

ARMS CONTROL

29 June 2007 U.N. Ends Iraq Weapons Monitoring

More than four years after Saddam Hussein's ouster, the Security Council on Friday voted to shut down the U.N. inspection bodies that helped uncover his illegal weapons programs but were then banned from Iraq by the United States.

The U.S. had been trying since 2005 to get the Security Council to wrap up the work of the inspectors. Iraq's new leaders had also been lobbying for the council to stop using the country's oil revenue to pay the salaries of the inspectors, and the resolution adopted by the council frees up \$60 million dollars for transfer to the Iraqi government.

The resolution terminates the mandate of two U.N. bodies responsible for overseeing the dismantling of Saddam's programs to develop nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and long-range missiles. It was approved by a vote of 14-0 with Russia abstaining.

Britain's U.N. Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry said that for some time neither of the U.N. bodies "have been in a position to carry out their functions in a way which serves the aim of disarmament and nonproliferation." The focus must now be on ensuring that Iraq itself supports international efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, he said.

The inspectors pulled out of Iraq just before the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion and were barred by the U.S. from returning. In a letter to the council in May 2003, the U.S. and Britain said they were taking over responsibility for Iraq's disarmament.

Since leaving Iraq, the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission known as UNMOVIC has continued to study satellite imagery in efforts to keep track of equipment with dual civilian and military uses that could be used in biological, chemical and missile programs. On Thursday, the commission published a 1,200-page account of Iraq's weapons programs and the lessons learned in the verification process.

UNMOVIC is the outgrowth of a U.N. inspections process created after the 1991 Gulf War in which a U.S.-led coalition force ousted invading Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Under terms of the cease-fire, Iraq agreed to dismantle its unconventional weapons programs and long-range missiles.

In the 1990s, U.N. inspectors uncovered significant undeclared banned weapons programs, including a biological warfare program that Saddam sought to conceal, the chemical nerve agent VX and other advanced chemical weapons capabilities, and the indigenous production of long-range ballistic missile engines.

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency helped unravel the true extent of Iraq's clandestine nuclear program, which never succeeded in producing a working weapon.

UNMOVIC's Acting Executive Chairman Demetrius Perricos warned the council in a final briefing Friday that the possibility of terrorists or insurgents getting their hands on toxic chemical agents "is real," especially in the present security environment in Iraq.

He also cited a number of outstanding issues that "cannot be resolved and therefore contribute to the residue of uncertainty" about Iraq's chemical, biological and missile

programs. These included the fate and whereabouts of 25 Al Samoud II missiles that were not destroyed before inspectors left in 2003, 326 SA2 missile engines, the status of the Muthanna chemical weapons facility, and the fate of liquid anthrax dumped in Baghdad in 1991.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin objected to the council's failure to comply with previous resolutions demanding that the inspectors certify that Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction before terminating their mandate.

"The adoption of this resolution does not give any clear answers to the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq," Churkin said.

U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said the efforts of the U.S.-led multinational force in Iraq and the U.S. Iraq Survey Group, which investigated Iraq's weapons programs from 2003-2005, "have demonstrated that the current government of Iraq does not possess any weapons of mass destruction or delivery systems."

"This is an historic day, it turns a new page, opens a new chapter with regard to Iraq" and weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq's U.N. Ambassador Hamid Al-Bayati said the adoption of the resolution turns the page on "an appalling chapter in Iraq's modern history, which had a destructive impact on the people of Iraq."

Source:<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/huff-wires/20070629/un-iraq-weapons-inspectors/>

11 July 2007 Activists Question Army CW Disposal Plan at Umatilla

Environmentalists have taken issue with the U.S. Army's decision to begin burning a new chemical agent at the Umatilla Chemical Agent

Disposal Facility in Oregon without first replacing the filters in the incinerator's smoke stack.

The plant last week completed disposal of weapons containing the nerve agent sarin, and is scheduled to begin eliminating VX nerve agent weapons following a changeover period.

The Oregon Environmental Quality Department last month voided a permit requirement that the Army after finishing off the sarin replace carbon filters intended to catch any weapons agent that was not fully incinerated. One agency official said there is no risk in not changing the filters because sensors in the smoke stacks have never detected any chemical agent entering the atmosphere through the stacks.

The environmental advocacy organisation Group Against Smog and Pollution said it is "very concerned about the potential impacts that could result if the carbon filters are not replaced between different agent campaigns. What will result from mixing [sarin], VX, heavy metals, dioxins, furans ... and then collecting them in the PFS carbon?"

Morrow County, the county next to Umatilla County, said in a filed comment that it "does not agree with the proposed changes in the (Army's disposal permit). There appears to be a lack of supporting information that ensures the carbon absorption in the units will not be adversely affected by these changes."

Another Army plan to incinerate mustard agent mixed with mercury at Tooele, Utah, has come under fire from the Chemical Weapons Working Group. The watchdog group has called for an environmental impact statement on the project under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Source:http://204.71.60.35/d_newswire/issues/2007/7/11/db9b1329-c649-46e9-ab17-9e16b05e42e4.html

11 July 2007 Senators Urge Accelerated Chemical Weapons Disposal

Four U.S. senators have charged the Defence Department with neglecting destruction of chemical weapons in Colorado and Kentucky while they introduced a measure to speed up the process.

“DOD has been stonewalling for years and it is time for them to produce results,” said Senator Jim Bunning.

Chemical weapons disposal plants have yet to be built at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky and the Pueblo Chemical Depot in Colorado. The current schedule has operations beginning in 2014 at both sites, with weapons disposal ending in 2020 at Pueblo and 2023 at Blue Grass.

Facilities at all other U.S. chemical storage sites have begun or completed their work.

Legislation sponsored by Colorado and Kentucky’s senators seeks \$49.3 million in extra funds for chemical weapons disposal and would set a 2017 deadline for the destruction of the U.S. stockpile. It also would require biannual updates from the Pentagon.

“It’s a kick in the pants that I think the Pentagon needs in order to get the Kentucky stockpile on a reasonable course for disposal,” said Craig Williams, director of the Kentucky-based watchdog Chemical Weapons Working Group.

The Defence Department “has consistently failed to provide sufficient funding for this program, and thus delayed the destruction of chemical weapons on site,” said Senator Wayne Allard.

Source:http://204.71.60.35/d_newswire/issues/2007/7/12/767fa935-b251-45cf-9f1a-769e3f5d045f.html

DISARMAMENT

6th BWC Review Conference

In his concluding remarks at the 6th BWC Review Conference, 20 November – 8 December 2006, held at Geneva, Ambassador Masood Khan of Pakistan, President of the conference, said, “We have succeeded. I think we can say without any exaggeration that this is a historic moment, both for the Biological Weapons Convention and for multilateral security and disarmament. The documents that we have produced are not an empty cosmetic consensus. They are a win-win result for all.”

Source:http://www.nti.org/d-news_wire/issues/2007-5-3.html

Expert Calls for Higher Scrutiny of Foreign Students

Former weapons inspector Rod Barton is calling for Australian universities to increase their scrutiny of foreign science students, to ensure they are not intent on using their newfound knowledge for dangerous purposes.

Source:http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2007_5_3.html

10th Anniversary of the CWC

CWC celebrated its 10th Anniversary on 29 April 2007. On the occasion, Ban Ki-Moon, the United Nations Secretary General observed that the CWC has made significant strides in eliminating an entire category of WMD. He also praised the work done by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), under whom the CWC is carrying out its activities.

Source: http://204.71.60.36/d_newswire/issues/recent_stories.asp?category=chemical

13 July 2007 Japanese Cult Nerve Agent Maker Loses Appeal

A member of the Aum Shinrikyo cult today lost his appeal of a death sentence handed down for his part in the deadly 1995 sarin nerve agent attack in Tokyo.

The Tokyo High Court upheld the 2003 conviction of medical doctor Tomomasa Nakagawa. The nerve agent Nakagawa helped to produce killed 12 in the subway system and claimed seven victims in an earlier attack, a court spokeswoman said.

Nakagawa was also convicted of involvement in other murders carried out by the cult, AP reported.

More than 12 cult members, including leader Shoko Asahara, have been sentenced to death.

Source:http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/print.asp?story_id=89FAAB06-DD62-442C-A462-31E9BBF3E213

12 July 2007 Albania First Nation to Eliminate Chemical Arsenal

Albania is the first nation to completely eliminate its full stockpile of chemical weapons, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons announced on April 27.

The Chemical Weapons Convention verification body said it confirmed yesterday that Albania had incinerated more than 16 metric tons of mustard, lewisite, mixed mustard/lewisite, adamsite and chloroacetophenone agents.

The exact provenance of the weapons remains unclear. Albania and five other treaty nations have declared chemical stockpiles totaling more than 71,000 metric tons. India, Libya, Russia, South Korea and the United States are continuing efforts to eliminate their arsenals of banned materials

such as VX nerve agent and mustard blister agent. More than one-third of the total amount had been eliminated by the end of June, according to a OPCW press release.

Source:http://204.71.60.35/d_newswire/issues/2007/7/12/6a4e023a-03b8-4e59-a6be-14c396f25003.html

10 July 2007 Umatilla Chemical Depot Destroys Last Sarin Weapons

The Umatilla Chemical Depot in Oregon on Sunday finished disposal of its stockpile of weapons containing the nerve agent sarin, the U.S. Army reported.

The Army began its disposal campaign at Umatilla in September 2004 and has destroyed more than 155,000 munitions and 1,000 tons of the chemical agent. The incineration project junked 155 mm artillery projectiles, M55 rockets, 8-inch projectiles, bulk chemical containers, and 500- and 750-pound bombs.

After a five-month changeover period, the depot is scheduled to begin destroying VX nerve agent weapons. The facility is subsequently set to burn its stock of mustard agent.

Source:http://news.greencross.ch/index.php?mode=singleview&action=overview&table=news_english&language=english&id=344

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

India came out with WMD and their Delivery Systems Bill in the year 2005 which could be viewed as India's reassurance of its commitment towards prohibition of WMDs. As per this bill WMD proliferation is a criminal offence. Private Companies are also liable for prosecution under this bill.

Source: http://204.71.60.36/d_newswire/issues/recent_stories.asp?category=chemical

25 July 2007 Kerala MP Submits First Memorandum to President

P.C. Thomas, an MP from Kerala, became the first parliamentarian to submit a memorandum to Pratibha Patil Wednesday, her first day as president, about the outbreak of viral fever in the state.

Thomas of the Kerala Congress (J) presented the memorandum to her while greeting her immediately after she took oath at the Central Hall of parliament.

The memorandum urged the president to declare the fever a 'national disaster'.

It said that a large number of people in Kerala were suffering from a 'peculiar type of viral fever and diseases like Chikungunya, dengue and Japanese fever and (that) other types of epidemics are spreading in several parts of the country'.

He gave copies of the memorandum to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss and Minister of State for Environment and Forests S. Regupathy

Source: http://news.monstersandcritics.com/india/news/article_1334790.php/Kerala_MP_submits_first_memorandum_to_president

11 July 2007 U.S. Launches Pandemic Rating System

The U.S. Health and Human Services Department has initiated a pandemic rating system similar to that used to grade hurricanes, scaling viral events from one to five based on their severity, the agency's chief response planner said on 2 July, 2007.

The Pandemic Severity Index, formally announced in February, allows people to "conceptualise what we mean" when officials begin talking about the extent of a widespread infectious event, said Rear Adm. Craig Vanderwagen, HHS assistant secretary for preparedness and response.

"We can talk about a category one which would be basically a seasonal flu which is maybe a little more than the usual seasonal flu up to a category five, which would be a 1918-like event or maybe even more severe than that," he said at meeting of the National Infrastructure Advisory Council here.

"I think we all live under the specter of a 1918-type episode," said Erle Nye, Chairman of the advisory committee.

The 1918 flu pandemic killed between 50 and 100 million people worldwide in about a year and a half.

The advisory board recently submitted a report to the Health and Human Services Department designed to help the government set the vaccination schedule for crucial health and emergency response workers during a pandemic. In the event of limited resources, those workers most vital to the continued functioning of the emergency and health care response systems would be the first to receive prophylactic care.

Source: http://204.71.60.36/d_newswire/issues/recent_stories.asp?category=chemical

11 July 2007 Bush Boosts Biodefence Budget Request

The Bush administration's fiscal 2008 budget request would provide \$309 million more for civilian biodefence than its previous request, boosting funding for the Health and Human Services, Defence and Agriculture

departments, the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Biosecurity said in June.

The Homeland Security Department and other agencies, though, would receive less funding, according to an article written by two center analysts.

The White House request for civilian biodefence totals \$5.42 billion. Nearly 80 percent of the funds would go to Health and Human Services, which researches treatments for infectious diseases through the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control.

The CDC BioSurveillance initiative, a project to develop an early-warning system tracking the spread of dangerous biological agents, would receive a \$10 million boost for a total budget of \$88 million.

The budget would nearly double the budget of the U.S. Agriculture Department biodefence program, for a total of \$340 million. Funding for the Food Emergency Response Network would increase to \$19 million, from \$2 million from the present Fiscal Year. The network of food laboratories is expanding across the country and being equipped to rapidly test large volumes of food for dangerous biological agents.

The budget of the Agricultural Research Service would be increased to \$58 million, from \$23 million. The service researches sources of manmade and natural food contamination and creates systems to survey the food supply and detect biological threats. Pest detection and animal health monitoring programs would receive a \$42 million increase to total \$119 million.

The Defence Department would receive a 23 percent increase in funding for biodefence projects. Pentagon programs include civil support teams to respond to WMD attacks and a threat reduction program to locate,

collect and destroy deadly biological agents produced by the former Soviet Union.

The Homeland Security Department would receive \$26 million less in 2008 than in the 2007 budget cycle, a 7 percent reduction attributable to the elimination of the Metropolitan Medical Response System, a program for preparing medical first responders for public health emergencies, according to the center.

The Environmental Protection Agency would experience across-the-board cuts in funding for its homeland security initiatives in the proposed budget, including a decrease of 8.5 percent or \$14.2 million for biodefence.

Requested funding for State Department biodefence programs would fall 10.4 million, to \$53.5 million.

Source:http://204.71.60.36/d_newswire/issues/2007/7/11/f9b83014-6dcb-4507-ac24-a93cc4eb0216.html

12 July 2007 Europe and Asia Consider Bioterrorism Defences

The European Commission issued a policy paper yesterday addressing the need for greater transnational cooperation to secure biotechnology and prevent bioterrorist attacks.

“Although in the past terrorists used explosives or improvised explosive devices, they may in the future resort to nonconventional means such as biological weapons or materials,” said Franco Frattini, a European Commission vice president.

“Therefore, risks from dangerous biological materials and pathogens have to be reduced and preparedness fostered in Europe through a comprehensive approach aiming at achieving a better preparedness in this area,” he added.

The report noted that as Europe's biotechnology sector grows along with its global commerce, dual-use knowledge and equipment could fall into terrorist hands.

Meanwhile, security experts from 10 Asian countries convened in Jakarta, Indonesia, for a two-day discussion of bioterrorism defence strategies, the Antara news agency reported on March 28.

Representatives from the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations intend to trade ideas and intelligence on combating bioterrorism, said Bambang Kuncoko, a senior officer with the Indonesian National Police.

Interpol and civilian experts are also scheduled to take part in the discussions, Bambang added.

Source:http://204.71.60.35/d_newswire/issues/2007_7_12.html

12 July 2007 U.S. Narrows Picks for Biological Defence Site

The U.S. Homeland Security Department yesterday announced five sites as finalists for a planned \$450 million biological defence facility.

Plans call for the National Bio- and Agro-Defence Facility to have the highest level security rating, "BSL-4," allowing it to handle the deadliest biological agents. The facility would also be the only laboratory in the country to combine studies of human and agricultural disease with research into vaccine countermeasures for animal diseases and animal pathogens that could spread to humans.

"The NBAF, when built, will enhance our nation's defence against animal and plant disease threats," DHS Undersecretary Jay Cohen said in a statement.

Texas A&M University, which has been embarrassed recently by failures to disclose research accidents, was not among the five finalists.

The proposed 520,000-square-foot facility, which promises at least 300 lab-related jobs, is being planned by Homeland Security and would be managed by the Agriculture and Health and Human Services departments.

Finalist sites for the facility are located in Mississippi, Kansas, Texas, Georgia and North Carolina. The Bush administration was originally considering 18 sites spread across 12 states, including the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California.

Experts are scheduled to complete an environmental impact study of the remaining sites in 2008. The Homeland Security Department plans to choose a final site next year, and construction is expected to begin in 2010. The facility is scheduled to start operating in 2013 or 2014.

Senator Pat Roberts expressed optimism that Kansas State University will be chosen to house the facility. "We are very well suited and I think we can compete with anybody," he said. "We stand ready to up the ante or do whatever is necessary.

Source:http://204.71.60.36/d_newswire/issues/2007/7/12/4fe519b6-1752-4385-983f-4874c534doc2.html

11 July 2007 Hearing Set on Chemical Agent Waste Transfer

A hearing is scheduled for Monday in federal court in Indiana on an injunction request to halt U.S. Army transfers of nerve agent disposal waste to Texas.

The Army in spring began shipping wastewater produced by VX nerve agent neutralization in Newport, Indiana, to a

private incineration facility in Port Arthur, Texas. Local and national environmentalists teamed up in May to file suit against the Army transfers of hydrolysate and are seeking a court order to prevent further shipments.

The plaintiffs have argued that the neutralized waste is still harmful and that the Army evaded normal procedures before beginning the transfers. The environmental groups also have petitioned Representative Ted Poe and state and local officials to intervene.

The Army voluntarily stopped wastewater transfers pending the federal court issues a decision. Roughly 360,000 of the proposed 2 million gallons of wastewater had been hauled by tanker truck to Texas before shipments halted.

Officials in Pueblo, Colo., site of another chemical depot, are closely following the case. Officials there have urged the depot to conduct on-site treatment of wastewater produced by mustard agent neutralization at a facility that has yet to be built. They argue that lawsuits and delays could result from shipping the waste.

Source:http://204.71.60.36/d_newswire/issues/recent_stories.asp?category=chemical

9 July 2007 South African Anthrax Scare Hospitalizes 11

Possible exposure to anthrax led to the hospitalization Friday of 11 people in South Africa.

A post office in Alberton, south of Johannesburg, notified police of a “suspicious” envelope containing an unknown powder, Inspector Juanita Kilian said on South African public radio.

“The envelope was filled with powder.... At this stage we cannot confirm that the contents were anthrax,” Kilian said.

Authorities decontaminated the site and sent those exposed to the powder to a hospital. Forensic testing is being conducted at a police laboratory in Pretoria

Source:http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2007/7/9/34b75e25-9c1d-4d1e-810f-4a7cc9646fa4.html

Role of NGOs

A New Delhi based NGO, Gene Campaign, organised a ‘Jansunwai’ on 30 March, 2007, at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, to address the issue of Agrarian Crisis in India and to frame a set of recommendations to resolve them.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

11 July 2007 Iowa Funds Pneumonic Plague Vaccine Research

Scientists at Iowa State University have received more than \$150,000 from the state of Iowa for a project that aims to make a protective vaccination against pneumonic plague. Pneumonic plague’s ability to quickly spread and resist antibiotic treatment makes it a likely biological weapon choice for terrorists, said researcher Michael Wannemuehler, who is leading a three-professor team on the project.

He said his team’s research could also have applications in the fight against anthrax, influenza and severe acute respiratory syndrome.

“If we can immunize against viral pathogens so there’s a good immune response, we may be better able to control diseases,” Wannemuehler said.

Source:http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2007_7_11.html

11 July 2007 D.C. Metro Floated as Anti-Nerve Agent Test Site

A lobbyist has sought congressional backing for a nerve agent antidote pilot project in the Washington, D.C., transit system.

Lynn Johnson, lobbyist for King Pharmaceuticals Inc., said he pitched the plan to House Appropriations Committee member Zach Wamp earlier this year. The proposal sought federal funding to disperse disposable injectors containing nerve agent antidote around the transit system covering the capital region.

“If there is a nerve gas attack, you need to have supplies close at hand,” said James Green, an executive at the Tennessee pharmaceutical firm. King Pharmaceuticals alone provides the U.S. military with the auto-injector nerve agent antidote, along with supplying local emergency agencies, states and the governments of other nations.

The antidotes, atropine and pralidoxime, must be used within 15 minutes of an attack to work, Green said. The auto-injector pens contain one dose of the drug and are designed to be easily administered.

The Washington, D.C., subway is a potential terrorist target and would be a perfect proving ground for the injectors, Johnson said. Terrorists killed 12 people with the nerve agent sarin in a 1995 Tokyo subway attack. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority spokeswoman Cathy Asato said the agency was never contacted about the project.

While the agency has conducted subway attack drills, it is not planning to install auto-injectors any time soon, she added.

There was much congressional interest in the injectors three years ago but other security priorities took precedence and obscured the project, Green said.

King Pharmaceuticals do not expect Congress to act on the proposal this year, AP reported.

Source:http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2007/7/11/86BAB2B5-CABF-47BC-A7C7-36516D8F5B48.html

RECENT PUBLICATIONS IN THE FIELD

1. Arms Control Association, *The 2006 Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference: Articles and Interviews on Tackling the Threats Posed by Biological Weapons*, Washington DC, November 2006.
2. Borrie, John, “The limits of modest progress: the rise, fall and return of efforts to strengthen the biological weapons convention”, *Arms Control Today*, 36 (8), October 2006: 18-22.
3. Choffnes, Eileen; Stanley Lemon and David Relman, “[A brave new world in the life of sciences] The breadth of biological threats is much broader than commonly thought and will continue to expand”, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 62 (5), September/October 2006: 26-33.
4. Chyba, Christopher, “Biotechnology and the challenge to arms control”, *Arms Control Today*, 36 (8), October 2006: 11-17.