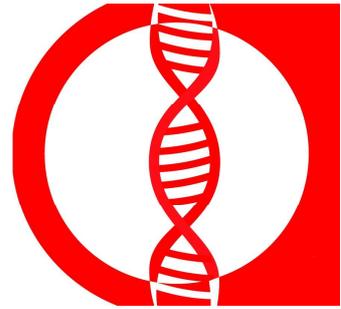


Research Group for Biological Arms Control



News and Activities 7 February 2009

If the first half of 2008 was a turbulent time of fundraising, conceptual discussions, workshops and celebrations, the second half of 2008 saw the Research Group put its nose to the grindstone and devote most of its time to substantive research. We have more concurrent projects now than we have ever had before. Furthermore, it being a ripe moment to start thinking about and preparing for the Seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in late 2011, the Research Group used the opportunity during the Meeting of BWC States Parties in December 2008 in Geneva to discuss possible collaborative projects with like-minded non-governmental organisations.

The Research Group also welcomed as a guest researcher Prof. Dr. Vladan Radosavljevic from the Military Institute of Preventive Medicine in Belgrade, Serbia, from 1 November 2008 to 31 January 2009. His stay was funded through a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Prof. Radosavljevic focussed his work on the ways and means to differentiate between natural and deliberate epidemics. He met with a wide range of German bioweapons control experts and disease specialists, attended the annual meeting of the German Working Group on Chemical and Biological Weapons Disarmament and Nonproliferation on 17 November 2008 in Berlin and gave a presentation on „Bioterrorism - Epidemics, fear and panic and how to prevent them“ on 15 January 2009 during the ZNF's Colloquium on Science and Peace Research. The Research Group looks forward to continuing the collaboration with its Serbian partners.

Detailed information on the work of the Research Group, copies of publications and regular activity updates can be found on our website: www.biological-arms-control.org.

Ongoing Projects

The following projects were undertaken at the Research Group during the second half of 2008. Detailed information on these projects is available on our website www.biological-arms-control.org:

- ◆ Dual use life science research and its potential application in bioterrorism (funded by the European Centre of Disease Prevention and Control).
- ◆ Economic, social and legal aspects of biodefence research (funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research).
- ◆ The role of non-state actors in promoting nonproliferation and arms control against biological weapons (funded by the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond in Stockholm under the European Foreign and Security Policy Studies programme).
- ◆ Tracking the global movement of biological dual use items (funded by the MacArthur Foundation).
- ◆ Strengthening the Confidence Building Measure regime under the BWC (currently not funded).

New Publications

Restricting the role of biosecurity

This article describes the history, diversity of definition and broadening scope of the term “biosecurity” and argues that while the broadening scope has the potential to bring renewed attention to certain public health issues, it also carries a substantial risk of tying the life sciences too closely to national security agendas thereby threatening to undermine transparency and public accountability, and to impede the scientific process by limiting possibilities for peer review and collaboration. Accordingly, this article argues that the concept of biosecurity should be limited to the prevention of the misuse of scientific activities for terrorist aims, in particular to keeping dangerous agents out of the wrong hands.

Zmorzynska and Hunger, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2008,
<http://thebulletin.org/web-edition/features/restricting-the-role-of-biosecurity>.

Statement to the 2008 Meeting of the States Parties to the BWC

In its now traditional statement to the annual meeting of BWC States Parties in Geneva, the Research Group made a plea to limit the concept of biosecurity to the prevention of the misuse of scientific activities for terrorist aims and argued for three principles that should guide the carrying out of particularly dangerous research: firstly, such research should be limited to the absolute necessary; secondly, any such activities should be subject to a globally harmonized risk assessment and oversight process; and thirdly, such work has to be completely transparent.

Research Group for Biological Arms Control. Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Centre for Science and Peace Research. University of Hamburg, December 2008, <http://www.biological-arms-control.org/download/MSP-Statement-final.pdf>

2008 Reader on Publicly Available CBMs

The 2008 CBM Reader provides information on states’ participation in the BWC’s Confidence Building Measures and summarizes the information contained in the 14 publicly available CBMs. Following the decision at the Sixth BWC Review Conference in 2006 to limit access to the CBMs to states, we publish the CBM reader annually to highlight the importance of transparency in the area of biological dual use activities.

Research Group for Biological Arms Control. Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Centre for Science and Peace Research. University of Hamburg, December 2008,
<http://www.biological-arms-control.org/download/CBMReader2008-final%20with%20annex.pdf>.

Workshops and Seminars

Workshop on Assessing the Dangerousness of Biological Dual Use Activities and Technologies

In connection with the project “Dual use life science research and its potential application in bioterrorism” the Research Group organized an expert workshop on 21 October 2008 at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin to discuss and assess the misuse potential of dual use activities and technologies of concern. Participating were practising life scientists and experts on regulatory and policy matters. During the workshop, participants assessed biological dual use activities of concern and classified them according to the threat they would pose in the hands of terrorists. The threat assessment took into account both the necessary capabilities of terrorists in terms of expertise and equipment and the likely resulting consequences and allowed conclusions about which activities are of higher security concern than others.

Annual Meeting of the German Working Group on CBW Disarmament and Nonproliferation

The Research Group was co-organizer of the annual meeting of the German Working Group on CBW Disarmament and Nonproliferation, which took place on 17 November 2008 in Berlin. Dr. Ralf Trapp,

formerly with the OPCW and now an independent advisor on CBW disarmament, talked about the proceedings and results of the 2nd CWC Review Conference. Dr. Alexander Kelle of the University of Bath presented his concept of a framework convention for preventing the misuse of chemical and biological agents. Dr. Volker Beck of the German Foreign Office introduced the group to the intricacies of the international discussion on biosecurity. And Dr. Walter Biederbick of the Robert Koch Institute gave a presentation on the biosecurity discussion in Germany.

Teaching

During the second half of 2008, members of the Research Group were engaged in the following teaching activities:

- ◆ Lecture „Contributions of Natural Sciences to Peace Research”, IFSH, University of Hamburg;
- ◆ Seminar “Ethics for Biologists”, University of Hamburg;
- ◆ Seminar “Ethics for Engineers”, Technical University Hamburg-Harburg;
- ◆ Seminar “Natural Science and Peace Research”, University of Hamburg.

Staff Activities

Besides managing the Research Group in all its aspects, **Iris Hunger** continued work on her project “Economic, social and legal aspects of biodefence research”. On 7 October, Iris gave a presentation on the history, current debate and implications for science and industry of the biosecurity issue during the Biopolicy Conference at the BIOTECHNICA fair in Hannover. Ten days later she participated in the Workshop “Teaching ethics and peace to science and engineering students” and spoke on requirements for teaching social responsibility to natural science students during the 2nd Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Forum, both in Hamburg. Iris went to Amman from 27 to 29 October to present a talk on dual use research, bioweapons and biosecurity during the International Forum on Biosecurity. Together with Anna and Nicolas she went to Geneva in late November/early December to participate in the 29th Workshop of Pugwash’s CBW Study Group, observe the BWC States Parties meeting and deliver the Research Group’s statement there, and take part in BWPP Board discussions.

Nicolas Isla continued to work on his main research project on the role of non-state actors in biological arms control. In October, he presented mid-project results at the European Foreign and Security Policy Studies Programme’s annual meeting “St.Malo 10 Years On: Taking Stock of the EU as an International Player” in Brussels. He produced the 2008 CBM Reader and presented it at the 29th Workshop of the Pugwash Study Group on the Implementation of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions “Moving Towards the Seventh BWC Review Conference” in November in Geneva. Nicolas continued to undertake administrative responsibilities of the Research Group such as design and maintenance of the website.

Gunnar Jeremias continued working on his trade monitoring project. In October, he went to Brussels to discuss the trade monitoring concept with experts at the EU Council, and to Berlin to meet with officials from relevant German authorities. Gunnar participated in and chaired a panel at the European Foreign and Security Policy Studies Programme’s annual meeting “St.Malo 10 Years On: Taking Stock of the EU as an International Player”, also in October, in Brussels. In addition, he served as coordinator for a collaborative research project on verification and monitoring of international treaties and was involved in teaching activities.

Anna Zmorzynska worked on her project “Dual use life science research and its potential application in bioterrorism”. On 7 October, she attended the Biosecurity Workshop at BIOTECHNICA’s Biopolicy Conference in Hannover. Anna was responsible for the organisation of the Research Group’s Workshop on

assessing the dangerousness of biological dual use activities and technologies on 21 October in Berlin. Together with Gunnar and Iris, she travelled to Berlin for the annual meeting of the German Working Group on CBW Disarmament and Nonproliferation on 17 November. She presented her preliminary project results at the 29th Workshop of the Pugwash Study Group on the Implementation of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions “Moving Towards the Seventh BWC Review Conference” in November in Geneva.



Representatives of non-governmental organisations, Iris Hunger for the Research Group among them, take their turn delivering speeches to the floor during the 2008 Meeting of the States Parties to the BWC.



Prof. Kalinowski (right), Head of the Centre for Science and Peace Research, in discussion with Prof. Radosavljevic, guest researcher from Serbia.

Contact

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