



Countering Biological Threats:
***National Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and
 Multinational Outbreak Response and Bioterrorism Investigation Demonstration***

Tbilisi, Georgia, 17-19 May 2011

This workshop was organized by the US Department of Defense (US European Command, Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center, Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine, and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency) and the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) with the support of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia (NCDC), the US-Georgia Central Public Health Reference Laboratory (CPHRL), and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. It included awareness training, a tabletop exercise designed to review the technical guidelines and procedures associated with the *United Nations Secretary General's Mechanism on Investigation of Alleged Use of Biological and Chemical Weapons* (UNSGM), and a practical demonstration of consequence management capabilities of Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs CBRN Rapid Response Team.

Of note, the tabletop exercise was a first of its kind at the international level for awareness raising and review of the UNSGM Technical Guidelines and Procedures including their updated appendices (available online at: http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Secretary-General_Mechanism/appendicies) for timely and efficient investigations of reports on the possible use of chemical and biological weapons. The tabletop exercise was facilitated by two representatives of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), Dr. Gabriele Kraatz-Wadsack- Chief, Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch and Mr. Franz Kolar- Political Affairs Officer.

In the spirit of President Obama's Transparency and Open Government initiative and its principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration, workshop participants were offered guided tours of the US-Georgia Central Public Health Reference Laboratory (CPHRL) whose mission is to promote public and

animal health through infectious disease detection, epidemiological surveillance, and research for the benefit of Georgia, the Caucasus region, and the global community (CPHRL website at: <http://www.cphrl.org>).

The workshop aimed to: i) promote interagency (in particular public health-law enforcement but also civilian-military) cooperation, coordination and synchronization for preparing, detecting, and responding to infectious disease outbreaks, whether natural, accidental, or deliberate in nature; ii) establish regional partnerships to enhance training and disease surveillance and containment initiatives; and iii) strengthen the core capacities required by the WHO International Health Regulations (IHRs) and existing national measures consistent with the obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540) to deter, prevent, and respond to biological incidents or threats.

The workshop was attended by about 100 participants including civilian and military public and veterinary health (laboratory and preventive medicine personnel, epidemiologists, emergency response planners, administrators), law enforcement, intelligence, and affiliated professionals (other first responders, policy staff, representatives of academia, and industry) from US, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Turkey, Poland, and Kenya; representatives of inter-governmental organizations (WHO, UNODA, NATO, and ECDC) and representatives from non-governmental organizations including Mr. Scott Spence, Senior Legal Officer at VERTIC. Opening remarks were offered by the Dr. Mikheil Dolidze - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs (MoHLSA) of Georgia; Ms. Julie Fisher, Chief of Political and Economical Affairs, US Embassy, Georgia; CAPT Kevin Russell- Director, Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System (GEIS) Operations Division and Deputy Director Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center, US Department of Defense (DOD); and Dr. George Korch, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (PD-ASPR), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The workshop on *Countering Biological Threats: National Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and Multinational Outbreak Response and Bioterrorism Investigation Demonstration* is the third such event co-organized by DOD and HHS in the European region (for more details on the two workshops organized in 2010 in Georgia and Moldova, please see: <http://www.phe.gov/about/OPP/Pages/bwc.aspx>

A detailed After-Action Report will be drafted and published (upon clearance by workshop participants) online on the ASPR website at: <http://www.phe.gov/about/OPP/Pages/biosafety.aspx>

These events illustrate the US Government commitment toward the implementation of the objectives of the *National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats*, to promote global health security and transform the international dialogue on biological threats, as well as working with cross-border and global partners to enhance national, regional, and global health security in accordance with the *National Health Security Strategy*.
