

INTERPOL Workshop on Preventing Bioterrorism

Opening speech by INTERPOL Secretary General [Ronald K. Noble](#)
Kiev, 6 November 2006

Honourable Minister of the Interior Yuriy Lutsenko,
Chairman of INTERPOL's Steering Committee on Bioterrorism Prevention John Abbott,
Distinguished police colleagues from NCBs and member countries' police services,
My dear colleagues from INTERPOL's General Secretariat,
Experts in the law enforcement, health sciences, bio-safety, bio-security and legal communities,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by saying why it is so important that we are all here.

We know from recent events that terrorists remain committed to perpetrating large-scale violence.

We also know that, as biotechnology industries continue to expand throughout the world, new pathogens and pathogen-making technologies are rapidly proliferating, increasing the risk that terrorists could get their hands on deadly pathogens or their means of production.

It is also becoming ever more possible for terrorists themselves to produce the weapons, as the volume and sophistication of the necessary information becomes increasingly accessible through publications, the Internet and other sources.

The world's most noteworthy bioterrorism attack was the 2001 anthrax attacks in the US.

Although the attack was limited in its direct harm to people – because anthrax is not contagious and because it was delivered by mail to only a handful of individuals – it still caused five deaths and massive disruptions and losses throughout the world.

And there is much evidence that terrorists have a strong interest in the use of biological weapons and are planning to use them.

We must always remind ourselves of this evidence, because this helps us maintain our resolve to prevent such potential harm from actually occurring.

The 11th volume of Al Qaeda's Encyclopedia of Jihad is devoted to chemical and biological weapons.

Captured terrorist suspects have admitted that their organizations are plotting potential biological attacks.

Police raids in a number of countries have resulted in the seizures of equipment and instruction manuals relating to the manufacture and use of bio-weapons.

Yet, in the face of all of this, some people still question whether the threat is real. They question whether it is truly necessary to devote resources to try to prevent it or even to prepare for it.

I have no doubt that the threat is real. Moreover, given the magnitude of the harm that could be caused by a bioterrorist attack – hundreds or even thousands of deaths are possible – it is clear to me that this alone mandates that we take this threat seriously.

But even if hundreds or thousands do not die, the panic and subsequent social and economic upheavals that could follow such an attack represent another set of reasons why we should take this threat seriously.

Nevertheless, I want to point out that even if there is never again a disease unleashed by terrorists, there certainly will be diseases unleashed by nature. Of this we can be certain. Natural pandemics have always been a part of life here on Earth. In the 20 th century alone, more people died of smallpox – over 300 million – than in both World Wars combined.

What we are doing at this workshop will help us prepare for an outbreak, whether unleashed by nature or by terrorists. And this is another reason why it is so important that you are all here.

To address the threat of bioterrorism, in 2004 we created a special unit headed by Adrian Baciu, a Romanian police officer, to focus exclusively in this area, and we formed a Steering Committee for this unit headed by John Abbott, former Director General of the UK's National Criminal Intelligence Service .

In March 2005, we kicked off the unit's activities by hosting a [global conference on bioterrorism](#). That event was attended by over 500 people and police from 155 countries. It was the largest gathering of international law enforcement ever.

Since then, we have hired Lisa Garin-Michaud to be the administrator of the programme, and we have conducted regional workshops in [Africa](#), [Southeast Asia](#) and [South America](#) attended by a total of 85 countries. Now we are conducting this new workshop with 22 countries represented. We will conduct the next workshop in the Middle East.

In addition, we have released the [INTERPOL Bioterrorism Incident Pre-planning and Response Guide](#). This guide is being presented to you today. We have recently revised the guide so hard copies are not yet available, but you all have on your tables CDs with the electronic copies of the guide in English. The hard copies in INTERPOL's four official languages (English, French, Spanish and Arabic) will be released by year-end. The guide will also be available on INTERPOL's public and secure websites.

We have also created a [Bioterrorism Prevention Resource Centre](#) on our website that is now at the disposal of the entire law enforcement community. This site can help you find training materials, online tests, scientific documents, planning guidelines, response and crisis management materials, and other useful resources.

We are developing another part of our secure website that will be dedicated to training materials that have been provided to us by NCBs and governments to show what is being done at national levels in terms of bioterrorism preparedness and response.

We also have designed 'table-top' exercises that were conducted with great effect at our prior workshops and will be conducted here as well. We will be conducting various 'train-the-trainer' programmes and two international interagency exercises as well.

In September, under the umbrella of the Bioterrorism Prevention Unit, we launched a new project focusing on bio-criminalisation, because we realised that police cannot most effectively confront the threat of bioterrorism unless their work is supported by a proper legal framework for investigating and deterring bioterrorism.

The project's goal is to assess the criminal and administrative laws relating to biological weapons and to assist countries in drafting better laws and enforcing such laws.

This includes the frameworks for controlling the possession, storage, transportation, use, trafficking and deployment of pathogens, and their means of production and weaponisation; the frameworks governing

intelligence, investigation, interdiction, and disruption; and the frameworks governing the activities required for attack response – isolation, quarantine, forced medical exams, forced vaccinations, etc.

I hope that each country participating here will get in contact with the project manager, Scott Spence, in order to start discussions on this subject.

In the future, we hope to find financing for a police officer rotation programme in which police could rotate through our Bioterrorism Unit, bringing their added expertise to the unit and then returning home with still greater expertise to share with their national colleagues in building their own programmes.

I trust you can see that we are very active and innovative in our commitment to help law enforcement do all in its power to confront the threat of bioterrorism.

But law enforcement cannot effectively confront this threat alone. It must do so in partnership with professionals from other relevant disciplines .

All of the relevant professions must establish and implement protocols and procedures to share information and co-operate in prevention and detection efforts, to mobilise response resources in the event of an attack or natural outbreak, and to co-ordinate all of these efforts.

The relevant constituencies include law enforcement (police, customs, immigration), first responders, health sciences, bio-safety, bio-security, legal, emergency management, intelligence, environmental management and agricultural authorities, and other relevant private and public resources (local, national, regional and international).

These diverse professional communities must forge partnerships in order to ensure an integrated approach. This is required to maximise the synergies of their complementary skills, methodologies, perspectives and resources and to minimise their conflicts.

This means overcoming many formidable obstacles, but it is essential to do so. And that is why it is so important that we have representatives from many of these communities at workshops such as this.

Before I open up the workshop and turn it over to John Abbott, Chairman of INTERPOL's Steering Committee on Bioterrorism Prevention, I would like to acknowledge the [Sloan Foundation](#) for its financial support.

The Sloan Foundation has provided generous grants to INTERPOL to operate its Bioterrorism Unit so that events like this could be possible. In total, the Sloan Foundation has committed over US\$2.5 million to INTERPOL's Bioterrorism Prevention Programme until 2008. So we owe the Sloan Foundation our appreciation and gratitude.

In addition, INTERPOL received a sizable grant from the Canadian government (US\$300,000 from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade), for which we are also grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the US Department of State's Bureau of Arms Control Office of Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions for its recent grant of US\$554,000 to support the new bio-criminalisation project.

Let me close by thanking Minister of the Interior Yuriy Lutsenko, your police colleagues, NCB Kiev and the citizens of Ukraine for hosting this important training workshop on bioterrorism prevention.

I wish you all a most successful workshop.

Thank you.