

ATLANTIC STORM
MINISTERIAL BIOTERRORISM EXERCISE

Background:

Atlantic Storm is a tabletop scenario, an exercise in which former heads of state and senior national leaders, consider major issues facing the transatlantic community of nations following a bioterrorist attack using a contagious disease. Such exercises provide a concrete “story” that greatly illuminates the difficult and unfamiliar issues involved in biodefense against deliberate epidemics.

The organizers of the exercise are the Center for Biosecurity of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, and the Center for Transatlantic Relations of the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies, and the Transatlantic Biosecurity Network – a group of medical, public health, and national security experts from the US and 10 European countries that have been meeting since early 2002.

Purpose:

- The *Atlantic Storm* exercise calls attention to international security issues of strategic importance that would likely arise in the wake of major bioterrorist attacks on civilians in the US and Europe.
- The exercise focused on matters that would typically engage heads of state, not necessarily scientific or technical questions. The exercise emphasized issues with which world leaders would have to contend, rather attempting to craft specific policy solutions.
- The goal is to highlight the major international issues likely to be associated with responses to deliberate epidemics and to provoke dialogue and thought about how to improve the transatlantic community’s ability to prepare for and respond to bioattacks.

Approach:

- The exercise took place in Washington, D.C. over an entire day on Friday, January 14, 2005.
- The exercise involved former heads of state and political leaders convened in a mock “Transatlantic Security Summit.” As they arrived, they “discovered” that an epidemic of a contagious disease has broken out in several countries as a result of bioterrorist attacks. Participants were asked to deal with the crisis in three exercise segments depicted world events as the crisis unfolds.
- The exercise organizers served as deputies and sherpas, providing participants with background information and framing the discussion. About 100 observers (e.g. government officials, biodefense experts) attended the event.

Atlantic Storm Executive Committee:

- **Tara O’Toole, MD, MPH**, Director and CEO of the Center for Biosecurity of the University of Pittsburgh. (Formerly with the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Strategies.)
- **Daniel Hamilton, PhD**, Director of the Johns Hopkins University Center for Transatlantic Relations.
- **Thomas V. Inglesby, MD**, Deputy Director of the Center for Biosecurity of the University of Pittsburgh.
- **Esther Brimmer, PhD**, Deputy Director of the Johns Hopkins University Center for Transatlantic Relations.
- **Colonel Randall Larsen (USAF, Retired)**, Founder and CEO, Homeland Security Associates, LLC
- **Brad Smith, PhD**, Atlantic Storm Project Director, Center for Biosecurity of the University of Pittsburgh

Funding:

- Both the Center for Biosecurity and the Center for Transatlantic Relations are university based, non-profit, non-partisan organizations.
- The meetings of the Transatlantic Biosecurity Network have been financed by grants from the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Nuclear Threat Initiative. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has provided funding for the *Atlantic Storm* exercise.

Precedent for this Type of Exercise:

- The *Atlantic Storm* exercise will be structured in a way analogous to the *Dark Winter* exercise, which was held in June, 2001 at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, DC. Tara O’Toole, MD, MPH, and Thomas V. Inglesby, MD, wrote the script for *Dark Winter*.
- *Dark Winter* portrayed a mock National Security Council that had to confront the impact a campaign of smallpox attacks in the US.