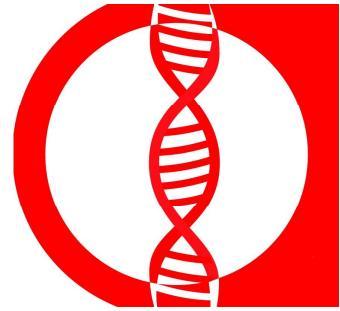


# Research Group for Biological Arms Control



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## News and Activities 8 August 2009

The first part of 2009 had several changes in store for our Research Group. Nicolas Isla finished work on his project on the role of non-state actors in biological arms control and got offered a position at the World Health Organisation, which he accepted. He left Hamburg in May. We were sorry to see him leave. We miss his dedication to the fight against deliberate disease, his innovative mind and his friendly ways with everyone. All of us left behind in Hamburg wish Nico all the best in his new job!

Our Research Group took over responsibility for the website of the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP) in May 2009. The BWPP office in Geneva closed on 1 May 2009. BWPP's network of civil society actors is now supported through the BWPP website only. Helping to transfer and reorganize the BWPP website was the first task for our new colleague Jan Hendrik Hoppe, who joined us in April. Jan is a second year sociology student at the University of Hamburg.

Also in April, we welcomed our first bachelor student. Aline Tänzer studies biology in her third year. For her bachelor thesis she spent four months with us investigating biological dual use research at Hamburg's scientific institutions and biosecurity awareness of the scientists involved.

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](http://www.biological-arms-control.org).

## New Project

### **Neither Safety nor Security without Cooperation. Control Measures for Biological High Risk Research in European Union States**

Our Research Group has received funding from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation for a two-year project to examine and compare control, security as well as safety measures applicable in European high containment laboratories. The project which started in June 2009 will identify and analyse existing legislation at the national and EU level and look at the implementation at the local level, in the laboratories. The project will address three main questions: 1) How effective are the existing accreditation and control measures for biological high risk research within the different EU states? 2) How must these existing measures be improved to reliably prevent the proliferation of potential biological weapons agents? 3) What lessons can be learned from the national experiences with accreditation and control systems for such systems at the EU and international level? The principal researcher for this project is Anna Zmorzynska.

## Ongoing Projects

The following projects were undertaken at the Research Group during the first half of 2009. Detailed information on these projects is available on our website [www.biological-arms-control.org](http://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

### Biological weapons as a public health issue

This paper explores the areas of convergence between biological weapons and public health. It starts with the most obvious, the negative health effects of the use of biological weapons, and asks where the public health response to natural disease outbreaks differs from a response to deliberately caused diseases. It argues further that while investments in civilian biodefence may spill over into general public health to a certain degree, states and international organisations need to be aware that this is by no means automatic. Finally, the wider question of positive and negative implications of framing public health as a security issue is touched upon.

Isla, in: McLaughlin and Nixdorff (eds.) BWPP Biological Weapons Reader, Geneva, 2009, [http://www.bwpp.org/documents/BWPP%20BW%20Reader\\_final+.pdf](http://www.bwpp.org/documents/BWPP%20BW%20Reader_final+.pdf), p. 53-58.

### Biosecurity policies at international life science journals

This paper presents the results of a survey of 28 major life science journals – 20 English language international, three Chinese and five Russian – with regard to their biosecurity policies and procedures. The survey addressed the question to what extent life science journals have implemented biosecurity procedures in recent years, how authors and reviewers are advised about these procedures and the underlying concerns, and what the practical experiences have been. The vast majority of English language publishers and all Russian and Chinese publishers surveyed did not implement formal biosecurity policies and do not inform their authors and reviewers about potentially sensitive issues in this area.

van Aken and Hunger, Biosecurity and Bioterrorism: Biodefense Strategy, Practice, and Science Vol. 7 No. 1 (2009), p. 61-71.

### Factsheet: Bioterrorism

This one-page factsheet (plus “further reading” list) provides a very short introduction to the issue of bioterrorism, starting with a “definition” of terrorism, describing the few historical examples of bioterrorist attacks, and ending with a note on intentions and capabilities as the factors influencing the bioterrorist threat.

Hunger, in: McLaughlin and Nixdorff (eds.) BWPP Biological Weapons Reader, Geneva, 2009, [http://www.bwpp.org/documents/BWPP%20BW%20Reader\\_final+.pdf](http://www.bwpp.org/documents/BWPP%20BW%20Reader_final+.pdf), p. 95-96.

## Workshops and Seminars

### FONAS Expert Talk

Our Research Group organised an Expert Talk on “Public Health Between Swine Flu and Bioterror” in cooperation with the Research Association Science, Disarmament and International Security (FONAS) on 30 June 2009 in Berlin. Dr. Heinrich Maidhof from the Robert Koch-Institute gave a presentation on generic biopreparedness measures and their applicability for countering the new influenza H1N1 outbreak. Prof. Kathryn Nixdorff from the Technical University Darmstadt spoke about new biotechnologies with a high misuse potential. And last but not least, members of our Research Group presented new approaches in bioweapons arms control.

## Teaching

During the first half of 2009, members of the Research Group were engaged in the following teaching activities:

- ◆ Lecture „Contributions of the natural sciences to peace research”, University of Hamburg;
- ◆ Lecture and seminar „Biological weapons, bioterrorism and the dual use problem in the lifesciences”, Summer-Academy “Young Scientists Cooperate for Peace”, University of Hamburg;
- ◆ Seminar “Ethics”, School of Life Science Hamburg;
- ◆ Seminar “Ethics for Biologists”, University of Hamburg;
- ◆ Seminar “Natural Science and Peace Research”, University of Hamburg;
- ◆ Seminar “The Politics of Science”, Technical University Hamburg-Harburg.

## Staff Activities

**Jan Hoppe** joined the Research Group in April 2009. He has worked mainly on migrating the website of the BioWeapons Prevention Project (bwpp.org) to a new server while simultaneously reorganizing its content. Jan also started to redesign the website of our Research Group; the new website is scheduled to be online by the end of September.

**Iris Hunger** continued work on her project “Economic, social and legal aspects of biodefence research” besides managing the Research Group in all its aspects. She took part in a training course on how to get in and out of a biohazard suit and gave a presentation on agroterrorism during the annual meeting of the German Society for Disaster Medicine in May in Berlin. Also in May, she spoke at a public discussion about art and politics following the screening of the movie “Strange Cultures” about the US American artist Steve Kurtz, who was detained on suspicion of bioterrorism in 2004. In June, Iris participated in the conference “Safety and Security Systems in Europe” in Potsdam, and the International Policy Workshop “Safety and Security of Biotechnology” in Geneva. At the invitation of the Working Group for Science and Disarmament, she spoke on current issues in biological arms control at the Technical University Dortmund in July.

**Gunnar Jeremias** continued his work on trade monitoring for dual-use items in biotechnology. He presented the trade monitoring concept in June at the conference “Safety and Security Systems in Europe” in Potsdam, and at the FONAS Expert Talk in Berlin. Gunnar also spent considerable time on bringing his doctoral dissertation forward, and continued his engagement in the interdisciplinary research group on verification and monitoring of international treaties at the University of Hamburg. He was involved in a number of teaching activities, among others seminars at the Summer Academy “Young Scientists Cooperate for Peace” which was hosted by the Centre for Science and Peace Research (ZNF).

**Anna Zmorzynska** was busy during the first half of the year with finishing work on her project “Dual use life science research and its potential application in bioterrorism”. In June, she started working on her new project “Neither safety nor security without cooperation”. She was responsible for organising the FONAS Expert Talk in June in Berlin, and gave a presentation there about new possibilities of assessing dual use research. On 13 and 14 July she attended the symposium „Emerging and highly pathogenic agents – from discovery to vaccine“ on the occasion of the opening of the extension building and the new biosafety level 4 facility of the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine in Hamburg.



Iris Hunger at a training course during the annual meeting of the German Society for Disaster Medicine in May

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