



HS DISEC - "The Danger of Bioweapons on Public Safety"

Disease and illness have always been used in warfare. It wasn't until the twentieth century where we saw the dawn of modern biological warfare. Despite efforts after both world wars, biological weapons continue to be used by both governments and non-state actors to cause devastation among civilian populations. According to the World Health Organization, "biological weapons can be either microorganisms such as a virus, or a substance produced by a living organism," (WHO). Biological weapons are classified as weapons of mass destruction by the United Nations. Although governments are the most influential users of biological weapons, it is important that member states take into account their use by non-state malicious actors. Notably in 2001, days following the September 11th terrorist attacks, an individual actor killed five Americans by sending anthrax-laced letters using the postal service. The attacks, while not connected to any organization or previous strike, brought into question how to safely store potentially dangerous microorganisms for research.

The international community has made efforts in the past to prohibit the use of biological weapons, and dispose properly of national stockpiles. The current and most relevant international agreement that deals with biological weapons is the Biological Weapons Convention. Since its

creation in 1975, the treaty has been revised eight times, and is signed by 185 member states. The treaty's goals include the prohibition of “development. Production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling, and use of biological and toxin weapons,” (BWC). Despite efforts to safely dispose of stockpiles, the process is slowed by a lack of funding, or other factors. Many member states also lack the infrastructure and technology to effectively counter a biological attack.

A reminder to delegates that the primary goal of this committee is to disarm. While current conflicts are relevant to disarmament, it is not the job of this committee to enforce peace. **This is not the International Court or Security Council.** There are a handful member states who have not yet signed or ratified the BWC: Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Haiti, Israel, Kiribati, Micronesia, Somalia, Syria, and Tuvalu. Some of these member states are currently in the process of signing or ratifying. The most current debate regarding the disarmament of biological weapons is the storage of these microorganisms for research purposes. Some member states, mostly non aligned countries, argue this storage can lead to abuse and have called for legally binding verification protocols. Others from the EU and NATO have promoted more voluntary and informal ways of verification. The other debate is over whether the more developed member states of the BWC should share research and resources with less developed member states. The research is argued to be valuable to member states in how to respond to a biological attack.

Sources for delegates (**please do your own research outside of these sources**):

<https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-09/news/experts-debate-biological-weapons-challenges> -

Arms Control Association

<https://disarmament.unoda.org/biological-weapons/#:~:text=Biological%20weapons%20disseminate%20disease%2Dcausing,spread%20rapidly%20around%20the%20world> - Biological

Weapons Convention background

<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/amerithrax-or-anthrax-investigation> - FBI Report on the 2001 Anthrax Attacks

https://www.who.int/health-topics/biological-weapons#tab=tab_1 - World Health Organization