

Other important developments have also taken place in the GRULAC region. On 22 April 2008, the Senate of the Dominican Republic – a Signatory State – had approved ratification of the Convention and forwarded the dossier to the Chamber of Deputies for its consideration. During his meeting with the Acting Permanent Representative of the

Dominican Republic to the United Nations on 4 November 2008, the OPCW Director-General was further informed that that State's Chamber of Deputies had approved the bill on ratification of the Convention.

Simultaneously, in the Bahamas the ratification process seems to have recently regained momentum. At the request of the Government of the Bahamas a Technical Secretariat's team travelled to the Bahamas in the second week of December 2008, for a high-level visit. In that context, the Secretariat's experts addressed a consultation meeting among national stakeholders relating to the ratification and implementation of the Convention.

The Secretariat's efforts to promote the universality of the Convention also continued with Myanmar, a Signatory State. Meetings were held with high-level representatives of Myanmar in Geneva, as well as with representatives from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, who were sponsored by the Technical Secretariat to attend the OPCW's Fourth Assistance-and-Protection Course for States Parties in Asia, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in September 2008. Two representatives of Myanmar were also sponsored to participate in the OPCW's subregional training course for customs authorities in Southeast Asia on technical aspects of the transfers regime, held in Malacca, Malaysia, from 6 to 9 October 2008.

Source: <http://www.opcw.org/news/news/article/update-on-the-implementation-of-the-universality-action-plan-1/>

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Bioterrorism, preventing a greater threat

Bob Graham, 18 December 2008

In May 2002, I visited Pokrov, a largely abandoned Soviet-era agricultural research center east of Moscow. Originally established to produce vaccines for animals, Pokrov became a laboratory for biological weapons, especially anthrax, in the final years of the Cold War.

We entered the building, which stored samples of all the materials produced at Pokrov. The woven

wire and electrified fence that at one time had secured the building was a fallen, rusting heap. The security alarm to the main entrance had been turned off and the door was ajar.

Up two flights of steel-grate stairs were the storage rooms, two tennis court-sized rooms filled with commercial refrigerators. Several refrigerators had two common features: note cards listing the materials inside and flimsy strings encircling them. Our hosts explained that a broken string would indicate that someone had possibly opened the refrigerator and stolen the materials inside.

I left Pokrov without much confidence in the security afforded the most lethal biological materials in the world.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States and its allies have wisely expended tens of billions of dollars to identify, capture, and secure nuclear materials.

The same cannot be said for lethal pathogens. The United States has cut back its biological threat reduction programs in Russia, and the Russians have refused greater transparency at their Ministry of Defense controlled biological weapons facilities. There is little reason to believe that the lethal pathogens of Pokrov are secure from falling into terrorist hands.

While the rugged and persistent anthrax spores remain the pathogen of first resort, the last two decades have seen an explosion of biological dangers.

Since 9/11, the federal government has poured billions into defensive research on pathogens that might be used for bioterrorism.

There are now 14,000 U.S. scientists authorized to work on these materials, increasing the risk of a few bad apples with access. Shockingly, there continues to be no comprehensive regulation within the United States or internationally of the sites where lethal pathogens are produced or of the scientists capable of their production.

Al Qaeda remains intent on securing lethal pathogens for use against the United States. Agents of Osama bin Laden have been intercepted attempting to procure biological capabilities and materials in Europe and Asia.

The laboratories we discovered in Kandahar after the October 2001 invasion of Afghanistan have

been relocated to the tribal areas of Pakistan. As Richard Danzig, former secretary of the navy, has observed, “Only a thin wall of terrorists’ ignorance and inexperience now protects us.”

Source: <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/12/18/opinion/edgraham.php>

Tenth Annual Meeting of OPCW National Authorities

04 December 2008

The Tenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities was held at OPCW headquarters in The Hague from 28 to 30 November 2008. A total of 190 participants from 92 States Parties attended the meeting, including from all regional groups - Africa (25), Asia (23), Eastern Europe (18), Latin American and the Caribbean (9), and West Europe and Other States (17). Lebanon, a State not Party, also participated and informed the Technical Secretariat that the government deposited its instrument of accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 November 2008.

The OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Rogelio Pflirter, opened the meeting by noting that 177 of the 184 States Parties to the CWC have now established National Authorities, and urged the remaining seven States Parties to do so at the earliest as the starting point for national implementation of the Convention. The Director-General added that the OPCW has made rapid strides in achieving universality and welcomed Lebanon’s decision to join the Convention. He expressed the hope that other States not Party in the Middle East will follow Lebanon’s example as soon as possible.

Director-General Pflirter stressed the crucial role played by National Authorities to achieve the object and purpose of the Convention. He acknowledged that many National Authorities continue to have capacity constraints and reiterated the Technical Secretariat’s commitment to provide them assistance in the form of implementation support and capacity building programmes. This includes training in the use of Electronic Declaration software for National Authorities (EDNA), which has been developed by the Technical Secretariat for National Authorities to make their declarations to the OPCW electronically.

The thematic focus of the meeting was to provide the chemical industry’s perspective on the implementation of the CWC, and the Technical Secretariat provided information on recent initiatives relating to Article VI declarations and verification issues. Participating National Authorities shared their experiences in national implementation, and regional groups discussed ways and means to foster regional and sub-regional cooperation in implementing the Convention.

Source: <http://www.opcw.org/news/news/article/tenth-annual-meeting-of-opcw-national-authorities/>

UN norms for chemical companies: Council to act as watchdog

Gaurav Sharma, 01 January 2009

Sanctions by the US on two chemical industries in Gujarat – Sabero Organics Gujarat Limited and Sandhya Organic Chemicals Pvt Limited – for supplying chemical weapon related items to Iran are likely to become a thing of the past.

This is a result of the intensive effort put in by the Indian Chemical Council – Gujarat Chapter (ICC) to ensure that the state’s chemical belt consisting of nearly 60 per cent of the chemical industries in the country adhere to the UN Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

According to the ICC, the number of declarations by the chemical industries regarding their product profile and exports has been the highest this year.

Ravi Kapoor, Chairman, ICC said: “We have established the first Chemical Weapon Convention Help Desk at Vadodara to educate and spread awareness about the sensitivity of the chemical industries in today’s security scenario.”

He added that the ICC, which acts as a bridge between the industry and the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers, Government of India, has organised about 50 training and dissemination programmes over the last three years.

The ICC is now working in collaboration with the UN-sponsored Organisation for Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in this regard.

The first batch of trainees under the ‘OPCW Associate Programme’ were trained at the Gujarat

Narmada Valley Fertilizers Company Limited and the United Phosphorus Limited. Kapoor, who recently attended a seminar at the OPCW headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands, said: “Under this, engineers from various developing countries are educated and oriented about the uses and ill-uses of various chemicals in real time. This is the first time that the associate programme is being undertaken in an Asian Country.”

Source: <http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/un-norms-for-chemical-companies-council-to-act-as-watchdog/405226/>

Why did Malaysia release Al Qaeda’s bioweapons expert?

17 December 2008

A U.S.-trained Al Qaeda microbiologist has been released from jail by the Malaysian government, prompting alarm among American counterterrorism officials.

“This individual is considered dangerous,” said one official, referring to the recent decision to free Yazid Sufaat, a notorious Qaeda operative who once oversaw the group’s germ-warfare efforts. The official declined to be identified talking about sensitive information.

Safaat had been in Malaysian custody since December 2001, when he was arrested because of his alleged involvement with Jemaah Islamiah, a radical South Asian terror group closely linked with Al Qaeda. But two weeks ago, Malaysia’s interior minister, Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, announced that Sufaat and five other detained Islamic militants were being freed because “they are no longer a threat and will no longer pose a threat to public order.” Albar added that Sufaat “has been rehabilitated and can return to society.”

The timing of Sufaat’s release was especially awkward for U.S. officials. The Qaeda scientist was freed on Dec.4—the day after a congressionally mandated commission on weapons of mass destruction released a public report warning of the risk of a biological weapons attack in the next five years.

“There’s a troubling irony that this happened the day after our report,” said Bob Graham, the former Florida senator and chairman of the Senate

Intelligence Committee, who served as co-chairman of the bioweapons panel. (In an interview with NEWSWEEK the day the report was released, Graham said he was particularly concerned about “the degree of risk associated with a biological weapon... The ubiquitous nature of pathogens and the increasing lethality of both natural and synthetic pathogens led our commission to conclude it’s more likely that an attack will come biologically rather than nuclear.”)

Source: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/175679>

Russia Backs Legally Binding Oversight System for Biological Weapons Convention

9 December 2008

Russia yesterday expressed support for establishing a legally binding system to monitor compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention, Interfax reported.

The Foreign Ministry statement followed the meeting last week in Geneva of member nations to the treaty that bans the development, manufacture and possession of weapons that involve biological agents such as anthrax, smallpox or plague. The pact presently has no mechanism for checks on its 162 states parties.

“We are satisfied with the constructive discussion which included an exchange of experiences. The Russian delegation actively participated in this work and explained the need for high biological security standards, that are used in Russia,” according to the statement.

“The most efficient way to achieve this goal is to develop and adopt a legally binding mechanism for monitoring” the treaty,” the Foreign Ministry added.

The next review conference for the convention is scheduled for 2011. It “will be able to adopt real effective measures to strengthen the ban of biological and toxin weapons,” according to Moscow (Interfax, Dec. 8).

Source: http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20081209_7554.php

Meeting of Experts 2008, 18-22 August 2008 Ends

The 2008 meeting is part of a series of sessions scheduled to address biological weapons topics between the 2006 review conference and the 2011 summit. On the agenda for this meeting were “national, regional and international measures to improve biosafety and biosecurity, including laboratory safety and security of pathogens and toxins,” and “oversight, education, awareness raising, and adoption and/or development of codes of conduct with the aim of preventing misuse in the context of advances in bioscience and biotechnology with the potential of use for purposes prohibited by the convention,” biological and chemical weapons expert Richard Guthrie said in the first of several reports from the meeting .

A number of nations and groupings of countries such as the Nonaligned Movement states offered statements during general debate on the first day of the meeting, Guthrie reported. Many addressed the importance of biosecurity and education, along with treaty universality and other topics.

There was discussion on the second day of the meeting on biosafety and biosecurity definitions and standards, Guthrie said. Discussion addressed the unlikelihood of producing a “one size fits all” understanding of biosafety and biosecurity by treaty states.

Discussion on the third day regarding biological oversight addressed three areas: “oversight of science,” “education and awareness raising” and “codes of conduct,” according to Guthrie. Delegates also discussed universalization and other matters that were not formalized on the agenda.

“The final report ... contains more detailed language about the subject matters that were under discussion,” Guthrie stated. “The use of language is very careful to ensure that nothing might be construed as a decision or recommendation.

The United Nations posted an informal copy of the report on Friday. A formal version is expected to go online before long, according to Guthrie.

The next states parties meeting is scheduled for Dec. 7-11, 2009. The topic for discussion is “with

a view to enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes, promoting capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis and containment of infectious diseases: (1) for states parties in need of assistance, identifying requirements and requests for capacity enhancement; and (2) from states parties in a position to do so, and international organizations, opportunities for providing assistance related to these fields”.

Source: http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20081209_7554.php

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Countdown to 2013?

Alexandra Stern, 16 December 2008

Studies done by various independent research organizations suggest that the panicked love affair with biodefense that intensified over the past 8 years of the Bush administration, has left us less not more safe.

For example, Propublica, a non-profit newsroom, published an online article earlier this month, outlining the findings of the study it conducted with Reader’s Digest and FLYPMEDIA. The article’s author, Marcus Stern (note: no relation), writes that scientists have become increasingly concerned and some convinced that “the \$20 billion biodefense research program the government has undertaken in the past seven years has actually made us less safe than before by vastly increasing the number of researchers and labs authorized to handle deadly substances across America.”

This extensive report echoes the findings of the *New York Times*, which examined the state of biosecurity following the suicide of Dr. Bruce E. Ivins, who killed himself while under indictment for murder charges connected to the fall 2001 anthrax attacks.

While a question mark still hangs over the guilt or innocence of Ivins — some believe he was psychologically unbalanced, others a scapegoat offered up to solve a puzzling crime — the case revealed what many scientists and policy-makers had begun to fear, namely, that there are over one

thousand researchers like Ivins working at approximately 400 biodefense labs, many newly created, around the country. All of them have access to the most lethal of biological pathogens, including anthrax, ricin, and tularemia, not to mention the capability to bioengineer new pathogens.

What makes this even more disturbing is the fact that not only are civilians at exposed risk, according to a still very relevant 2004 Institute of Medicine report, “the biodefense efforts of the Department of Defense (DoD) are poorly organized to develop and license vaccines, therapeutic drugs, and antitoxins to protect members of the armed forces against biological warfare agents.”

What’s the solution to this situation? Well, what many of my fellow bloggers have already mentioned, increased investment in basic public

health infrastructure to comprehensively lower the risk of harm from any disaster whether “naturally” occurring or bioengineered (also see here and here), full support and expansion as needed of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (as noted by Marcy), and much tighter oversight of this country’s biodefense labs as recommended during hearings held by General Accounting Office (GAO) last year.

There is some hope, once the Obama administration is in place, that we’ll move into a new era of biodefense, in which public health is not given short shrift and regulations and safety protocols in labs are strictly enforced.

Source: http://scienceblogs.com/biotech/2008/12/countdown_to_2013.php?utm_source=sbhomepage&utm_medium=link&utm_content=channellink

Disclaimer

Chemical and Biological News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and media related to the subject.

The news reports have been abridged to provide clarity. IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.



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