

*Working together to strengthen the norms
against chemical and biological weapons.*



CBW Challenges Radar no. 12

What's new at CBWNet

CBWNet moves to second project phase

CBWNet recently successfully completed its first project phase. During the first four years of our network project, CBWNet team members held two conferences and three expert workshops, published 19 CBWNet working papers (plus other articles, book chapters and papers) and made numerous presentations in different contexts. In all of this, we greatly benefitted from the regular engagement with our implementation partners in the Auswärtiges Amt and the Office of the Joint Committee for Security Relevant Research, as well as the members of CBWNet transfer network. Our thanks go to all the colleagues and friends who, through their interactions with us, have supported our work!

For the second project phase, CBWNet II, which has started on 1 April 2026, Dr. Anna Krin at the ZNF in Hamburg will serve as the network coordinator. Across the network, we will continue to address both new and existing challenges to the CBW prohibition regimes from an interdisciplinary perspective and ensure the utilization of research results through focused contributions to scientific and practice-oriented political discourse. Through this, CBWNet-II will continue to contribute to consolidating research on the prohibition of biological and chemical weapons in Germany and to providing sustainable inter- and multidisciplinary expertise in this field.

CBWNet mourns the passing of Kathryn Nixdorff

The CBWNet team is sad to note the passing away of Kathryn Nixdorff on 23 March 2026.

Kathryn was a retired professor for microbiology and genetics at the Technical University of Darmstadt. In parallel to her academic career, she advocated for responsible research in the life sciences, and, as an active and well-respected member of the NGO community surrounding the Biological Weapons Convention, was a strong supporter of biological arms control. She was also instrumental in integrating peace research into biology, including as a founding member of the 'Interdisciplinary Working Group for Science, Technology and Safety (IANUS)' at the TU Darmstadt, as long-standing chair of the German 'Working Group Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Chemical and Biological Weapons', and in the international non-governmental network 'Bioweapons Prevention Project (BWPP)'.

She worked on biological weapons disarmament issues for almost four decades, with a special focus on the role of scientific and technological developments in this context. Even after she retired, she continued to invest much time and energy in this topic and in supporting and enhancing biosecurity education. She supported the CBWNet project as a consultant, and until most recently published papers, for example on [biosecurity governance within the BWC](#) and on [preventing the misuse of security-relevant research in the life sciences](#).

We all benefitted greatly from Kathryn's profound knowledge and enjoyed working with her throughout the years. We will miss her and always remember her for her wisdom, modesty and kindness. With her passing, CBWNet and the wider biological weapons disarmament community lose a highly respected colleague and a very dear friend.



News

- On 9 April 2026, the OPCW Director-General issued a [statement](#) calling for strengthened international efforts to end the Syrian chemical weapons dossier and welcoming the launch of the Syrian-led “Breath of Freedom Task Force”.
- UNIDIR held an event on *Monitoring the frontiers of innovation: Converging technologies and their impact on disarmament and arms control* on 23 March 2026, during which CBWNet researcher Una Jakob gave a [presentation](#).

- On 16 March 2026 the OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias gave a [commemorative speech](#) on the chemical attack in Halabja, Iraq on 16 March 1988.
- On 3 March 2026 the OPCW released a [landmark report](#) on AI and the Chemical Weapons Convention.
- The Norwegian Institute of Public Health launched a [project](#) on enhancing resilience against biological threats in the Nordic and Baltic countries.
- On 5 February UNIDIR hosted an [online event](#) on navigating frontier artificial intelligence and perspectives for strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention.

Publications and presentations of interest

Publications and presentations by CBWNet researchers

- Several CBWNet researchers contributed a chapter to the edited volume – *50 Years of the Biological Weapons Convention*. These include CBWNet researcher Barry de Vries with an [Introduction and a chapter on Review Conferences: The Lifeblood of the Convention](#); Associate CBWNet researcher Alexander Ghionis (et al.) on [Reflections on the Past, Present, and Future of the Biological Weapons Convention Research Community](#); CBWNet researcher Thilo Marauhn on [the Legal corollary of the Biological Weapons Convention: A long and winding Road](#); Associate CBWNet researcher Mónica Chinchilla on [The BWC and UNSC Resolution 1540 \(2004\): Strengthening the ‘Quasi-Compliance’ Role of the 1540 Committee Against Bioterrorism](#); CBWNet associate researchers Kristoffer Burck and Sannimarie Veini on [the BWC and the Regional: Permeation and Reflection of the Biological Weapons Prohibition in Regional Institutions](#); CBWNet researcher Alexander Kelle and Malcolm Dando on [Dual-Use of Biotechnology, Biodefense, and Challenges to the Future Verification of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention](#); CBWNet researcher Gunnar Jeremias and CBWNet researcher and project coordinator Anna Krin on [The Calculation “BWC+S&T+Verification” Does not Work Without the Variable “Convergence”](#).
- Associate CBWNet researcher Alexander Ghionis et al. published a [paper](#) on artificial intelligence and biological weapons acquisition.

- CBWNet researcher Barry de Vries published an [article](#) with the *Lieber Institute at West Point* on the alleged poisoning of Alexei Navalny, analyzing why states pursue toxin-related allegations through the Hague-based CWC mechanisms rather than under the BTWC framework.
- Several CBWNet researchers contributed a chapter to the edited volume – *Thirty Years of the Chemical Weapons Convention*. These include Associate CBWNet researcher Alexander Ghionis on [From Disarmament to Abolition: Learning to maintain the CWC Model](#); CBWNet researcher Alexander Kelle on the [Chemical Weapons Convention as a Model for Verification of the Biological Weapons Convention](#); CBWNet researcher and consultant Ralf Trapp on [Compliance Management in the Verification Dimension](#); and CBWNet researcher Alexander Kelle and former CBWNet student employee Yasmin Cürük on [The Chemical Weapons Convention as a Tool in the Global fight against Terrorism](#). In addition, CBWNet transfer network member Ahmet Üzümcü contributed the [Keynote Address](#).
- CBWNet researcher Alexander Kelle and Malcolm R. Dando published an [article](#) in *Defense & Security Analysis* on Biodefense as a challenge to the global norms against biological and toxin weapons, examining five problems and a potential solution.
- CBWNet researcher Barry de Vries published an [article](#) in the *Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy* on Bio-Invasions and the threats for the Biological Weapons Convention.
- CBWNet researcher Alexander Kelle and Malcolm R. Dando published an [article](#) in *Politics and the Life Sciences* on Gain-of-function virology as a dual-use research of concern and the Variations of securitization in the United States.

CWC

- Andrea Stricker published a [policy brief](#) on the *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* website analyzing the recent Israeli attacks on suspected Iranian chemical weapons facilities.
- Damian Alexander Honeyman, David James Heslop and C Raina Macintyre published an [article](#) in *Global Biosecurity* analyzing the Fall of the Syrian Regime and the end of Chemical Warfare in Syria.

- Clive Jones published an [article](#) in the *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* examining Britain, Intelligence and Egypt's use of Chemical Weapons in the Yemen Civil War 1962-1968.
- Anam Murad Khan elaborates in this [opinion piece](#) on the *c&en* website how Middle East hostilities expose a chemical-nonproliferation blind spot.
- This [article](#) by Gregory D. Koblentz published in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* discusses why the world should help the new Syrian government destroy leftover chemical weapons now.
- Al Mauroni criticizes the poor evidentiary basis of claims of an Iranian CBW program in this [substack post](#).
- Andrea Stricker published a [paper](#) on the *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* website on Countering Iran's Covert Chemical Weapons Program.
- Gemma Bowsher published an [article](#) in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* on the Navalny assassination as another chemical weapons violation.
- Bretislav Friedrich, Ulf Schmidt and Paul Warker (ed.) published a [volume](#) on *Thirty Years of the Chemical Weapons Convention*.
- This [article](#) by Zoha Dorri et al. published in the *International Journal of Emergency Medicine* designs a model for hospital preparedness against chemical weapons of mass destruction terrorist incidents through a mixed method approach.

BWC

- Barry de Vries, Kristoffer Burck and Sannimari Veini (ed.) published a [volume](#) on *50 Years of the Biological Weapons Convention*.
- This [article](#) by Diane DiEuliis and James Giordano published by the *Institute for National Strategic Studies* develops a broader conception of biodeterrence.
- Ashish K. Jha published an [article](#) in *STAT* on why the U.S. needs to be worried about Iranian biological materials.
- Cassidy Nelson published an [article](#) in *RUSI* on the underappreciated biological weapons risks emerging from the current conflict in Iran.

- The Institute for *National Strategic Studies* published a [report](#) examining a Framework for Biological Weapons Deterrence.
- Jasmin Kluge et al. published an [article](#) in *Police Chief Magazine Online* addressing the rising threat of bioterrorism.
- Miranda Smith, Kolja Brockmann and Mark Bromley published a [report](#) on the *SIPRI* website on preventing biological weapons proliferation - Operational Applications of Emerging Technologies.
- Junaid and Tanzeel Yasin published an [article](#) in *Social Science Review Archives* on strengthening international law for emerging biological threats.
- Riya Manas Sharma and Tom Hobson published an [article](#) in *The Nonproliferation Review* analyzing the limited participation in confidence-building measures under the Biological Weapons Convention.
- Eva Siegmann published a *Council on Strategic Risks Briefer* on Respiratory PPE as Day-Zero Defense Against Biothreats.
- Paul Friedrichs, J. Stephen Morrison, Michaela Simoneau and Sophia Hirshfield published a *CSIS report* on protecting Americans from biological threats.
- Filippa Lentzos published an [article](#) in *The i Paper* analyzing how a bioweapon attack would unfold.

Biosecurity

- Thomas Kelly published an [article](#) in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* examining the keys to a better gain-of-function policy.
- Filippa Lentzos and Tim Stevens published an [article](#) in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* on what can biosecurity learn from cybersecurity.
- David Gillum, Megan Shoff and Randy A. Albrecht published an [article](#) in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* on how NIH modernization could expose biosafety gaps.
- Stuart D. Blacksell et al. published an [article](#) in *Clinical Microbiology Reviews* on Biosafety and biosecurity for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* and *Burkholderia mallei*: evidence, gaps, and sustainable practice in endemic, low-resource settings.

- The *United States Government Accountability Office* published a [report](#) on Biosafety and Biosecurity by comparing the U.S. and selected G20 Members.
- Md Asadulghani, Natasha K. Griffith and William Arndt published an [article](#) in *Biosafety and Health* on Containment of antimicrobial resistance for strengthening global public health security and Biorisk management perspectives.
- Jay Atanda, Matthew L. Nicotra, Benjamin Sperisen, Erika Somani and Henry H. Willis published a *RAND* [working paper](#) examining a Living Framework and Guidelines for Information Disclosure in Biosafety.

AI

- Scott Nolan Smith published an [article](#) on the *NTI Risky Business blog* arguing that rapidly advancing AI–bio convergence requires much stronger global governance and safeguards.
- Richard C. Armitage published an [article](#) in *Global Security: Health, Science and Policy* on Frontier large language models and clinical recognition of category agents: a cross sectional analysis.
- Sarah R. Carter published an [article](#) in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* on how Agentic life science AI is exacerbating bioweapons concerns.
- Elise Annett, James Giordano and Brendan Melley published an [article](#) in *National Defense magazine* on how AI can help enforce the Biological Weapons Convention.
- Rebecca Hersman and Cassidy Nelson published an [article](#) in *Time* examining the Weapons of Mass Destruction AI Security Gap.

Other publications of interest

- Christina McAllister and Richard T. Cupitt published an [article](#) in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* addressing the threat of Iran’s potential secret chemical and biological weapons programs.

- This [commentary](#) by Katie Davis (et al.) published in *The Sun*, examines how the Iran carnage could spiral into chemical & biological warfare from weaponized clinics to leaks from DIY labs.
- Stacey Henderson (ed.) published a [volume](#) which examines how international and domestic legal frameworks respond to emerging forms of chemical and biological weapons.
- Stacey Henderson published an [article](#) in the *Griffith Law Review* examining the legality of the use of chemical and biological warfare agents against crops and livestock.
- Richard Cupitt, Christina McAllister and Barbara Slavin published a [commentary](#) on the *Stimson* website on highlighting the need to secure nuclear and potential chemical and biological dual use material and expertise in the event of regime change in Iran.

Podcast/Interviews

- King's College researcher Gemma Bowsher joined the “*Battle Lines*” *The Telegraph's Defence & Foreign Affairs Podcast*, to discuss new forensic findings surrounding the alleged use of epibatidine - a highly toxic compound sometimes referred to as “dart frog toxin” - in the death of Alexei Navalny. Listen to the full episode [here](#).

Coming up!

- [Joint BWC ISU – OPCW Workshop on Policy and Diplomacy for Scientists](#), The Hague, 26 -29 May 2026
- [One Hundred and Twelfth Session of the Executive Council](#), The Hague, 7 - 10 July 2026
- [One Hundred and Thirteenth Session of the Executive Council](#), The Hague, 6 -9 October 2026
- [Working Group on the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention](#), Ninth session, Geneva, 17 -21 August 2026
- [Thirty First Session of the Conference of the States Parties](#), The Hague, 23 - 27 November 2026



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