Committee: Disarmament
Issue: Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction
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Introduction

Terrorists, being one of the greatest threats for the international community, have been held responsible for the loss of hundreds of lives many times. In the past, there have been many attacks by terrorists, but only a few in which weapons of mass destruction were actually used. However, terrorists have announced their interest in acquiring this kind of weapons. So, in order to eliminate the danger, nations and organizations worldwide have decided that the prevention of terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is a subject of vital importance and thus has many times been a subject in the UN agenda.

Definition of Key-Terms

According to the 7th edition of Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary:

Weapon of mass destruction (WMD) is *a weapon such as a nuclear weapon, a chemical weapon or a biological weapon that can cause a lot of destruction and kill many people;*

Terrorism is *the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act;*

Terrorist is *a person who takes part in terrorism;*

According to oxforddictionaries.com

Bioterrorism is the use of infectious agents or other harmful biological or biochemical substances as weapons of terrorism.

Background Information

<u>The "War on Terror" in general</u>

After the attack of September 11th, where terrorists attacked the twin towers in New York City, the United States of America officially claimed that they are in the middle of a war against terrorism. After other attacks, many countries of the western world "felt" the same way as United States of America did. These countries consider extremist Islamic nations as the ones being responsible for these attacks and see them as their adversary and a threat to the security that should be halted by any possible mean. On the other hand such terrorist groups believe that it is their duty to kill as many as civilians as possible of the More Economically Developed Countries.

Terrorist Training Camps

As the term indicates terrorist training camps are locations where terrorists learn the main principles of terrorism and the use of weapons. These weapons are supposed to be conventional, but the truth is we do not have the exact knowledge neither of the number nor the function of these training camps, so we cannot eliminate the chance of WMD training. Many of these camps have been found in Pakistan and Afghanistan and it is known that Al Qaeda has used them a lot in the past. Surprising is the fact that potential terrorists who attend these camps are people from all around the world, even from the More Economically Developed Countries. For instance there was a case in the United Kingdom that some of their policemen attended this kind of camps. Also, it is really interesting that there can be found even in countries like the United States of America.

The WMD black market

There is no legal way to find the material needed to produce weapons of mass destruction. Thus, it is lucid that there is a black market in which such technology is available. Countries like Iran and North Korea that are suspected to possess weapons of mass destruction, despite the conventions signed, seem like the ones that may be able to support this kind of market. Nations are working hard to find out about these markets, and especially the ones that suffered an attack, like the United States of America, have set it as a vital priority.

How possible is it for terrorists to have access to WMD?

It is clear that terrorists have the possibility to produce biological and chemical weapons, since the raw material needed can be easily found. From October of 2001, one month after the attack of the 11th of September, there have been several reports of anthrax attacks in the United States of America. The fact that the anthrax was transferred through the mail has convinced the authorities that we have become witnesses of bioterrorist attacks. The investigations have officially ended in August 2008 and Dr. Bruce Ivins has been considered as the perpetrator of these attacks.

However, biological and chemical attacks are not the greatest concern. The production of nuclear weapons, a scenario that most of the countries believe is unlikely to become true, but certainly not impossible, is what really worries the Most Economically Developed Countries.

In any case, Al Qaeda is considered as the terrorist group that has gone the furthest in designing biological and chemical weapons, but also in obtaining access to nuclear capabilities.

Al Qaeda

From the early 1990s there have been allegations that Al Qaeda is trying to enter the WMD black market. Osama Bin Laden, in 1998, has officially claimed that acquiring weapons of mass destruction is his “Islamic duty”. In any case, the first attack with weapons of mass destruction was in February of 1993,when a car bomb exploded in New York’s world trade center using cyanide gas and killing five people. It has never been proven that Al Qaeda has actually conducted another WMD attack but via investigation it is believed that they had access to these kinds of weapons and created camps in order to

train passionate supporters about their use. Moreover, Al Qaeda's co-leader Zawahiri said that a planned attack in New York's subway never materialized because something "better" was plotted. Even after the death of Osama Bin-Laden there have been attacks that may be connected to Al Qaeda. That means that Al Qaeda is still active.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America
Being the main "victim" of attacks by weapons of mass destruction, the United States of America is now the country, which probably fears most the possibility that terrorists will be able to obtain weapons of mass destruction. Thus, it has taken national initiatives, such as the creation of FBI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate (WMDD), whose occupation is to ensure that terrorist groups or nations (except for France, United Kingdom, China, Russia, and United States, which have the right to possess but not use WMD) will not obtain weapons of mass destruction. In addition, it is officially claimed by the USA that Al Qaeda and other "extremist" terrorist groups are enemies. USA has times played a key role in the international diplomacy and exercised pressure in order to adopt measures to prevent the danger.

Pakistan
Although it is supposed to be an ally of the United States, many Americans, civilians and politicians, consider Pakistan as a state that helps the extremist terrorist groups. This belief has been based on some incidents where Pakistan hasn't kept the position that the U.S thought it was supposed to. Such an incident appeared once again a couple of months ago, when Pakistan imprisoned Dr. Afridi, a doctor that according to the USA authorities has helped capturing Osama Bin-Laden. Madame Secretary Clinton had requested his release, a request that was rejected by the State of Pakistan. Worth mentioning facts concerning Pakistan are also the existence of an illegal market in Pakistan that may be able to supply terrorists with the raw material for the construction of weapons of mass destruction, the intense presence of Al Qaeda in this nation and the estimate that in Pakistan exist more than 40 terrorist training camps.

Afghanistan
It has been the nation that is considered to have the strongest links with terrorist groups. In Afghanistan there have been found, in the past, training terrorist camps, many of which have been destroyed mainly by the United States of America. Another reason why Afghanistan is believed to be such a dangerous country in terms of terrorism is the power that Taliban have over the region. Taliban are claimed to be the ones that protected Osama bin-Laden, hidden him and helped Al Qaeda, in general.

The former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
After the separation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, a country that traditionally possessed weapons of mass destruction, many nations in the

international community thought that countries that used to be part of this Union were a threat to the international security, since they are vulnerable to potential stealing of the material needed for the construction of weapons of mass destruction.

International Atomic Energy Agency
This organization is responsible for the safe use of nuclear energy. It is related with the issue of terrorists and weapons of mass destruction because it is the one which is supposed to find out whether a nation uses nuclear energy for peaceful purposes or uses it in a way, such as selling it to terrorist, that poses a threat to the international community.

Timeline of Events

1993 World Trade Center bombing; this was done with a bomb built of urea nitrate-hydrogen; killed 6 people and was financed by a group with links to Al-Qaeda
1995 Shinrikyo's nerve agent attack using Sarin in the Tokyo subway; killing 13 people and injuring thousands more
1995 Oklahoma City bombings by Timothy McVay and other accomplices using a 4,800 ton bomb made of fertilizer and various ammonium chemicals
1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; this was linked to the Egyptian Islamic Jihad
2001 Anthrax attacks in the United States
2002 Bali Bombings; killed over 200 people using 3 bombs with a variety of chemicals; this was linked to a group called Jemaah Islamiyah and was a retaliation against American policies on terrorist groups and for Australia's role in the issue of East Timor; in addition, there was a link made to Osama Bin Laden due to a recorded message congratulating the bombing

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
This treaty has as an aim the use of nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes. It prohibits the possess of nuclear weapons by all states except for China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States of America. It contributes in the general prevention of the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction
Chemical Weapons cannot be produced by any state signatory and can't be transferred to anyone else, like terrorist groups. (Article 1, 1a: *To develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to anyone;).*

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction
According to this convention a state cannot produce biological weapons, but also as stated in article 3 it cannot also assist anyone to obtain them (Article

3: Not *to transfer, or in any way assist, encourage or induce anyone else to acquire or retain biological weapons.).* This ensures that there will be no nation that will proliferate biological weapons to any other third party.

International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism
Member states of the United Nations have always feared the case that terrorists will be able to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Thus, they have voted in 1996 in the General Assembly the creation of an organ that will be responsible for the prevention of this scenario.

Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
It is the convention, which states that nuclear material should be protected, and it legally obliges all states to follow this statement. It is a convention under the International Atomic Energy Agency and in case a country violates the convention there are punishments, which will be imposed to it.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

“Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction” is a topic that has appeared many times in the UN General Assembly agenda in the disarmament committee. As stated before, many conventions have been signed in order to affront the problem. There have also been many military invasions to combat terrorism in general, such as the invasion in Iraq. Also, there has been much pressure on countries that possess or are suspected to possess weapons of mass destruction, like North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) or Iran, so as to give them up.

Possible Solutions

Terrorist groups, as it seems, will seize the first opportunity in order to construct weapons of mass destruction. They can achieve that only via illegal means, so there are several steps that should be taken by the countries. Firstly, it is urgent to discover and then eliminate every black market that may sell technologies and elements capable to create weapons of mass destruction. If this is achieved, it will be almost impossible for terrorists to achieve their goals. However, this elimination will certainly not be easy and will require a stricter legislation, stricter control to the nations that may help terrorists in any way but also international co-operation from each and every country in the world. Another necessary measure is to trace down terrorist training camps, to find out how they work and to ensure that there is will be no spread of the knowledge of the way weapons of mass destruction are produced. As it has been proven throughout the history, a military invasion is not a solution to the problem and usually because of it the situation worsens rather than ameliorating.

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