chemical and biological agents. Toxins and related compounds such as bioregulators have increasingly come to be seen as posing a central difficulty in the distinction between chemical and biological warfare agents. Nevertheless, we can distinguish between biological and toxin agents. Biological agents are living microorganisms that cause infectious diseases. Toxins are poisonous chemical substances originally obtained by isolation from living organisms. Furthermore, some toxins are synthetic chemicals modelled on natural compounds.

The 1970 unilateral renunciation of biological and toxin weapons by the United States was a two-step process. The first step involved the renunciation of biological weapons. Afterwards, questions were raised about the status of toxin weapons. Toxins were generally considered to be 'chemical', rather than 'biological', agents since toxins are not capable of self-reproduction. Toxins were not even mentioned in the original renunciation of biological weapons.

Why were toxins added to the earlier renunciation of biological agents by the United States? The most persuasive reason is the similarity of large-scale production of toxins to biological agents at that time. For example, given the technology available in 1970 to make anthrax toxin, large scale production of bacterium Bacillus anthracis was a necessary first step. Since this bacterium is a potential biological warfare agent, the production of a