

BIOLOGICAL NON-PROLIFERATION

“The most important under-addressed threat relating to terrorism, and one which acutely requires new thinking on the part of the international community, is that of terrorists using a biological weapon to develop designer diseases and pathogens.”

— *Uniting Against Terrorism: Recommendations for a global counterterrorism strategy. Report of the United Nations Secretary General, May 2006.*

Background

Curbing the proliferation of biological weapons (BW) is an essential element of the *Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction*. At the Kananaskis Summit in June 2002, G8 Leaders committed to prevent terrorists, or those that harbour them, from acquiring or developing biological weapons and related materials, equipment and technology. To this end, Canada's GPP is investing heavily in biological non-proliferation activities in countries of the former Soviet Union.

THE THREAT: INFECTIOUS DISEASES, BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS AND BIOTERRORISM

Disease is the world's oldest weapon of mass destruction, showing no respect for borders or politics. Throughout history, disease has proven itself to be ruthlessly efficient, persistent and adaptive, and has been responsible for unparalleled suffering and death.

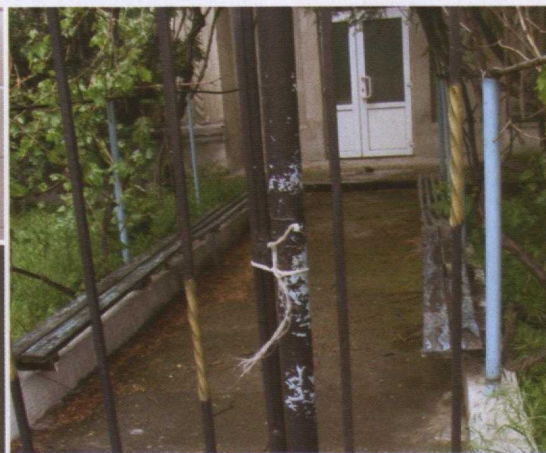
The effectiveness of disease as a killing machine attracted the attention of military programs in the twentieth century, and a number of countries—the Soviet Union in particular—developed

large and sophisticated offensive BW programs, and “weaponized” dozens of diseases. A new biological threat emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991; the once formidable Soviet biological complex fell upon very hard economic times, and underfunded facilities were no longer able to safeguard adequately the dangerous biological agents and manufacturing equipment they housed. To this day, many facilities in the FSU lack the resources to protect these agents and materials from sabotage or theft, a problem exacerbated by the significant insider threat posed by thousands of underpaid scientists who retain access to their institutes' dangerous strain collections.

Compounding the threat further is the increased importance that terrorist groups, Al Qaeda included, have ascribed to acquiring and using biological weapons. Terrorists have used biological weapons in the past, and have vowed to unleash far more devastating biological attacks in the future. In recent years, governments, academics and international think tanks have all recognized that the threats posed by terrorist acquisition of BW and biological agents are on the rise. Global consequences of a large-scale disease outbreak—be it deliberate or naturally occurring—could be catastrophic.



The replacement of decades-old equipment with new, modern equipment makes a tangible contribution to biosecurity and biosafety.



The front gate of this biological facility is secured with a piece of string. More robust and effective security measures are required to prevent the theft, sabotage, accidental release and/or terrorist acquisition of dangerous pathogens.



Canada is supporting physical improvements at certain vulnerable biological facilities, where dangerous pathogens are at present “secured” with string and wax seals.