

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



CBW Challenges Radar: Investigating the use of chemical and biological weapons

In the latest CBWNet working paper, Ralf Trapp discusses the mechanisms for investigating the use of chemical and biological weapons and the development of scientific capacity for such investigations. The author highlights the importance of investigations in determining if a chemical or biological weapon was used, the type of agent used, and the origin of the weapon. The OPCW and the UN Secretary General's Mechanism have set up systems with designated laboratories to investigate such allegations. However, there are still significant scientific challenges to be addressed, including validation of methods, agreed acceptance criteria, and distinguishing between natural and deliberate events. The paper emphasizes the need for continued investment and attention from governments to make progress in this field.

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What's new at CBWNet

In a UNIDIR report, CBWNet researcher Alexander Kelle together with co-authors Alexander Ghionis and María Garzón Maceda look into historical experiences, provide analysis of salient issues and make recommendations for [preparing for the Fifth Chemical Weapons Convention Review Conference](#). CBWNet also submitted substantive [suggestions to the CWC Open-Ended Working Group](#) in preparation for this year's Review Conference.

On 12 December 2022, CBWNet researchers Kristoffer Burck, Barry de Vries and

Sannimari Veini presented their research on “The Legal Effect of the BWC Review Conferences” at a side event during the Ninth BWC Review Conference, discussing the legal implications and decision-making procedures of the Conference.

CBWNet researcher Alexander Kelle and Almutaser Albalawi participated in the Meeting of States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention in The Hague, 28 November - 2 December.

Additionally, CBWNet researchers presented at and participated in several events, among others a SIPRI workshop on a new biosecurity toolkit, the EUNPD Consortium's annual conference and the #Leaders4Tomorrow initiative.



Publications of interest

Dual-Use Research

- Michael Schulson writes on the [debate surrounding the risks of made-to-order DNA](#) in *Undark*, 21 December, 2022
- Pannu et al. propose [measures to strengthen the oversight of dual-use life sciences research](#) in *Science*, 8 December, 2022
- Daniel Greene, Megan J. Palmer and David A. Relman write about [motivating proactive biorisk management among life scientists](#) in a *Health Security* article, January 2023

- Michèle Gemünden and Svenja Vinke explore [how to teach life sciences students about dual-use research](#) in the *Canadian Journal of Microbiology*, January 2023
- The draft report from a US biosecurity panel recommends to expand dual-use research regulations, [Jocelyn Kaiser reports](#) in *Science*, 20 January, 2023
- Gigi Kwik Gronvall summarizes the findings from a [workshop on governance of biotechnology innovation](#) held by the *Council on Foreign Relations*, 30 January 2023

Regional case studies

- In the fifth edition of the *The Trench Historical Notes* series, Brian Rappert, Lizeka Tandwa and Chandré Gould analyze the [historical lessons for verification and transparency in the case of the former South African chemical and biological weapons program](#), 26 November, 2022
- Benjamin Wakefield highlights [opportunities for the EU to strengthen biosecurity in Africa](#) in the *EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers* series, November 2022
- A [RAND report](#) characterizes the risks of North Korean chemical and biological weapons, 2022
- Gigi Kwik Gronvall and Aurelia Attal-Juncqua [assess the trajectory of biological research and development in the Russian Federation](#) in the *Joint Force Quarterly 108*, *National Defense University*, 16 January, 2023
- Nicole Lurie and Joshua M. Sharfstein [discuss the recently released US National Biodefense Strategy](#) in the *JAMA Health Forum*, December 2022

Biological Weapons Convention

- Una Jakob analyses the outcome of the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention in a [PRIF blog post](#), 7 February, 2023
- James Revill and Manon Blancafort assess the outcome of the negotiations during the Review Conference in the [Geneva Policy Outlook](#), 30 January, 2023
- A [UNIDIR report](#) edited by James Revill, Vivienne Zhang and María Garzón Maceda highlights different Stakeholder perspectives on the Biological Weapons Convention, December 2022

- Kai Ilchmann and James Revill [assess the SecBio platform proposal for the Biological Weapons Convention](#) in a *UNIDIR* report, December 2022
- In "[Preparing for Twenty-First-Century Bioweapons](#)" for *Issues in Science and Technology*, Yong-Bee Lim, Kathleen M. Vogel and David Gillum argue that involving more NGOs in nonproliferation and disarmament could help significantly to prepare for future challenges, 8 December, 2022
- In a Vox article, Jen Kirby argues that while [agreement on arms control is getting harder, it still really matters](#), 5 January, 2023

Miscellaneous

- In a *UNIDIR* report, Alexander Ghionis, Alexander Kelle und María Garzón Maceda provide a historical analysis of salient issues in preparation of the CWC Review Conference, 6 February, 2023
- Michal Smetana, Marek Vanka and Ondrej Rosendorf present findings of a [public opinion survey on the taboos against chemical and nuclear weapons](#) in *Conflict Management and Peace Science* article, September 2022
- Biejan Poor Toulabi dissects the [myth of chemical and biological weapons as the "poor man's atomic bomb"](#) in the *Journal of Global Security Studies*, January 2023
- Ma et al. propose a [practical application of metal-organic frameworks to protect against chemical warfare agents and biological threats](#) in a recent *Accounts of Material Research* article, 7 January, 2023
- A recent *Council on Strategic Risks* report assesses the state of global pathogen early-warning systems and makes recommendations for a way forward, December 2022
- In "[Route attribution of chemical warfare agents: Retrospective classification of unknown threat samples](#)", Karin Höjer Holmgren assesses methods to trace the synthesis methods applied in the production of chemical warfare agents, December 2022
- Daniel Salisbury and Karl Dewey analyse and compare the [responses to Russian political assassinations on 'British ground](#) historically, January 2023
- A *VERTIC* report addresses misconceptions about biological and chemical weapons and related legal frameworks, January 2023

Multimedia

- The *John Hopkins Center for Health Security* hosts a podcast, the "[BWC Global Forum: Biotech, Biosecurity & Beyond](#)" to provide a permanent and growing repository of information on emerging S&T capabilities by directly engaging with technical experts; four episodes have been released in January 2023
- *Interpol* released "[The Watchmaker](#)", an awareness video highlighting the need for multi-agency cooperation to mitigate risks from chemical weapons, October 2022

News

- The US Secretary of State [released plans for a National Bureau on Global Health Security and Diplomacy](#), 13 December, 2022
- The OPCW releases the [third report from the Investigation and Identification Team](#), concluding there are reasonable grounds to identify the Syrian Arab Air forces as the perpetrators of the 2018 Douma chemical attack, 27 January, 2023

Coming up!

- [102nd Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW](#), The Hague, 14-17 March
- Biological Weapons Convention, [Working Group on the strengthening of the Convention](#), Geneva, 15-16 March, 2023
- [Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention](#), The Hague, 15-19 May, 2023



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