

# The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point



## Bioterrorism Symposium

The Methods and Impact of Developing a Resilient Public

May 5, 2006

Chairman  
**Dr. David Franz**

Speakers  
**Dr. Bruce Hoffman**  
**Ms. Judith Miller**  
**Dr. Monica Schoch-Spana**

# Background and Format

Biological weapons pose unique challenges for U.S. defense and homeland security planners. In conceptualizing a response, U.S. policymakers thought first of technical solutions and training of emergency responders to protect the population or respond to a bioterror event. Next, we considered non-proliferation and traditional deterrence approaches to reducing the likelihood of an attack. More recently, some have begun thinking about strengthening the resolve of the general public in order to mitigate the effects of an attack and, perhaps, serve as a deterrent.

The purpose of this workshop was to explore the nature of public resilience and begin a conversation about both positive public policy measures to develop a resilient public and its strategic impact. What active or passive factors might influence public resilience? Is public resilience a deterrent or only of value because it mitigates the impact of an attack?

This workshop was designed to educate the USMA community about the threat of bioterrorism and support the CTC's goal of developing modular bioterrorism curriculum that can be inserted into existing classroom environments. It was intended to continue the discussion began during last fall's symposium that addressed the technical issues relevant to bioterrorism.

The workshop was ultimately a conversation between the speakers and the audience. Speakers gave brief statements that were followed by discussion. The audience included participants from numerous departments at the U.S. Military Academy, private industry, government laboratories, and other academic institutions.

The workshop's purpose was to advance the debate about bioterrorism at USMA, and in particular spark a discussion about how to adjust West Point curriculum so as to better prepare cadets for an uncertain world in which bioterrorism is a real threat. Our next generation of military leaders should have the capacity to engage the policy and technical issues that the nexus of scientific expertise and extremism pose to the United States and the world.

The CTC would like to thank our speakers for sharing their expertise and our audience for contributing their insights. The threat posed by bioterrorism is uniquely interdisciplinary, which demands analysis from many perspectives. The public, private and academic sectors all have an important role to play in the defense of the nation.

The CTC is particularly grateful to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and Dr. Paula Olsiewski, without whom this program would be impossible.

If there are any questions, comments, or concerns about the CTC's bioterrorism program, please contact Brian Fishman at 845-938-3697 or [brian.fishman@usma.edu](mailto:brian.fishman@usma.edu).

# Table of Contents

1. Summary of Findings
2. Recommendations for the United States Military Academy and Beyond
3. Speaker Biographies

# Summary of Findings

## Key information:

- Resilience should not be confused with invulnerability. Resilience is the ability to bounce back after receiving a shock to the system, thereby limiting the long-term impact of that shock. A resilient society is able to ‘heal’ itself quickly after an attack and return to a sense of normalcy.
- Expert understanding of the public’s likely response to biological threats has changed over time. The assumption was that a panicked public would overwhelm public health systems and might even resort to violence as a means of procuring health care.
- The anthrax attacks of 2001 changed the conception of the public from a *problem to be managed* to a *constituency to be served*. The public response to the fall 2005 attacks was not panic, and highlighted the importance of effective, credible communication systems to inform the public of risks and treatment opportunities.
- The public rarely devolves into panic during disasters but continues to expect that it will.
- The human body’s response to disease is a useful model for describing appropriate social response to a biological attack. Like the body, society is equipped with coping mechanisms that can be over-extended and pushed into shock.
- There are risks to focusing on resilience, including the possibility of deserting the most vulnerable victims in order to sustain and empower those with a higher probability of effectively bouncing back from an attack.
- Policymakers often do not see the media as an integral part of disaster response.
- Communicating via the media is increasingly complex because of the variability of the news media. Identifying trusted opinion leaders is increasingly difficult as consumers diversify their sources of information. In addition to traditional newspapers and network television (known as Mainstream Media or MSM), cable news, internet sites, and bloggers have transformed the way the public accesses information.
- Very few media outlets are trusted by all of the public, which further complicates public education.
- Media coverage of biological terrorism has been episodic. Intense coverage of issues such as biological terrorism is often followed by a backlash against ‘scaremongering.’

- Coverage of a biological attack is particularly problematic because contamination implies that the impact of an attack lingers. Episodic coverage is ill-suited to this kind of threat.
- The media both shapes and *reflects* popular trends and popular culture. When biological terrorism is a pop issue, it garners media attention as well.
- Although the risk of a mass casualty biological attack is possible, more plausible uses of biological terrorism would be to:
  - Shut down a critical or symbolic site for a sustained period of time during decontamination (the Hart Senate Office Building was closed for three months),
  - Financially strain the United States (cleanup of the Senate Hart Building alone cost \$42 million dollars),
  - Undermine public confidence in the government,
  - And, provoke a counterproductive government response.
- Biological weapons are attractive to terrorists precisely because of the increased psychological impact of a non-traditional, “invisible” weapon.
- Unaffiliated, amateur terrorists may attempt to use biological weapons because they do not have the technical or organizational capacity to carry out a large-scale attack using conventional means. The increased psychological impact of a biological attack may make such a weapon appealing to an ambitious amateur with limited operational capacity.
  - One example of this phenomenon is Kamel Bourghass, who was convicted of murdering a London police officer after his apartment was raided in connection with a terrorist plot to employ ricin. He correctly understood that the toxin was ill-suited to a mass-casualty attack, but believed that the psychological impact made the toxin an appealing weapon.

# Recommendations

- Develop a bioterrorism curriculum for the U.S. Military Academy that embraces the interdisciplinary nature of the threat and includes course projects that increase cadet understanding of public resilience and strategic communications in a crisis.
- Limited “bio-literacy” is a problem both for the public at large and for many journalists with the responsibility of educating the public. Lack of information heightens the fear surrounding biological weapons. Increase societal bio-literacy by:
  - Encouraging education through science classes in journalism schools. While many journalism schools have dedicated courses covering business or armed conflict, few dedicate class time to the peculiar demands of understanding, synthesizing and explaining scientific processes. Educating journalists about both biological terrorism and basic biology is critical for developing a credible, informed media capable of delivering accurate information in a timely fashion.
  - Disseminate bioterrorism curriculum developed at West Point to military and civilian educational institutions.
- ‘Embed’ reporters in academic, government, and private laboratories around the country for a fixed period in order to increase bio-literacy in the media, and create opportunities for public education.
- Develop public forums for sustained focus on bioterrorism. Episodic media coverage reduces the public’s ability to learn lessons from past events. Sustained focus at a lay-level to raise public awareness is a first step toward a more bio-literate, and more resilient, public.
- Directly challenge assumptions about a “panicky public.” A confident, educated public is a more resilient public. A positive externality of public education is that it will alter the strategic logic of potential biological terrorists, who may be less willing to employ such methods if they anticipate a less dramatic social response.

# Biographies

## **Dr. David Franz**

### **Combating Terrorism Center Senior Bioterrorism Fellow**

David Franz is the Center's Senior Fellow for Bioterrorism. He is a retired Colonel in the U.S. Army, having served 23 of his 27 years on active duty in the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command. He has served as both deputy commander and commander of the U.S. Army medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases and as Deputy Commander of the Medical Research and Materiel Command. He also served as veterinarian for the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

In addition to his time on active-duty, Franz served as chief inspector for three U.N. Special Commission biological warfare inspection missions to Iraq and was a member of the first two U.S./U.K. teams that visited Russia to support the trilateral Joint Statement on Biological Weapons. He has served on numerous governmental advisory committees on bioterrorism. Currently, Dr. Franz is the director of the National Agricultural Biosecurity Center, located at Kansas State University and is the Senior Biological Scientist at the Midwest Research Institute. He is a resident graduate of the Army Command and General Staff College, a recipient of the Army Research and Development Achievement Award, the Order of Military Medical Merit and the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster. Dr. Franz holds a D.V.M. from Kansas State University and a Ph.D. in physiology from Baylor College of Medicine.

## **Dr. Bruce Hoffman**

### **Combating Terrorism Center Fellow**

Bruce Hoffman the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point's Senior Terrorism Fellow. He is also the Director of RAND's Washington, D.C., office and holds the RAND Corporate Chair in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency. He is one of the leading experts on terrorism and counter-terrorism in the country. He was the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St Andrews in Scotland.

Dr. Hoffman has been awarded the United States Intelligence Community Seal Medallion, the highest level of commendation given to a non-government employee, which recognizes sustained superior performance of high value that distinctly benefits the interests and national security of the United States. He has served as a member of the U.S. Department of Defense Counter-Terrorism Advisory Board and has been a consultant to the National Academy of Sciences; the U.S. Department of Energy, the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence; the World Cup USA94 Security Planning and Management Staff; the U.S. General Accounting Office; the American Academy of Arts and Science's Religious Fundamentalism Project; and, the New York State Emergency Management Office. He is also Editor-in-Chief of *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, the leading scholarly journal in the field. He holds a doctorate in International Relations at Oxford University.

**Ms. Judy Miller**  
**Author & Pulitzer Prize-winning Investigative Journalist**

Ms. Miller joined The New York Times' Washington Bureau in 1977, where she covered the securities industry, Congress, politics, and foreign affairs, particularly the Middle East. In 1983, she became the first woman to be named chief of The Times' bureau in Cairo, Egypt, responsible for covering the Arab world. In 1986, she became the Paris correspondent, traveling throughout Europe and North Africa. In 1987 and 1988, she returned to Washington as the Washington Bureau's news editor and deputy bureau chief.

In May, 1989, she became co-coordinator of a newly created unit to enhance the paper's coverage of radio, television, advertising, and publishing. In October, 1990, she was named special correspondent to the Persian Gulf crisis, and after that, The Times' Sunday Magazine's special correspondent.

Before joining The Times, Ms. Miller was Washington bureau chief of The Progressive, a monthly, contributed regularly to National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," and wrote articles for many publications.

Born in New York City, she grew up in Miami and Los Angeles, graduating from Hollywood High School. She attended Ohio State University, Barnard College and the Institute of European Studies at the University of Brussels. She has a bachelor's degree from Barnard and a master's from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

Ms. Miller has written four books and contributed chapters to several others. Her most recent book is "Germes: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War." (Simon & Schuster, 2001) Written with two Times colleagues, the book topped the best seller's list in the wake of 9/11 and the anthrax letter terrorist attacks. Her previous book, "God Has Ninety-Nine Names," (Simon & Schuster, 1996) explores the spread of Islamic extremism in ten Middle Eastern countries, including Israel and Iran. In 1990, her first book was published: "One, By One, By One," (Simon & Schuster) a highly praised account of how people in six nations have distorted the memory of the Holocaust. That same year, she co-authored "Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf," (Times Books, 1990) the first comprehensive account of the Gulf crisis and biography of the man behind it. That, too, was a best-seller which topped The Times Best Seller list during the 1991 Gulf war.

In 2002, Judith Miller was part of a small team that won a Pulitzer Prize for "explanatory journalism" for her January, 2001 series on Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. That same year, she won an Emmy for her work on a Nova/New York Times documentary based on articles for her book, "Germes." She was also part of the Times team that won the prestigious DuPont award that year for a series of programs on terrorism for PBS's "Frontline." She has discussed a wide range of national security topics on such programs as "Sixty Minutes," Oprah Winfrey, CNN, ABC's "Night Line" and "Good Morning America," NBC's "Today" show, David Letterman, and "The Charlie Rose Show."



She lectures frequently on the Middle East, Islam, terrorism, biological and chemical weapons and other national security topics.

She lives in New York City and Sag Harbor with her husband, Jason Epstein, a publisher and writer.

**Dr. Monica Schoch-Spana**

**Senior Associate, Center for Biosecurity; Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh**

Dr. Schoch-Spana, a medical anthropologist, helped established the UPMC Biosecurity Center after 5 years with the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Strategies.

Dr. Schoch-Spana has led research, education, and advocacy efforts to encourage greater consideration by authorities of the general public's capacity to confront bioattacks constructively - a realm she has termed "the people's role in biodefense." She organized the 2003 national summit, *Leadership during Bioterrorism: The Public as an Asset, Not a Problem*, and chaired the Working Group on "Governance Dilemmas" in Bioterrorism Response that recently issued consensus recommendations to mayors, governors, and top health officials. Dr. Schoch-Spana has also served as P.I. for a national study of public communications during the anthrax crisis.

Case study investigations inform Dr. Schoch-Spana's perspective on community reactions to public health and terrorist crises including Anthrax Attacks 2001, World Trade Center attack 2001, NYC West Nile Virus 1999, and Pandemic Influenza 1918. Select publications include "Leading during Bioattacks and Epidemics with the Public's Trust and Help," *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism*. 2004; "Educating, Informing and Mobilizing the Public," in *Terrorism and Public Health*, B. Levy and V. Sidel, eds., Oxford University Press, 2003; and "Bioterrorism and the Public: How to Vaccinate a City against Panic?," *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 2002. She is also an Associate Editor for the peer-reviewed journal, *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism: Biodefense Strategy, Science and Practice*.

She received her B.A. from Bryn Mawr College, and her Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from Johns Hopkins University.