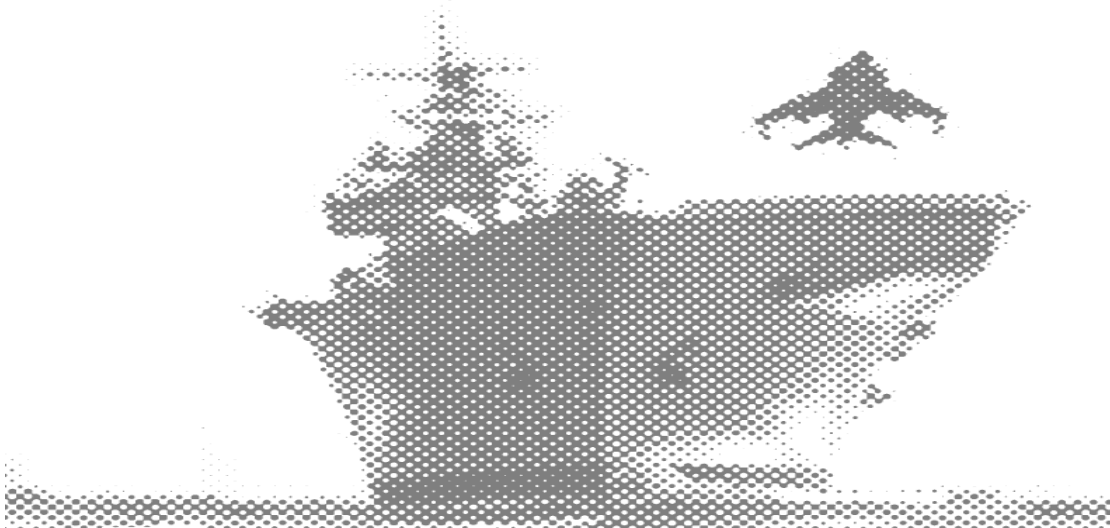


EUROPE'S DRIVE TO IMPLEMENT AN ANTI-TERRORIST STRATEGY

Monthly Roundtable
Monday, 16 February 2004
Bibliothèque Solvay, Brussels



Moderated by **Karel Kovanda**, Ambassador to NATO of the Czech Republic
and **Giles Merritt**, Director, New Defence Agenda

Rapporteur: John Chapman

16 February 2004

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Programme for the day:

Session 1

Are EU governments tackling the risks of 9/11-style attacks?

The possibility of major terrorist attacks in Europe has provoked a strong response from authorities in charge of security and there have been a number of successful anti-terrorism operations. But with the EU on the point of enlarging from 15 to 25 countries, questions exist:

- how well structured are its collective and collaborative anti-terrorism defences?
- is intelligence-sharing adequate and is enough use being made of new security technologies, ranging from border, airspace and entry ports surveillance to those in telecoms and financial services?
- how close are Europe's anti-terrorism efforts to those of the US?

Introductory speakers:

- **Victor Aguado**, Director General of EUROCONTROL
- **Kenneth Moss**, Associate Dean of Academic Programs, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, Washington DC
- **Susanne Welter**, Deputy Head of Unit, International Cooperation against Terrorism, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Session 2

How strong are Europe's defences against biological and chemical attack?

The vulnerability of sophisticated urban societies to attack by chemical or biological agents has long been well known, and in the wake of 9/11 has become widely feared.

- what steps have governments around the world begun to take to improve their defences, and how seriously is the EU assessing the threat?
- is the EU's work to counter the risk of a human influenza pandemic a model for vaccinating against attack or treating civil populations after one has taken place?

Introductory speakers:

- **Lars Hedström**, Deputy Director General, Swedish Emergency Management Agency (SEMA)
- **René Snacken**, Head of the Department Epidemiology-Toxicology, Belgian Scientific Institute of Public Health
- **Jean-Pascal Zanders**, Director, BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP)

Key points of the debates

The latest New Defence Agenda roundtable asked if Europe was on track with its anti-terrorist activities. After three hours of keen debate, it was apparent that although Europe was tackling some of the major threats, it was far from having a comprehensive strategy at the EU-level. The key theme emerging from the debate, and echoed by many of the speakers, was the need for improved *cooperation and coordination*: within the EU-25 itself, between the EU and NATO, and between the EU and the US.

Most speakers expressed optimism about the overall ant-terrorist situation while recognising that improved coordination was necessary. EUROCONTROL's **Victor Aguado** argued that his organisation had reacted well in the wake of 9/11, while **Kenneth Moss** of the National Defense University, Washington DC insisted that much work remained to be done. SEMA's **Lars Hedström** called for improved coordination between the EU and NATO. Adding a note of caution, the German government's **Susanne Welter** emphasised the need for a balance to be found between control and the need for an open society.

Listening to the speakers, it became apparent that appropriate actions were being taken but that many of these were ad-hoc instead of being part of a consolidated European plan. Speaking from the floor, the ISS-EU's **Gustav Lindström** called for the various plans to be harmonised and the public to be more informed about the true nature of the threats. It was also clear that more agreement is needed on both the threat and the possible responses. The BWPP's **Jean-Pascal Zanders** argued that the threats of terrorist attacks were often exaggerated, commenting worryingly that such assessments were now part of the US budget process.

On the thorny subject of defences against biological and chemical attacks, **René Snacken** of the Belgian Scientific Institute of Public Health underlined the dangers existing on the civil side via the bird flu epidemic. Noting that the differences between bio-terrorist attacks and naturally-occurring biochem attacks were becoming blurred, he called for a global surveillance network to be created.

Many unanswered questions remained as the debates drew to a close: what is the likelihood of such attacks in Europe? What should the public be told and when? Should Europe stockpile vaccines? Should regular defence exercises be held?

But above all, the conclusion was that there is an urgent need to take decisions at the EU level. Perhaps it was indeed time to get agreement (between as many partners as possible) before the next terrorist attack strikes against the world's major cities. This discussion often echoed the debates swirling around the need for a Common Threat Assessment found during several 2003 NDA roundtables.

Session 1: Are EU governments tackling the risks of 9/11-style attacks?

Czech Ambassador to NATO **Karel Kovanda** opened the NDA's second session of 2004 and got straight down to business by giving the floor to the three speakers.

First speaker: Kenneth Moss, Associate Dean of Academic Programs, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, Washington DC

From a personal viewpoint, Kenneth Moss gave a US view on the EU's initiatives in response to terrorism. He argued the attacks had increased the EU's importance, in the US's eyes, as it was responsible for all issues of legal process and jurisprudence. Highlighting issues taken, he mentioned:

- many EU states have *criminalized terrorism* (only six member states had terrorism on their statute books before 9/11)
- the *common arrest warrant has been introduced* (although doubts exist about implementation)
 - there are also concerns about Europol's independent role across all member states – would this be equivalent to the US's FBI?
- *information sharing has improved* between member states and between agencies
- *Eurojust* has been strengthened, although the aim to transform Europe into one area of jurisdiction is “a long road”

Despite areas where cooperation between the EU and the US had improved (flight data exchanged), Moss noted several outstanding questions:

1. *EU expansion*: will citizens in the ex-Soviet block countries welcome increased security? How will the flow of citizens between member states be handled?
2. *The nature of the threat against the EU*: does the EU feel as much under threat as the US and if so, how would it respond?

Overall, Moss felt positive about developments in the years since 9/11, while noting open areas of contention: extradition treaties, the death penalty in the US, submission of evidence on both sides of the Atlantic – especially where the US is reluctant to share evidence in the court process.

Second speaker: Victor Aguado, Director General of EUROCONTROL

Victor Aguado opened his remarks by describing the complexity of Europe's airspace. He noted that its size was similar to that of the US, with a comparable number of controllers. However, where the US had one central air traffic control body (with 21 centres), Europe had 31 different entities (with over 60 centres). Given these figures, Aguado underlined EUROCONTROL's challenge to optimise cost and operational activities. Looking at EUROCONTROL's objectives, he described its aim to develop a single main air traffic management system in Europe for civil and military purposes.

Turning to the subject of the 9/11 attacks, Aguado noted that in Europe an aircraft could cross national airspace in 10 minutes and that if the trajectories of the terrorists' 9/11 flights had been transposed to Europe, they could have potentially crossed nine member states – hence the need for cooperation.

On the day of 9/11 itself, staff from EUROCONTROL's CFMU¹ had been able to prevent flights taking off for the US just four minutes after US airspace had closed down; and had brought flights back to Europe, where they had been in flight. Aguado added that the CFMU had already worked closely with NATO at the time of, for example, *Desert Storm* and the Kosovo crisis.

EUROPE'S AIRSPACE

- more than 450 airlines
- 1,500 "other" customers
- 16,000 air traffic controllers
- 100,000 pilots
- 10,000 aircraft
- 3,000 flights per day (with a peak day of 28,000 flights)
- 8.5 million flights per year.

EUROCONTROL and NATO have established a joint co-ordination group, NEASCOG: the NATO/EUROCONTROL Air Traffic Management Security Co-ordinating Group. Security guidelines have been produced and the group is defining a European ATM Security Action Plan.

Aguado also covered EUROCONTROL's work in the safety arena, with ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation), NATO, ECAC (European Civil Aviation Conference), the European Commission and Europol. He noted that the work was in three main areas:

- optimising civil and military *radar data*
- developing *tools to ensure communication* of the right information at the right time
- *harmonising civil and military ATM procedures*, e.g. training on hijacks and other emergency situations.

Aguado's final – and intriguing - point related to EUROCONTROL's plans for a system that would filter out potential suspect aircraft flying to Europe. In closing, he said that EUROCONTROL had the tools and the instruments but that more effort had to be expanded on improving cooperation across Europe.

Third speaker: Susanne Welter, Deputy Head of Unit, International Cooperation against Terrorism, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Susanne Welter tackled the question of the day head-on and insisted that Europe was facing-up to the threat of 9/11-style attacks. To support this argument, she listed the most significant actions taken:

- the EU Action Plan (21/9/01), in which many tasks have been completed
- the EU Road Map – that includes enhanced judicial and police cooperation
- the Seville (and similar) declarations
- a growing understanding of the need to protect EU citizens from biological and chemical warfare

Bringing the situation up-to-date, Welter identified the new European Security Strategy, to be developed in the current Irish Presidency, with its focus on the 'combat against international

¹ Central Flow Management Unit – responsible for the collection of flight plans across Europe, it matches capacity and demand.

terrorism'. With the same objective in mind, she described the EU list of terrorist organisations and people – “a means of preventing suspected terrorists entering the EU or making financial transactions there”.

As for internal cooperation, Welter argued the situation was positive, for example, between justice ministries, exchanges of law enforcement staff, etc. However, she expressed the need to ensure cooperation with the 10 accession countries. Expanding her theme, Welter described work with the UN, its Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the 1267 Taliban Al-Qaida Committee (where sanctions are automatically transposed into EU law, e.g. bank accounts can be frozen in this way).

Describing her national situation, Welter highlighted a current discussion on a new air security legislation – including the question, what to do with suspect planes in German airspace? – where a debate rages as to who decides if and when to shoot down flights above German cities in case of a presumed terrorist attack.

Concluding her remarks, Welter reasoned that 100% security was impossible. She said that while controls could be improved, this had to be balanced against what society would accept, i.e. the need for an open society.

Karel Kovanda used his position as moderator to make two points before allowing questions from the floor:

- *Renegade*: Of the seven new countries joining NATO, four of them do not have the capacity to control their airspace against infiltration. Although the alliance has created the “renegade” program to resolve the problem, Kovanda emphasised the legal complexity of the task, i.e. asking a pilot of country A to take down a plane belonging to country B, flying from country C to D and carrying passengers from countries E, F and G, etc.
- *Civil emergency planning*: Kovanda noted that although the consequences of terrorist-driven and civil catastrophes are similar, civil emergency planning responsibilities are handled differently across many member states.

First session – Q&A

US-EU surveillance techniques

Kicking off, the WEU's **Paulo Brito** asked how Europe could hope to follow the US's lead (and expenditure) in electronic surveillance. As a supplementary question, Brito wanted to know if cooperation on cyber-terrorism was a priority.

In **Kenneth Moss'** opinion, it depended how Europe's 'common assets' (such as the defence budgets of EU member states) were funded at the EU or NATO levels. Moss also cited export controls (out of the US) as a problem for spreading such capabilities in a post-9/11 world. Concluding on cyber-terrorism, Moss agreed about the threat and its potential power to destruct – the answer again was to improve cooperation at government and private sector levels.

Differences between member states

WEAG's **Luis Balsells-Traver** turned to the differences between member states, especially in regard to political parties being banned in one country and its members re-surfacing in another. How could this be handled?

Susanne Welter commented that this was less likely to happen in future (due to actions taken) but reminded the audience that the question “what is a terrorist?” remains, e.g. one man's terrorist is another man's freedom-fighter. But she acknowledged that the tolerance of such groups had dropped in the current environment. **Karel Kovanda** asked Welter if a future

CFSP could diminish the problem, but she argued that implementing policies took time and the potential for problems between member states – where mere suspicions of crime or violence might exist – were ongoing.

Luck or good judgement

UPI's **Gareth Harding** wanted to know if the dearth of attacks in Europe was down to good luck or good planning, and additionally asked for the panel's opinion on the immediate threat inside Europe.

Welter took the question, reasoning that *softer targets* existed - for example, Bali and Northern Africa - where western citizens could be hit, thereby possibly removing the need to attack Europe itself.

The need for improved harmonisation and more information

The ISS-EU's **Gustav Lindström** was more pessimistic than the speakers, as he saw Europe as a "sitting duck" for attacks of many kinds and from many quarters. He cited the Schengen agreement as a source of potentially disastrous situations, i.e. once someone has entered the EU they could cause problems anywhere - in ports, railways, subways, etc.

Lindström argued that there were probably 25 different anti-terrorist plans in place, and relatively few EU-level exercises. Furthermore, he highlighted the shortcomings thrown up when such exercises did take place – poor inter-operability, no clear command structures, etc. Lindström therefore asked:

- how can plans be harmonised and more exercises conducted
- how can more and clearer information be provided to the public?

Welter said the approach to holding anti-terrorist exercises differed between member states; they had been held in France and the UK, but Germany had avoided them as they were seen to be counter-productive, i.e. they could be the cause of panic.

Aguado did not agree with Lindström's pessimism, arguing that Europe had the tools. However he saw the need for more inter-governmental coordination. Moss however agreed that 9/11 had opened a Pandora's Box in terms of terrorist attacks – and asked his own question as to the extent of coordinated exercises being held in Europe.

At this point, the BWPP's **Jean-Pascal Zanders** entered the fray and declared there had been an attempt – prevented – to crash a plane into the Eiffel Tower. But Zanders' main point concerned crisis communication; while systems existed in earthquake zones (to inform about the level of danger), there were no equivalent procedures in place in regard to potential terrorist attacks. If they did, he argued, people would feel more in control and might more readily accept prevention exercises.

Expanding on the subject of exercises, Zanders turned to the US and the 'Dark Winter' manoeuvre², which had not been completed. He declared that issues such as the need for 'quarantine areas' after attacks, were not being debated in Europe and that this could also be a reason for holding such exercises. NATO's **Linda Goldthorp** reinforced the question and asked for more information on what the public should be told and what was being discussed about the issue.

Moss responded on crisis communication (again speaking personally) and described the US' "colour code" system. He was not impressed as he felt the effectiveness of the system was eroding - people were asking why alerts were issued, whether they were politically motivated

² Zanders explained that the exercise had been called off when citizens fled from a quarantined area – due to a 'smallpox outbreak' – and soldiers would have had to shoot into the crowd.

and what if anything the public should do because of the alert – leading to a general lack of credibility. Welter agreed, and added that as time passes, people in Europe were less willing to believe in the threats.

Control vs. Freedom

As an aside, the Belgian Scientific Institute of Public Health's **René Snacken** commented that in Taiwan, the government had abandoned quarantine (in relation to SARS) due to the disruption to society. His question though, referred to EI Al airlines, with its heavy security procedures – is Europe ready for such strict controls?

Welter took on the EI Al question immediately and said that such a level of control could not be envisaged in Europe ... at least until a 9/11-style attack happened.

Joint NATO-EUROCONTROL activities

Lockheed's **Scott A. Harris** asked for more details of EUROCONTROL's joint security action plan with NATO.

Aguado gave the headline news: these included information sharing between civil and military organisations in Europe, new technologies (air-ground communications capability for the transmission of encrypted cockpit voice, flight data and on-board video information) and the coordination of civil and military ATC procedures and training on hijacks and other emergency situations.

Hitting the terrorists' wallets

The IRRI-KIIB's **Georges Vilain XIII** added a further topic to the mix, asking about the financing of international terrorism. He noted that this was a difficult subject but wanted to know if the US were happy about current efforts in this area.

Moss took the question and remarked, "more could be done". Interestingly, he said that some of the initial attempts had not proved successful as terrorist groups are a) dispersed, and b) remarkably innovative.

Session 2: How strong are Europe's defences against biological and chemical attack?

Opening the second session, New Defence Agenda Director **Giles Merritt** referred to an article in the NDA's new Discussion Paper by NATO's Germain Acke³ which concluded that preparedness in Europe against bio-chem attacks is far from encouraging. With that note of pessimism, he passed the floor to the speakers.

First speaker: Lars Hedström, Deputy Director General, Swedish Emergency Management Agency (SEMA)

Lars Hedström put the spotlight on Sweden and the events there since 9/11. The main changes had seen the introduction of a new Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and a new crisis management system. He explained that SEMA coordinates six different areas, including actions against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats (CBRN). Going deeper, he added that the recent focus had been on improving information to the public, on CBRN training and exercises and on operational expert support.

Moving to the EU, Hedström focussed on the CBRN Action Programme – aimed at preventing and limiting the consequences of CBRN terrorist threats. As background, he explained that work had been conducted (information sharing etc.) in the EU in the N (Nuclear) and R (Radiological) fields, in the Health Security Program and the Health Security Committee, in the EU's "from farm to table" program and in the European Food Safety Authority.

Moving to the C (Chemicals) area, Hedström referred to the directive aimed at preventing large-scale industrial emergencies by improving risk assessments and emergency plans. Despite all these activities, Hedström called for more *horizontal coordination and communication* in the EU in the areas of (risk and vulnerability analysis, alert routines, crisis communication and intelligence) – potentially through the EU's CBRN Action Programme.

Concluding with the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Partnership for Peace (EAPC and the PfP⁴), Hedström mentioned non-binding guidelines and minimum standards against CBRN risks. These guidelines aimed to minimise the consequences of possible CBRN incidents by enhancing national preparedness. Hedström said that the focus on 'preparation' was necessary in order to develop international procedures for cooperation and information exchange (e.g. early warnings, the joint use of high-level laboratories, etc.).

As for the next steps, Hedström called for further development and implementation of those standards. Turning to a thorny subject for his final remarks, Hedström called for improved dialogue between the EU and NATO in this field. Although communication was on-going in the areas of civil emergency and CBRN, Hedström remarked on the duplicated efforts in many member states.

³ In the NDA's Discussion Paper *Fresh Perspectives on Europe's Security* (Winter 2004).

⁴ 27 Partner Countries are co-operating with NATO and its 19 members within the framework of the EAPC and the Partnership for Peace. (see <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb030201.htm>)

Second speaker: René Snacken, Head of the Department Epidemiology-Toxicology, Belgian Scientific Institute of Public Health

René Snacken examined “influenza pandemic preparedness as a model for bio-terrorism contingency plans”. As examples, he looked at two totally different threats – the first being *bird flu*⁵ and the second SARS.

Snacken described the “highly pathogenic influenza virus” of bird flu, in 10 countries, as an unprecedented threat as it:

- affected an economically important sector of agriculture
- could be the trigger for a global pandemic such as the Spanish Flu of 1918 which killed 20 to 40 million people

Although there was no sign the outbreak was started intentionally, he argued that agro-terrorism remained a cause for concern. Looking at Europe, Snacken declared that each country had activated a national pandemic plan facilitated by the previous SARS outbreak. He raised three issues which would need to be addressed in any “model plan” to counter bio-terrorism:

1. *Availability of vaccines*: if they were available just before the outbreak spreads, it could be beneficial – as vaccination methods would be similar and plans could be prepared (central locations and mobile units), vaccination teams could be ready.
2. *Equity of supplies*: how would distribution be organised from central stockpiles -(in the event that drugs were available) – and who receive the supplies?
3. *Surveillance – the most important aspect*: a global network of surveillance would be particularly useful for detecting unusual cases.⁶

Snacken concluded that a high-performance early warning system would help countries to take timely actions against an influenza outbreak. Furthermore, in the event of a bio-terrorist attack, the same methodology could be used for preventing outbreaks and reducing the impact of such attacks.

Third speaker: Jean-Pascal Zanders, Director, BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP)

Jean-Pascal Zanders looked at the potential scope of CBW attacks – “so enormous that no government could counter all the threats”. He examined these attacks from three angles:

- *war scenarios*: - “probably the least likely, but often exaggerated”
- *terrorism*: the FBI had only eight recorded attacks by pathogens in the 21st century, including the anthrax letters of October 2001
- *criminal acts*: similar to terrorism but without any political intent

Looking at the use of pathogenic agents – in all three types of attacks – Zanders said the choice would depend on several factors: the intent, the availability, the stability of the pathogen, the technical skills and structure of the attack perpetrators (some substances need a large organisation – they cannot be developed in a garage), etc.

Turning to the threat itself, Zanders dismissed the idea that humans were the main targets. He saw the main purpose as being to disrupt logistics, something that could be achieved more effectively today with military hardware.

⁵ On December 17, 2003, authorities in the Republic of Korea reported an epidemic of highly pathogenic avian influenza, caused by the H5N1 strain of the virus, at a chicken farm. Since then, the total number of confirmed cases in humans in Thailand and Vietnam has reached 25, of which 19 have been fatal.

⁶ Currently, the WHO collaborates with a Canadian network, the Global Public Health Intelligence Network – a multilingual application that provides an early -warning system for potentially serious public health scares.

Another type of attack described by Zanders was against animals and plants – where the economic consequences could be catastrophic, e.g. the foot and mouth outbreak in the UK, where mismanagement contributed to the size of the economic disaster.

Zanders also noted that another target could be economic and societal disruption – fear could be exploited in such cases and hoaxes could be just as effective as genuine attacks.

This led to Zanders' thoughts as to how the CBW threat could be dealt with. He argued that generic measures could cope with 80% of the threats, without the risk of creating panic in society. Generic measures included in an EU policy option could be the development of:

- *political and juridical measures* – national legislation to apprehend terrorists before attacks *specific measures to counter the CBW threat* – e.g. decontamination standards for public to use certain facilities (zero tolerance could lead to financial disaster), make doctors aware of certain threats, create vaccine stockpiles etc.
- *independent assessment capabilities*: in the US they are "part of the budget process" for a domestic audience! Zanders called for an EU assessment capability to be discussed in the European Parliament, i.e. to have an open debate.
- *training and simulation exercises*: e.g. crisis communication strategies and emergency preparedness of civilians

In conclusion, Zanders acknowledged that the perception of a CBW threat had increased since 9/11. However, he argued that the real threat was somewhat in the future. Zanders concluded that effective countermeasures were possible and cost-effective AND must be undertaken today for the long-term. Putting the responsibility firmly in the court of parliaments and governments, Zanders called for the chemicals and biological weapons convention (BTWC and CWC) to be strengthened, as "they are our baseline".

Second session – Q&A

The financial aspects

As a follow-up, **Giles Merritt** asked **Lars Hedström** for details of the proportion of SEMA's resources being spent on bio-chem attack, and how much realistically could be spent.

Hedström indicated that SEMA's budget was 200 million euros, with 25% being spent on CBRN. However, he noted that this was divided between all the actors (central and regional governments, municipalities, etc.).

Availability of vaccines and drugs

Merritt also had two questions in response to **René Snacken's** 'key issues':

- will vaccines be on hand just before an outbreak?
- how unlikely is it that drugs would be available?

Snacken explained that there were two main differences in the type of vaccines:

- the smallpox vaccine is an old-generation attenuated vaccine with many side-effects
- the new vaccines based on cell culture do not have these problems

He added that, because of the side effects, there was a body of opinion in the US against vaccination before an attack and the best policy was to wait until the virus had been discovered – as was the view in Europe.

On the question of drugs availability, Snacken replied that the candidate vaccine - H5N1⁷ - was now ready (after being produced at the Biological Standards and Control centre –NIBSC- in London). He added that mass production would start in a further two months time, after safety and efficacy trials, either by use of the seed, or by cell or egg culture.

He noted that Baxter was the only company currently able to produce stocks via cell culture (earlier, Baxter's **Toon Digneffe** had called for investment in new technology to shorten the production timeframe). He added that as not enough vaccine would be available, someone would need to prioritise distribution (depending on the type of threat).

SEMA

The WEU's **Paulo Brito** asked for more details on SEMA's organisational structure and interaction with neighbouring countries.

Hedström replied that SEMA was now linked to the Ministry of Defence as traditionally such agencies had been seen as part of Sweden's civil defence efforts. He added that there was excellent cooperation in the medical health area in the Nordic countries and bi-laterally with the Baltic States.

Apocalypse Now?

Brito also asked why **Jean-Pascal Zanders** disagreed with the "apocalypse" doomsday scenario in Germain Acke's aforementioned article. Finally, Georges Vilain XIII asked the panel to give a genuine assessment of the threat (i.e. of a bio-chem attack by "non-state actors") and asked for thoughts as to how attacks could be presented. He also asked why there had been so few bio-chem attacks in the world to-date?

Zanders looked at the hype surrounding potential threats and attributed this to a lack of facts – he noted that the authorities were only certain about society's vulnerabilities. He expanded on the subject by highlighting the amount of money spent on so-called high-risk agents, for example the anthrax letters 'only' killed five people, contrasted with the West Nile⁸ virus – 300 deaths per year – which received relatively little funding.

Zanders also commented that many biotech companies had suffered in the 'crash' that followed 9/11 and had therefore been happy to take on defence-related responsibilities. These companies now had a vested interest in keeping threats in the public domain. With a touch of irony, Zanders also reasoned that in today's climate, it was merely necessary to mention bio-terrorism in order to receive research funding.

As for the reality of the threat, Zanders admitted the presence of an increased threat perception, the key element was that only vulnerabilities were being discussed as the other factors – identifying agents and attacking critical points within the terrorist organisations were much more difficult to handle.

Giles Merritt asked Zanders what might happen in the biochem arena in the next five-to-ten years and noted that the differences between biotech terrorism and naturally-occurring biochem attacks (e.g. SARS and avian flu) had become blurred. He had three final questions for the panel:

- do we have an *international* "colour-coding" system to describe the levels of threat of biochem attacks? (and if not, how can it be achieved?)

⁷ The H5N1 virus kills chicken eggs, the normal medium for growing flu vaccine viruses, so the WHO laboratories are using reverse genetics to lower the pathogenicity of the virus to chickens and to get a high yield in the egg cultures.

⁸ The mosquito-borne virus has been found in animal hosts (primarily birds and horses) in 43 states. In 2001, there were more than 4,000 cases and almost 300 deaths there is no treatment and a vaccine is at least a decade away.

- do we have a global agreement on “the need for a travel ban”? (as in the case of SARS, where it did have economic consequences)
- do standards exist so that we discuss the same issues in the same way?

Closing remarks from the panel

Hedström took the standards question and reasoned that they existed, for example in NATO's PfP.

Snacken referred back to his remarks on the Canadian software system (used for SARS) and argued that it could be used to counter bio-terrorism threats. Indeed, he used SARS as an example as to how travel bans could help in certain cases.

Zanders answered all three questions:

- *colour-coding*: it is difficult due to cultural differences, but it could be useful on a regional level
- *travel bans*: they could make the situation worse (economic problems)
- *standards*: a regional approach is best as neighbouring countries share perceptions

He expanded these thoughts in looking at the EU and the US where threat perceptions differed and caused tension between the two parties. Zanders argued that experiences since 9/11 have differed on both sides of the Atlantic and this was at the root of many of the difficult discussions over Iraq.

Merritt closed an interesting roundtable debate by agreeing with Zanders that crisis communication had to be improved so that the scientists could get their message across to the public. In this way, the potential for panic could be reduced.

Upcoming meetings

Future roundtables will take place:

- March 15 – Towards an EU burden-sharing of defence costs?
- April 26 – Assessing the military threats of the future