

The main tasks (see also Sutherland and Schiefer, 1984) during the investigation of a truly unusual event would be:

- (1) to conduct an epidemiological survey;
- (2) to obtain tissue samples (blood, urine, or tissue of deceased casualties), etc., for future investigations;
- (3) to collect any other necessary samples, be they remnants of delivery systems or environmental samples, according to standard procedures;
- (4) to use the basic information obtained to make a very tentative assessment of the situation;
- (5) to transmit the findings (documentation in general, samples, tentative conclusions, etc.) to a central agency.

With respect to biological weapons (not part of this review), the reader is referred to Vol. 6, Technical Aspects of Early Warning and Verification, SIPRI, 1975.

As shown by the domoic acid example, (see Section 4.3), dedicated instrumentation and the availability of a computerized data bank were necessary to identify the toxin. Clearly, such a task is beyond the possibility of a field laboratory. On the other hand, the field laboratory plays a pivotal role in securing/preparing samples suitable for further work. If the field laboratory selects only one method of extraction (just to give an example), or stores the samples at inappropriate temperatures or in inappropriate containers, future investigations might be severely hampered by this first step. It should be a conditio sine qua non, therefore, that the field laboratory does the following: