

In 1972, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) was signed. It bans the development, production, acquisition and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons. It also requires the destruction or conversion to peaceful purposes of existing BW. Over 115 countries are party to the BTWC.

Canada and BW

Canada does not possess biological or toxin weapons.

Canada ratified the Geneva Protocol in 1930. Like most other parties, Canada reserved the right to use BW against countries that didn't sign the treaty, and to use BW if BW were used against it. In 1970, to draw more attention to the need to control BW, Canada announced its clear policy not to develop, produce, acquire, stockpile or use BW at any time. To ensure that there is no confusion, Canada recently removed its reservations to the Geneva Protocol with respect to bacteriological methods of warfare. That is, Canada will never use BW, no matter what the circumstances.

Canada played an important role in the negotiation of the BTWC. We signed and ratified the treaty in 1972, further committing ourselves to never develop, produce or stockpile biological or toxin weapons.

Since not all countries have signed the Geneva Protocol and the BTWC, it is possible that the Canadian Forces will someday have to participate in a war or a peacekeeping operation where BW might be used. During the Gulf War, for example, it was thought that Iraq might try to use BW. To make sure that Canadian personnel would be properly protected in such a case, the Department of National Defence carries out research into defensive measures against BW. These include protective clothing, respirators, anti-toxins and vaccines. This type of research is consistent with the terms of the BTWC.

Canada is concerned about the possibility that some countries might be developing and stockpiling biological or toxin weapons. As a result, the federal government has started a program to make Canadian industry and universities aware of the dangers of BW proliferation. They are advised to be on the look-out for suspicious attempts to gain knowledge about the use of biological technologies, as well as for attempts to acquire materials and equipment that could have BW uses. The goal is to make sure that Canadians involved in research and production for peaceful purposes do not contribute, either directly or unintentionally, to another country's biological or toxin weapons program.

Canada is also working to make the BTWC more effective. At a conference held in September to review the BTWC, Canada and other countries proposed that the treaty be strengthened to promote transparency (in other words, sharing of information) and to ensure compliance (in other words, to ensure that parties are acting in accordance with the terms of the BTWC).

Some arms controllers are worried that recent advances in biotechnology — especially genetic engineering — could make BW more effective and reliable, and thus a more attractive option to some countries. Biotechnology techniques make it easier for countries to come up with new biological warfare agents and to produce toxins on a large scale. At the same time, the equipment for doing so is becoming smaller and more difficult to track, and the range of civilian research with potential military applications is increasing. There are therefore some serious challenges to making arms control a reality in this evolving field.

So far, the world has had a relatively lucky track record with biological weapons. The goal is to make sure that the treaties banning these horrible weapons, and the national means for their control, remain effective and up-to-date. ■

Disarmament Fund Update

Grants and Contributions from the Disarmament Fund, April 1 - September 30, 1991

CONTRIBUTIONS

1. North American Model United Nations (Toronto) — 1992 Simulation of UN General Assembly	\$5,000
2. North Coast Tribal Council (Prince Rupert, B.C.) — Nuclear conference, April 1991	1,000
3. UN Association in Canada (Vancouver branch) — Conference on naval arms control, November 1991	5,000
4. Canadian Association of NATO Defence College Anciens (Ottawa) — Symposium on "Canada and NATO," October 1991	4,000
5. Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies (Toronto) — Canadian Strategic Forecast 1991 seminar	3,000
6. Division of University Extension, University of Victoria — Public forum on "Canada's Role in Disarmament, Arms Control and Arms Trade," October 1991	5,000
7. Park View Education Centre (Bridgewater, N.S.) — 1992 Atlantic Coast Model UN on the Arms Trade	5,000
8. Peace and Environment Resource Centre (Ottawa) — Purchase of books about disarmament for library	1,000
9. Voice of Women (national office, Toronto) — 1991 Study tour of UN General Assembly	3,000
TOTAL OF CONTRIBUTIONS	\$32,000

TOTAL OF CONTRIBUTIONS

GRANTS

1. Project Ploughshares (Waterloo, Ont.) — Research and publication on naval arms control	7,000
2. Jocelyn Coulon (Outremont, Que.) — Book on Canada and the Gulf War	2,500
TOTAL OF GRANTS	\$9,500

TOTAL OF GRANTS

TOTAL OF GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS	\$41,500 ■
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