



CSBA Issues New Bioterror Report

May 9, 2007

Biological weapons can cause massive casualties under the right circumstances. Moreover, compared to nuclear weapons, they may be substantially easier for a terrorist group to acquire. CSBA's newest study, *Avoiding the Plague: An Assessment of US Plans and Funding for Countering Bioterrorism*, examines the nature of this threat, and both budgetary and non-budgetary aspects of current US efforts to counter bioterrorism.

CSBA's report evaluates programs and spending in each of three areas:

- Preventing terrorists from acquiring biological weapons or the means of effectively employing those weapons to cause mass casualties, through non-military means;
- Defending against a terrorist attack with biological weapons, once it has been launched, through the use of various measures capable of detecting, protecting against and mitigating the effects of such an attack; and
- Attacking and destroying terrorists' biological warfare capabilities through preventive or retaliatory operations.

The report finds that, altogether, federal spending directly related to preventing and defending against a possible attack with biological weapons currently (2007) amounts to about \$8 billion a year. This is an increase of 330 percent in real (inflation-adjusted) terms from the level of funding provided prior to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Far more is spent on military capabilities that might be used to attack against bioterrorist sites.

The report concludes that current policies, programs and activities do not adequately address the challenge posed by bioterrorism. It should be possible to address some of these gaps by shifting resources within program areas. Substantially improving US efforts to combat bioterrorism, however, will likely require an increase in the overall level of funding for these programs and activities, according to the report

Existing data limitations make it impossible to precisely estimate how much additional funding is needed. However, the report finds that an additional \$1-5 billion a year might usefully be allocated to this mission, primarily to expand the development of medical countermeasures, and broad spectrum therapeutics in particular.

The report emphasizes that countering the threat posed by bioterrorism also depends on overcoming structural, organizational and other largely non-budgetary challenges. It contains a wide range of recommendations to improve US planning and preparations for a possible bioterrorist attack, including the institution of more frequent and realistic high-level training exercises.

Robert Sherman, commissioned by CSBA to write this report, is an expert in bioterrorism and homeland security with more than three decades of experience in national security positions in both Congress and the Executive Branch.

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