

## Improving implementation of the BWC: preparedness, response, and assistance

International conference  
Global Biosecurity Challenges: Problems and Solutions  
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CBW Events / BioWeapons Prevention Project

[www.cbw-events.org.uk](http://www.cbw-events.org.uk)

*A project to create a record of events to enable and encourage understanding of how policies on the issues relating to chemical and biological warfare (CBW) are developed.*

## Current situation

- Technical challenges set within broader legal and political contexts for both investigations and assistance efforts
- Controversial existing investigation arrangement = UN Secretary-General's mechanism (SGM), agreed in A/RES/42/37C, guidelines in A/44/561
- Possibility of new political or legal arrangements
- Most technical issues considered here would still apply under any new arrangement

## Request issues

- Short time frame to deal with a request from a government, either for investigation or for assistance
- Possibly highly charged political situation
- In some scenarios there may be very specific requests for investigation or assistance or both
- In some scenarios, especially those involving a large scale attack, there may be only one very simple request – 'help'!

## Request-related actions

- Points of contact need to be maintained across relevant government departments, UN departments/agencies and other relevant bodies.
- There would be benefits from exercises to test request (and evaluation of request) procedures
- Potential triggers in different scenarios should be explored
  - fast/slow response needed?
  - small/large investigation team needed?
- Some agencies, especially those seen as neutral in conflict zones, may wish to keep at arms length from investigation missions.

## Resource issues

- Funding for investigative and assistance activities inherently unpredictable, reliant on voluntary contributions – key aspect of the political context.
- Three key phases – the launch phase, field phase and recovery phase
- Smaller teams are easier to support than larger teams, but capacities are then limited.
- Self-sufficiency vs reliance on local supplies
- Without a sense of level of funding, hard to effectively plan for possible mission types.

## Safety and legal issues

- Mission safety paramount – do not add to the number of casualties!
- Host country services (security, first aid and medical countermeasures) liability questions.
- Medicines licensing, especially across borders
- Inoculation/vaccination needs

## Resource and legal actions

- More reliable sources of funding needed, need to illustrate funding used effectively and appropriately
- Flexibility of planning needed ... response to complex scenarios ... rarely complete information available in an emergency
- Encouragement for offers of specific logistical assistance, such as for transport of samples
- Training for sampling strategies should be sought
- Need for dynamic risk assessments, noting diverse procedures within multiple agencies
- Multi-agency table top exercises useful to identify overlaps, complementarities and conflicts

## Skills development

- Capability gaps in skills and analysis
- One example – skills such as interview techniques needed, often not already held by technical experts
- Multiskilling provides for greater investigation and assistance team flexibility.
- Need to communicate complex technical issues in a legal context
- Core basic skills set for investigators, may be opportunities for common training with other bodies (e.g., CTBTO, IAEA and OPCW)

## BWC, investigation / assistance issues

- Lack of BWC operational institution
- Needs every one of us to ensure all entities we are involved with are prepared to contribute
- BWC retains vital role in providing a forum for coordinating international efforts for investigation and for assistance.
- Vital that these issues are able to be considered within a robust BWC inter-sessional process.

“Remember your humanity”