

Biological warfare agents

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Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive weapons, pose a considerable threat to human lives. Biological warfare agents include organisms and toxins used to incapacitate or kill. The biological warfare agents are disseminated using spraying devices or line sources, for example, a moving vehicle or airplane (Bond, 2009, p.

498). The concept of biological agents dates back to the ancient times where it involved deliberate food and water poisoning, use of microorganism and toxins in the weaponry systems and using biologically inoculated fabrics. For example, in 400Bc, archers used arrows infected through dipping them in decaying bodies or blood mixed with manure. In the 12th century, the dead soldiers' bodies and those of people infected with the plague were used to inflict harm to the enemy in battles. In the 18th century, smallpox was used as a tool of war by the British against the Americans. In the 1900s, sophisticated biological agents were developed with the Germans developing anthrax, cholera and wheat fungus as biological weapons during World War 1.

“ They infected livestock exports, bound for Russia and Allied countries, with the disease..... in the United states, German agents were reported to have injected horses, mules, and cattle with anthrax”(Congressional Record, p. 26377). Between 1942 and 1945, the British developed and tested anthrax bombs. Anthrax is caused by the bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*.

The symptoms for infection appear one to six weeks after exposure. They include fever, fatigue, and shortness of breath. The severities of the symptoms vary depending on the means of dissemination of the agent and

the amount the casualty was exposed to. Fear of biological warfare has necessitated the creation of International policies to counteract biological warfare incidences. The biological Weapons Convention of 1972 was formed to prohibit the development and production of biological weapons. In addition, member states to this convention are expected to submit information concerning biological research facilities where research is being done, the exchange of scientific information and other relevant details concerning the biological agents, to the United Nations.

The defense against weapons of mass destruction act of 1996 was passed due to growing concerns on chemical, biological and nuclear threats of attacks.