



An Ongoing Threat

In most people's minds, plague is associated with the Black Death that ravaged Europe in the Middle Ages, killing tens of millions. But plague and many other highly infectious diseases have not been eradicated, and continue to pose serious threats today. In a March 2006 report, the Center for Non-Proliferation Studies noted that: (...) *today, the anti-plague system [in Central Asia] retains the raw material and knowledge highly sought after by bioterrorists. More than a decade of fragmentation has resulted in lax security, severely underpaid*

staff, and virtually no accounting system for highly lethal strains of viruses and bacteria. Although international donors have taken some steps to contain the system's physical security threats, existing and prospective non-proliferation efforts are not substantial enough and somewhat off the mark. Such efforts will not be truly effective until they reinforce the important public health benefits these facilities offer. (Illustration: University of Pennsylvania)

World at Risk

On December 2, 2008, the U.S. Congressionally mandated bipartisan Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism tabled its *World at Risk* report, which forecast that "unless the world community acts decisively and with great urgency, it is more likely than not that a weapon of mass destruction [WMD] will be used in a terrorist attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013." While the report focuses on both biological and nuclear weapons, it concludes that "terrorists are more likely to be able to obtain and use a biological weapon."