

Report shines spotlight on incapacitating chemical agent weapons

October 23 2014



Today's report, 'Down the Slippery Slope', published as part of the Biochemical Security 2030 Project at Bath, coincides with the 12th anniversary of the Moscow theatre siege in October 2002 during which a number of hostages were killed by an incapacitating chemical agent (ICA) intended to aid their release.

A new report out today (Thursday 23 October), authored by researchers in our Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies, has highlighted how contemporary chemical and life science research could be applied in the study or creation of incapacitating chemical agent (ICA) weapons.

The joint report 'Down the Slippery Slope', published as part of the [Biochemical Security 2030](#) Policy Paper Series from researchers at Bath including Principal Investigator Professor David Galbreath, alongside colleagues at the University of Bradford's Non-Lethal Weapons Research Project, coincides with the 12th anniversary of the Moscow theatre siege in October 2002 during which a number of hostages were

killed by an ICA intended to aid their release.

Ahead of a major international conference on the subject in December, today's report examines contemporary neuroscience research into a range of pharmaceutical chemicals which could be applicable to the study or development of ICA [weapons](#).

Professor Galbreath explains: "The study illustrates the complex realities for states in negotiating arms control around chemical and other weapons. States are under pressure from the international community and major powers to restrict research into chemical and/or biological weapons. At the same time, security services are under pressure to deliver the techno-science that allows for control (incapitants) and even lethality."

Research Associate on the project, Dr Brett Edwards explains: "This paper addresses one of a number of contemporary issues facing policy-makers, scientists and diplomats in the area of biological and [chemical weapons](#) control. The maintenance of the regimes directed against the development and use of these types of weapon at domestic and international levels is something which requires continued input from governments, as well as an ever increasing range of stakeholders."

Professor Malcolm Dando, co-author of the report at the University of Bradford, adds: "The development and introduction of ICA weapons threatens to create a 'slippery slope.' Once introduced there is a danger that such weapons will consequently be used for an increasingly broad range of purposes.

"Our study indicates that dual-use research being conducted in a variety of institutional environments, and for a range of – stated or unstated – purposes could potentially be applied to the study or creation of ICA weapons."

As well as documenting contemporary research by Russian scientists, the report highlights the possession of ICA weapons by the Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army, their previous use by the Israeli security services, and examines unconfirmed allegations of their use in Syria. In addition, it explores potentially relevant research activities undertaken since 1997 in the Czech Republic, India, Iran, the UK and USA.

ICA weapons come under the scope of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and their use in armed conflict is absolutely prohibited. However there are different interpretations as to whether, and in what circumstances, such toxic chemicals could be employed for law enforcement purposes.

In 2013, certain states, including the UK and US, formally declared that they do not develop or possess ICA weapons, however others have remained silent and to date the issue is still to be satisfactorily addressed by CWC states as a whole. The new report, published as governments prepare for the forthcoming CWC Conference in December, is intended to spotlight this issue.

Dr Michael Crowley, also of the University of Bradford, said: "There is now a window of opportunity for the CWC States Parties to take a precautionary and preventative approach. If the international community does not adequately respond to these challenges, there is a danger that more states may become intrigued by these weapons, with the consequent threat of their proliferation and misuse."

More information: "Down the slippery slope? A study of contemporary dual-use chemical and life-science research potentially applicable to incapacitating chemical agent weapons" (October 2014) – By Dr Michael Crowley and Professor Malcolm Dando – Paper 8. [biochemsec2030dotorg.files.wor ... -slope-final-web.pdf](http://biochemsec2030dotorg.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/biochemsec2030dotorg.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/slope-final-web.pdf)

Provided by University of Bath

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