
**Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention
on the Prohibition of the Development,
Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological
(Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their
Destruction**

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English Only

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Geneva, 6–10 December 2010

Item 6 of the agenda

**Consideration of the provision of assistance and
coordination with relevant organizations upon
request by any State Party in the case of alleged
use of biological or toxin weapons, including
improving national capabilities for disease surveillance,
detection and diagnosis and public health systems**

**United States Government law enforcement efforts to
strengthen cooperation and collaboration among security,
health, and science communities**

Submitted by the United States of America

I. Overview

1. The United States is committed to expanding international capacity to prevent the deliberate or accidental release of a biological agent, as well as enhancing capabilities to attribute or apprehend those responsible. One integral component of reaching these goals is ensuring that law enforcement, security, health, and science communities are closely integrated into a larger response framework. In the event of a suspicious biological outbreak, high level cooperation and collaboration between these disciplines will greatly facilitate their respective objectives of identifying the biological agent, preventing the spread of the disease, preventing public panic, and apprehending those responsible. In particular, biological agents pose a number of challenges to both law enforcement and public health officials in their efforts to minimize the effects of a biological attack and apprehend those responsible. Lack of mutual awareness and understanding, as well as the absence of established communication procedures, could hinder the effectiveness of law enforcement and public health's separate, but often overlapping, investigations.

2. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), through various departments and agencies, is actively engaged in building capacities to prevent, protect, and respond to a biological attack. Because a biological outbreak is not limited to geographical borders, the FBI is committed to working with international partners to promote appropriate communication, coordination, cooperation, and capacity building efforts among Federal, State, and local security, health, and science communities. Cooperation among these communities could lead to improved measures to prevent a bioterrorist attack, help

minimize the impact of an attack, and ensure the successful prosecutions and convictions of those responsible.

3. The United States looks forward to sharing its law enforcement expertise and experience with the international community in the hopes of strengthening collective national capacities and advancing the aims of the Biological Weapons Convention.

II. Current and future law enforcement efforts

Joint Criminal and Epidemiological Investigation Training Program

4. A coordinated response between law enforcement and public health is critical to protecting public health and safety and mitigating health consequences of deliberate biological threat events. To promote collaboration between these disciplines domestically, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) developed a Joint Criminal and Epidemiological Investigations Course for public health and law enforcement personnel. In addition to providing an introduction to criminal and epidemiological investigations, the course offers participants a forum in which to gain greater insight into each discipline's expertise, identify potential conflicts that may be encountered between the disciplines during a response, and develop solutions by using best practices when conducting joint threat assessments, investigations, and interviews.

5. This training was an outgrowth of growing collaboration between FBI and CDC in addressing unusual cases or outbreaks of disease. This collaboration has also led FBI and CDC to jointly develop protocols to share domestic disease reporting and other relevant information. Through these protocols, the CDC provides information on instances where the index of suspicion suggests the possibility that disease may not be the result of natural exposure factors, and the FBI provides relevant threat information.

6. Through close partnership between the CDC and FBI, the Joint Criminal and Epidemiological (Crim-Epi) Investigation Training Program has been internationalized. Employing curricula and course materials similar to those used in the training provided to U.S. public health and law enforcement communities, FBI and CDC provide training to public health and law enforcement personnel from partner countries. This training assists international partners in developing protocols for conducting joint crim-epi investigations within the public health and law enforcement structure existing in their respective countries. As a result, partners who participate in this training are better able to develop or enhance national capability to identify when an outbreak of infectious disease might be the result of an act of bioterrorism or other malicious intent. These capacities can also contribute to effective implementation of the International Health Regulation (IHR).

Biological Scientific Outreach Program

7. The *National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats* encourages the development of a "culture of awareness and responsibility" within the life sciences community. The FBI's Biological Science Outreach Program supports this objective by improving situational awareness and reporting on suspicious activities that could represent an emerging security threat. The initiative seeks to develop a partnership and a dialogue between the FBI and the research community to establish build trust and promote the reporting of potentially suspicious incidents as an accepted norm of professional conduct. Through this initiative, the FBI educates partners on security issues and the "real world" threat and serves as a resource for risk mitigation. The research community benefits by increasing its capacity to self-regulate and self-police. The FBI, in turn, benefits by gaining subject matter expertise on emerging threats and increased reporting of suspicious events.

8. The FBI has worked with the Federation of American Scientists, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Department of Health and Human Services' National Institutes of Health to develop educational and training materials on biosecurity. These materials are provided during outreach events to the biological sciences communities to help foster the development of a culture of responsibility. The FBI will continue to expand its engagement in this area by working with the aforementioned organizations and others to develop educational and outreach materials for the biological sciences community.

International Biological Threats Forum

9. The primary objective of FBI's International Biological Threats Forum (IBTF) is to provide an international venue for the coordination and sharing of information and best practices related to the prevention of and response to the misuse of biological agents as weapons of mass destruction (WMD). To support this objective, key domestic and international stakeholders will be asked to support collaboration with international law enforcement organizations, public health agencies, and prevention professionals to facilitate the exchange of information on preparedness, investigations, training, threats, and intelligence. The IBTF will use a website to facilitate information exchange and collaboration on current issues, topics, and biological WMD concerns. The IBTF will also support international training and exercises to improve preparedness of law enforcement and other response groups to events involving the use of biological agents as WMD. The IBTF website is currently under development with an expected launch date of late 2011. In the upcoming months more information regarding participation will be made available to the international community.

Synthetic Biology Program

10. While the emerging field of synthetic biology holds tremendous promise for benefits in areas ranging from health to energy, the FBI has identified the synthetic biology community as posing a risk for exploitation because the rapidly advancing technologies that enable the synthetic generation of DNA sequences could be misused by those seeking dangerous biological materials for harmful purposes. Through the Synthetic Biology Program, the FBI engages public and private synthetic biology companies to develop common standards and best practices for risk management in accordance with the *Screening Framework Guidance for Providers of Synthetic Double-Stranded DNA* recently released by the Department of Health and Human Services¹. In furtherance of this program, local Field Office WMD Coordinators identify corporate entities in synthetic biology within their geographic area of responsibility. Upon identification, outreach efforts are conducted to sensitize industry community members to the potential risks inherent in this technology. As a result, methods to mitigate the risks, such as mechanisms for reporting, responding to, and investigating suspicious purchases, are developed jointly with affected industry. This effort also involves working with partner countries to share best practices regarding risk management. The FBI works with the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Implementation Support Unit and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) to characterize the threat and risks posed by synthetic biology and to develop strategies to manage the risk. In coordination with the Department of State (DOS), the FBI has engaged the International Association of Synthetic Biology.

¹ available online at: <http://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/legal/guidance/syndna/Pages/default.aspx>

11. Through the sharing of best practices, the FBI Synthetic Biology Program provides international synthetic DNA marketers with greater situational awareness that their products have the potential to be exploited and misused. In addition, the program fosters dialogue between international companies and their respective government/law enforcement agencies to develop the requisite processes to mitigate the risk of misuse of harmful DNA sequences. Through the program, the FBI seeks to promote partner country efforts to improve situational awareness and to report suspicious activities that could represent an emerging international security threat. FBI and Department of State (DOS) experts attended the 2009 International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) Competition attended by members from 100 universities and 26 countries. At the event, the FBI hosted an outreach booth and provided a biosecurity workshop. The FBI will continue to work with DOS to identify opportunities to conduct outreach to international synthetic DNA companies.

Amateur (Do It Yourself) Biology Initiative

12. The FBI's Do It Yourself (DIY) Biology Initiative creates a symbiotic relationship between the FBI and members of the DIYbio community, which engages amateur biologists in assisting the USG to prevent, detect, and respond to bioterrorism incidents. Efforts include outreach through attendance at amateur biology conferences and regional meetings, assistance in the development of a safety framework, and dissemination of educational materials. The program fosters a culture of responsibility and raises the level of awareness regarding potential security vulnerabilities. It develops lines of communication between members of the DIYbio community and their respective local FBI WMD Coordinator. The FBI and HHS were invited to be a part of the DIYbio community's safety working group, which was established to identify and institute best practices for conducting research work. The FBI will continue to work with DIYbio community members and partner US Government Departments and Agencies to assist in the development of a safety/security framework.

III. Contact information

13. The United States looks forward to sharing its law enforcement expertise and experience with the international community in the hopes of strengthening collective national capacities and advancing the aims of the Biological Weapons Convention. For further information about U.S. programs, please contact:

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