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**Preventing terrorists from gaining  
weapons of mass destruction**

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**Forum:** Security Council

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## Introduction

With no official authorized definition of the Weapons of Mass Destruction, international laws and treaties are often used referring to a specific category within the broad range of WMDs. Terrorist gaining of Weapons of Mass Destruction could be used to threaten government bodies into accepting their demands, and put many civilian lives at risk.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

According to the United Nations there are no official definitions of Weapons of Mass Destruction, but is generally accepted to include nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons. The first resolution on WMDs, Security Council Resolution 687, was passed in 1946, after the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in Japan during World War II.

### Terrorism

There is no official definition of terrorism determined by the United Nations, but was defined to be: ‘any action intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians, non-combatants when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act’ in a UN panel in 2004. Some examples of the different types of terrorism includes bombings, kidnapping and hostage taking, armed attacks, hijacking, assassinations, arsons, and cyber-terrorism.

### Terrorist

There is no official definition of terrorists determined by the United Nations, but is generally accepted to be defined as: ‘one that commits acts of terrorism or are personally involved in them’.

## General Overview

## Terrorist gain of Weapons of Mass Destruction

Cases of terrorism using WMDs (nuclear, chemical, and biological) have been historically rare, as other means of terrorism, such as bombings, have been found to be financially cheaper. However, terrorist gain of WMDs could pose as a great threat to international security and stability.

### *Financial*

Terrorist organizations, and smaller branches of those groups often conduct large-scale robberies, for the purposes of financing their group and acts.

### *Access*

It is easier for terrorist organizations to gain WMDs from countries involved in armed conflicts, as weapon stockpiles are often not guarded or kept tracked of as carefully as nations that are not. Nations in armed conflict usually increase their production of WMDs, which also increases the possibility of terrorists managing to get their hands on them, through theft, accidental losses, illicit sales, and seizure. Large-scale terrorist organizations with the financial ability may also gain access to WMDs by hiring professionals to conduct research and construct the WMDs themselves.

## Examples of extreme terrorism

### *9/11*

On September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, 19 people who identified themselves as members of the Al-Qaeda hijacked four passenger carrying aircrafts. Two of the commercial aircrafts were intentionally crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City, while another crashed into the Pentagon, and another in a small field in Pennsylvania. None of the people on the planes managed to survive the crash, and there was a total estimated toll of 3,000 casualties, of which more than 300 were firefighters, and more than 60 police personnel's.

### *Munich Massacre*

The Munich Massacre occurred during the 1972 Munich Summer Olympics, when 11 Israeli athletes and coaches were taken hostage, then later murdered. Black September, a Palestinian terrorist group was held responsible for the incident. They refused all offers of money, and demanded for the release of over 300 Palestinian and non-Arabs that had been held in Israeli jails. One West Germany police officer was killed during the process, and 5 members of the Black September were killed by police officers during a rescue attempt (which failed), and the remaining 3 were captured, but later released during the hijacking of Lufthansa Airlines by the Black September.

## Historical examples of the effects of WMDs

### *Atomic Bombing*

At the end of World War II, on August 6<sup>th</sup> 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima, Japan by the United States of America, in response to the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces. Another similar bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, on August 9<sup>th</sup> 1945. The total estimated death toll ranges from 150 000 to 246 000 casualties, as numbers continue to rise due to diseases such as leukemia, which had been caused by the atomic bombings, and had been passed down through generations.

### *Tokyo Sarin Gas Attack*

In 1995, a Japanese religious cult Aum Shinri Kyo released small amounts of sarin gas in 5 different stations of the Tokyo Metro. 13 people were killed, 50 were severely injured, and thousands of others faced temporary vision problems. After the attack, and the revealing of the Aum Shinri Kyo headquarters, it was found that the cult had been conducting high-level research, and had manage to produce the dangerous sarin chemical on their own.

## **UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events**

### **Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF)**

This was created by the Secretary General of the UN in 2005. They work to prevent respond to WMD terrorist attacks and assess the response that the United Nations, and certain international organizations would take in case of terrorist attacks involving WMDs.

### **UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

It is a resolution and a plan of action passed by the United Nations in 2006, which addresses ways in which to combat terrorism. It is the first mutual agreement on a strategic approach to deal with terrorism.

## **Country Positions**

### **China**

China has stressed the importance of preventing the large-scale international development of WMDs and nuclear weapons, as they feel that it poses as a threat to its national security. China faces many regional disputes within its own boundaries, and fears that the anti-government bodies may use the WMDs against the government if they manage to gain access to them. Although they also hold nuclear weapons, China has supported the idea of international nuclear disarmament through negotiations.

### **France**

France sees international terrorism as a national threat, and continues as a target of terrorism, according to higher ranked members of the al-Qaeda. They have been actively involved in counter-terrorism activities through

implementing domestic policies, the United Nations, the European Union, the G8, and other means. France is a 'Nuclear Weapon State' under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They had opposed the idea of the international banning of nuclear weapons, and setting a timeframe for nuclear disarmament.

## Russia

Russia co-operates with China, India, and the United States to promote counter-terrorism, and is open to and support multilateral negotiations on the use of nuclear weapons. They have made counterterrorism one of their country's top priorities, with most of the threats of terrorism coming from domestic terrorist organizations, yet most of the major terrorist incidents happening outside their national borders. Even before the 911 attacks in 2001, Russia had been warning member states of the danger of the terrorist gain of Weapons of Mass Destructions. Russia had not met the time boundaries set for the destruction of domestic chemical and biological weapons, which they explained was due to the lack of support, and broken promises of financial aid from Western countries.

## United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is against multilateral negotiations, and does not agree to timebound nuclear disarmament agreements. The United Kingdom faces threats of domestic terrorism from an Irish militant group that opposes the British rule of Northern Ireland. The organization had been known to use bombs and explosives in their attacks during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and their access to WMDs will put many civilian lives and UK's domestic security into danger.

## United States of America

It is against the foreign policy of the United States of America to support terrorism or terrorist acts in any way. They have stressed the importance of preventing terrorism, and from terrorist access of WMDs. They have experienced the threat of terrorism on September 11th, 2001, and established a Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Proliferation and Terrorism, after the incident. The commission has identified bioterrorism- terrorism using biological WMDs as the most likely and biggest threat within their country.

## Timeline of Events

| <b>Date</b>        | <b>Description of event</b>   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1945               | Atomic bombing of Japan   |
| 1968               | Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty signed   |
| September 11, 2001 | 911 attacks on Twin Towers in New York  |
| September 2006     | United Nations General Assembly adopts the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy |

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