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United Nations
Interregional Crime and Justice
Research Institute

International legal frameworks for biothreat reduction

Workshop on Fortifying Institutional Resilience Against Biological Threats
(FIRABioT) for IGAD Member States
14-16 March 2023

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United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), est. 1968

- **Mission** is to advance justice, crime prevention, security and the rule of law in support of peace, human rights and sustainable development



- Counterfeiting
- Vulnerabilities of the legal supply chain
- Organized crime infiltration
- Agroterrorism
- Biosecurity



- Counterfeit medicines
- Prevention of substance abuse and treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers
- Ethics and law in biomedical research
- European Union CBRN Centres of Excellence risk mitigation initiative



- International crime and justice
- Human rights
- Investigative and legal psychology
- New threats



- Environmental crimes
- Illicit trafficking of precious metals



- Promoting a gender perspective in drug and alcohol abuse
- Domestic violence



- Enhancing biosafety and biosecurity
- Big data
- Robotics and artificial intelligence
- Major events and tourism security
- Cybercrime



- Empowering youth
- Enhancing community resilience
- Reducing inequalities and vulnerabilities



- Urban security
- Trafficking and smuggling of migrants
- Community policing



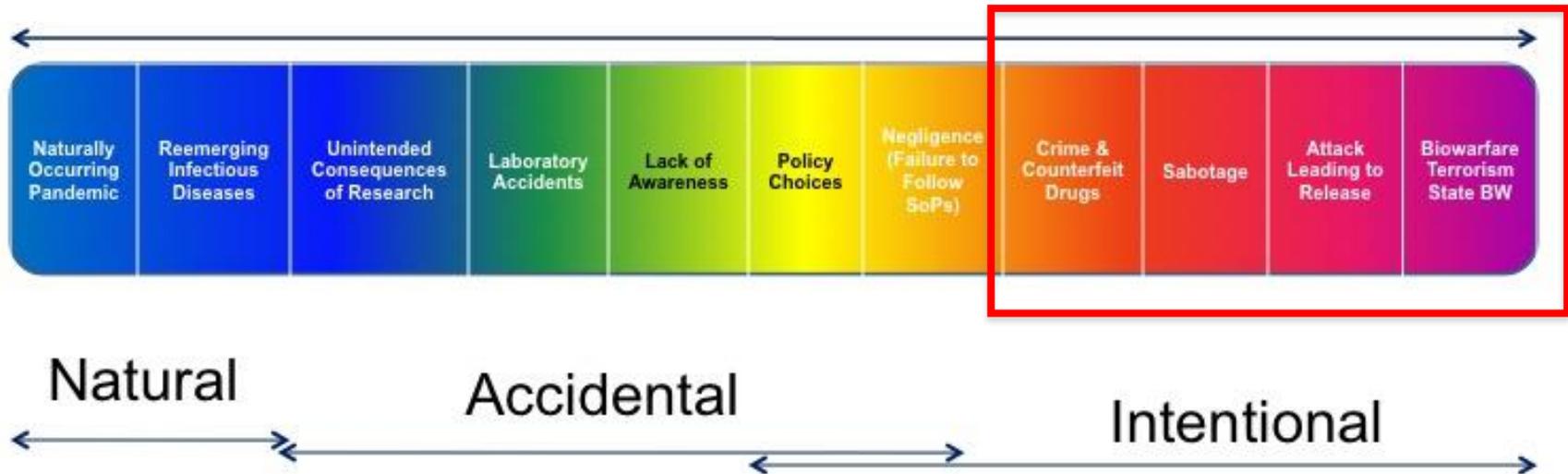
- Illicit financial flows and asset recovery
- Rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists in prisons
- Responding to the threat and reintegrating foreign terrorist fighters
- Countering radicalisation and violent extremism
- Juvenile justice in a counter-terrorism context
- Nexus between organized crime, international terrorism and development

Biothreats

Defining 'biothreat'

Spectrum of biological risks/threats

- Biothreat
 - An event involving the intentional misuse of a biological agent to harm humans, animals or plants



Categories

Biowarfare

- The use of a biological agent (biological weapon) during warfare

Bioterrorism

- The deliberate release of a biological agent by a non-state actor to cause illness or death in people, or to disrupt agriculture and/or the food supply (agroterrorism); typically inspired by ideological, religious or political beliefs

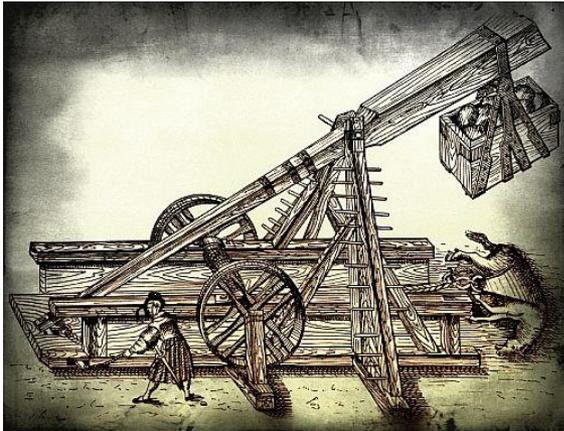
Biocrime

- The deliberate release of a biological agent by a non-state actor to kill or make ill a single individual or small group of individuals; typically motivated by revenge or the desire for monetary gain by extortion

Biowarfare

“State Actors”

Historical precedents: Biowarfare (WWI)



Antiquity

Numerous instances of the use of plant toxins, venoms, other poisonous substances to create biological weapons

Pre-20th century period

Reports of infected carcasses, clothing, and blankets used as weapons during sieges

World War I (1914-1918)

Biological agents, including anthrax and glanders, used to target draft animals and to engage in 'biological sabotage' activities targeting cattle and pigs



Geneva Protocol



Geneva Protocol - Chemical and Biological Arms Control

- Signed 17 June 1925
- Entered into force 8 February 1928
- Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare

- ❖ General prohibition on chemical and biological weapons in armed conflicts, but **does not** cover the production, storage or transfer of such weapons, and interpreted by some countries as only applying to ‘**first use**’

Historical precedents: Biowarfare (WWII)



Shirō Ishii



'Unit 731'

World War II (1939-1945)

- Despite the signing of the Geneva Protocol, several countries continued to explore the possible strategic value of 'germ warfare'
- Japan's 'Unit 731' field tests biological agents, including plague, anthrax, typhoid and cholera, causing the large-scale loss of human life

Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)



BWC - Biological Arms Control

- Opened for signature 10 April 1972
- Entered into force 26 March 1975
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction

- ❖ First multilateral disarmament treaty banning an **entire category** of weapons, covering biological agents, toxins, their means of delivery, and **all future scientific and technological developments** relevant to the Convention

Bioterrorism

“Non-state actors”

Historical precedents: Bioterrorism (Anthrax Letters)



Anthrax Letters (2001)

- Coined ‘Amerithrax’
- ‘Ames’ strain anthrax (a potent variety of *Bacillus anthracis* bacteria) mailed through the US postal system
- 5 deaths, 17 others sickened, many hundreds of ‘worried well’
- Approximately 1 billion USD in cleanup and decontamination costs

UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540)



UNSCR 1540 - CBRN Terrorism

- Adopted 28 April 2004
- Resolution binding to all UN MS
- Mandate of 1540 Committee extended until November 2032 (UNSCR Resolution 2663)

- ❖ Obliges all states to adopt legislation to prevent non-state actors from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring or using CBRN weapons, related materials and their means of delivery

International Health Regulations (IHR)



**World Health
Organization**

IHR - Public Health

- Established in 2005
- Entered into force 15 June 2007
- Notification requirements for any ‘public health emergency of international concern’, including **novel or evolving risks** to international public health

- ❖ The IHR provide an overarching legal framework that defines countries’ rights and obligations in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders

Thank you for your attention

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