



Working for a Safer World

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# WMD411

Your Information Resource on Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Weapons Issues

"Preventing the spread of biological and chemical weapons should be the central organizing principle of the 21st Century"

## A Primer on WMD

- Definitions
- Effects
- Production
- Proliferation & Use
- Missiles
- ▶ Terrorism
  - Historical Context
  - Scope of Threat
  - What Can Be Done?
  - Nuclear Terrorism
  - Bioterrorism
  - "Suitcase Nukes"

## Limiting Use of WMD

## Policy Options

## WMD Terrorism: Introduction

Produced by the Monterey Institute's Center for Nonproliferation Studies

Since the beginning of the 20th century, terrorists have used a variety of tactics, including assassination, kidnapping, hijacking, and bombing, to achieve their goals. The September 11 attacks and the subsequent **anthrax letters** have focused renewed attention on the possibility of terrorism involving chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons, commonly called weapons of mass destruction (WMD).



Usama bin Laden

### Definitions:

#### Terrorism:

There is no single, universally accepted definition of terrorism. The word "terrorism" is usually used to describe violence that is political, social, religious, or ideological in nature and that is designed to influence an audience beyond the immediate target or victims of the attack. One example of a definition of terrorism that is often quoted is that of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which describes terrorism as:

"...the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." (28 Code of Federal Regulations Section 0.85)

Terrorism is not a neutral term. Governments use it to describe their opponents and avoid it when describing their allies. This has led to the saying that "one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter." Countries therefore cannot agree on an objective definition of terrorism. This poses a problem, because if states want to combat terrorism at the international level, they must first agree on exactly what they are fighting against.

#### WMD:

Although large-scale conventional weapons, such as the bomb that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma or the airplanes involved in the September 11 attacks, are sometimes described as **weapons of mass destruction**, usually

### Further Reading

- » WMD 411 **WMD Terrorism**
- » WMD 411 **Attacks**
- » WMD 411 **Terrorism**
- » CNS, James L. Payne, "Better to Curb Biological Threats"
- » Henry L. Bretcher, Amy Saragovka, "The Chemical Threat: A Response"
- » Jonathan S. Landman, Amy Saragovka, "Unlikely to Succeed"
- » CNS, James L. Payne, "The Risks of Biological Weapons to Terrorism"
- » CNS, Brian R. Martin, "Terrorism: Some Policy Hypotheses"
- » CNS, Jonathan S. Landman, "Combating Biological Risk Management: Establishing Priorities"
- » CNS, Robert A. Hargrett, "Assessing the Biological Threat"
- » CNS, Thomas J. Sisk, "The Problem of Chemical and Biological Terrorism: A Policy Response"

the term is used to refer to chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons.

**WMD Terrorism:**

WMD Terrorism, therefore, refers to terrorist use or threat of use of WMD.

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