
**Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention
on the Prohibition of the Development,
Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological
(Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their
Destruction**

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**Consideration of the provision of assistance and
coordination with relevant organizations upon
request by any State Party in the case of alleged
use of biological or toxin weapons, including
improving national capabilities for disease surveillance,
detection and diagnosis and public health systems.**

**Technical guidance for preparing for and responding to
alleged use of biological or toxin weapons**

Submitted by the Implementation Support Unit

Summary

This paper summarizes sources of existing technical guidance for measures to prepare for and respond to the use of biological or toxin weapons. It includes mechanisms for use both at the international and national, levels. It also covers guidance relevant to both health and security aspects of this topic.

I. Introduction

1. Various international organizations have produced technical guidance that may be directly or indirectly relevant to the efforts of individual States Parties to prepare for, and respond to, the use of a biological or toxin weapon. Some of this guidance covers the security aspects of preparedness and response measures, such as the technical annex to the United Nations Secretary-General's investigative mechanism or INTERPOL's "Bioterrorism Incident Planning and Response Guide". Other guidance addresses health aspects, such as the "Public Health Response to Biological and Chemical Weapons: WHO Guidance" or "National Capacity to Manage Health Risks of Deliberate Use of Biological and Chemical agents and Radionuclear Material: WHO Guidance for Capacity Assessment".

2. These international guidance documents cover both collective preparedness and response efforts, such as in the case of the UN Secretary-General's investigative mechanism, as well as guidance for assessing and developing necessary national capabilities¹, as in the case WHO documents and INTERPOL's planning and response guide.

II. The United Nations Secretary-General's investigative mechanism (1989)

3. The origins and evolution of this mechanism were described in a background paper for the 2004 Meeting of Experts entitled "Mechanisms available to States Parties to investigate the alleged use of biological or toxin weapons and to provide assistance in such cases" (BWC/MSP/2004/MX/INF.3)².

4. Details of the procedures and guidelines under this mechanism were described in a report by the Secretary-General on *Chemical and Bacteriological (Biological) Weapons* on 4 October 1989 (A/44/561). The report included details of the mandate for the process, a summary of its proceedings, and in an annex, the Report of the Qualified Experts which incorporated all of the procedures and guidelines developed for such investigations. The report of the Secretary-General on *Chemical and Bacteriological (Biological) Weapons* was endorsed by the General Assembly on 4 December 1990 (A/Res/45/57).

5. The technical annex to A/44/561 included the technical procedures for an investigation, including:

- (a) Types of information to be provided, as available by a Member State to the Secretary-General in reporting the possible use of chemical or bacteriological (biological) or toxin weapons;
- (b) Information to be provided by Member States, either in proposing expert consultations or in designating qualified experts;
- (c) Equipment for investigations;
- (d) List of areas of expertise for qualified experts;
- (e) List of laboratory specialisations;
- (f) Information to be provided by Member States in designating analytical laboratories;
- (g) Sampling procedures for physical samples;
- (h) Sampling procedures for biomedical samples; and
- (i) Model interview questionnaire

6. Since 2004, there has been significant progress in updating these guidelines and procedures. In 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288). In this resolution, UN Member States encouraged "the

¹ Details of national mechanism to ensure that biological resources are used safely and securely are not covered in this paper as they were addressed during the 2008 Meeting of Experts. Additional information can be found in the background paper "Biosafety and Biosecurity" (BWC/MSP/2008/MX/INF.1).

² All official documents of the Biological Weapons Convention can be found online at: www.unog.ch/bwc/docs

Secretary-General to update the roster of experts and laboratories, as well as the technical guidelines and procedures, available to him for the timely and efficient investigation of alleged use”.

7. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA) is facilitating the administrative and substantive support and coordination for the smooth functioning of the Secretary-General’s investigative mechanism including the update of the technical guidelines and procedures. In 2007, ODA convened meetings of international experts from Member States and international organizations which resulted in an update of the appendices of the technical guidelines and procedures contained in document A/44/561. It is understood that a draft revised technical annex has been forwarded to the Office of the Secretary-General.

III. Public Health Response to Biological and Chemical Weapons: WHO Guidance (2004)

8. The 2004 publication “*Public Health Response to Biological and Chemical Weapons: WHO Guidance*”³ is an update of an earlier report “*Health Aspects of Chemical and Biological Weapons*”, which was originally published in 1970⁴. Both publications contain “information designed to guide preparedness for and response to the deliberate use of biological and chemical agents that affect health”.

9. The 2004 guidance has five substantive sections and a series of technical annexes. After the introduction, the report starts by considering how to assess the threat these weapons pose to public health. This discussion includes consideration of technological improvements, advances in science and the basics of threat assessment.

10. The second section deals with the agents that might be used and covers: the types of agent; how they might be disseminated; routes of exposure; characteristics of the agents; and the possible consequences of the use of these agents.

11. The third section covers public health preparedness and response and includes: the principles of risk assessment; as well as case studies of actual attacks and the responses they necessitated.

12. The fourth section reviews the legal frameworks related to these weapons and how they are being implemented. It includes details of: the 1925 Geneva Protocol; the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention; and the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention.

13. The final section provides details of international sources of assistance and includes information on: the United Nations; the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; the Biological Weapons Convention; the World Health Organization; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE); and nongovernmental organizations.

14. The annexes cover:

- (a) More detailed information on chemical agents (Annex 1), toxins (Annex 2) and biological agents (Annex 3);
- (b) Principles of protection (Annex 4), such as risk-reduction measures, individual protection, collective protection, as well as an example of the application of risk-management principles to the problem of potentially contaminated mail;

³ <http://www.who.int/csr/delibepidemics/biochemguide/en/>

⁴ <http://www.who.int/csr/delibepidemics/biochem1stenglish/en/index.html>

- (c) Precautions against the sabotage of drinking water, food, and other products (Annex 5);
- (d) Information sources (Annex 6); and
- (e) Affiliation of WHO states to the international treaties on biological and chemical weapons (Annex 7).

IV. National Capacity to Manage Health Risks of Deliberate Use of Biological and Chemical Agents and Radionuclear Material: WHO Draft Guidance for Capacity Assessment (2005)

15. To supplement its more general guidance, WHO began working on an additional guidance document to assist states in assessing their national capacity to manage health risks from the deliberate use of various agents and material, including biological agents.

16. This guidance starts by examining why conducting such an assessment is important, who should benefit from such a process and describing the major steps and content of the guide.

17. The second section details the key principles involved including: basic philosophy and principles; relevant components of national capacity, such as emergency management, health and security; as well as a capacity assessment framework, such as: system and organization dimensions; capacity and development domains; policy and strategic arrangements; security threat assessment; risk assessment; risk management functions; capacity development and training; and monitoring and evaluation.

18. The third section looks at the process involved with deciding to conduct a capacity assessment, including strategic appraisal considerations and outcomes.

19. The final section provides guidance for managing and conducting an assessment and includes:

- (a) A project steering group;
- (b) Project planning, such as: defining objectives; determining the scope and type of assessment; assessment activities, like surveys, interviews, field visits and workshops; resource management and scheduling;
- (c) Approval of a project plan;
- (d) Communications strategy;
- (e) Monitoring, review and evaluation;
- (f) Establishing the assessment team, such as team: diversity; capabilities; model; and preparation;
- (g) Selecting participating organizations;
- (h) Preparing and conducting assessment activities;
- (i) Assessment questions and considerations, such as: descriptive questions; exploratory questions; and function specific questions;
- (j) Data management;
- (k) The assessment report, including having it approved and making recommendations;

- (l) Developing and implementing a plan of action; and
- (m) A follow-up capacity assessment.

20. The guidance also includes a number of technical annexes, which examine: the main characteristics of agents (Annex 1); details of security threat assessments (Annex 2); the capacity assessment data management framework (Annex 3); a pool of questions and considerations (Annex 4); a stakeholder checklist (Annex 5); details of other international organizations (Annex 6); terminology and a glossary (Annex 7); and references (Annex 8).

V. INTERPOL's Bioterrorism Incident Planning and Response Guide (2007)

21. In order to help build national law enforcement capacity to be able to deal with incidents that might involve a biological weapon, INTERPOL developed a *Bioterrorism Incident Preplanning and Response Guide (BIRG)*.

22. The First Edition of the BIRG covered: descriptions of biological agents; means of acquisition and production; intelligence indicators; law enforcement interaction with public health bodies; response priorities; safety issues and protective equipment for personnel; and operational response, such as: incident command, hazard assessment, containment, evidence recovery, and liaison with public health authorities.

23. A Second Edition of the BIRG is currently under development. It will be published in all four INTERPOL languages (English, French, Spanish and Arabic) by October 2010. It will include:

- (a) General information on biological weapons, such as: the acquisition of biological agents, their production and dissemination; intelligence indicators; different types of attack; as well as personal protective equipment;
- (b) Details on preparedness, such as: prevention; legislation; the need for partnership; joint law enforcement and public health operations and investigations; securing biological agents; as well as biosafety and biosecurity⁵;
- (c) Facets of an operational response, such as: an incident response checklist; conducting an on-scene threat assessment; hazard and risk assessment; personnel safety; containment; evidence recovery; forensic microbiology and investigation; as well as site release; and
- (d) Media management.

⁵ For details of how these terms are used in the context of the Convention see the Report of the 2008 Meeting of States Parties (BWC/MSP/2008/5)