
ATLANTIC STORM — A TRANSATLANTIC BIOTERRORISM EXERCISE

Atlantic Storm was a ministerial table-top exercise convened in Washington, DC, on January 14, 2005. It was created and presented by the Center for Biosecurity of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, the Center for Transatlantic Relations of Johns Hopkins University, and the Transatlantic Biosecurity Network and was funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and the Nuclear Threat Initiative. The exercise was held in real-time using the world's current geopolitical context as a backdrop, and used a fictitious scenario designed to mimic a summit of transatlantic leaders forced to respond to a bioterrorist attack. The transatlantic leaders at the mock summit were played by current and former officials from each country or organization represented at the table:

Prime Minister of Canada

Played by Barbara McDougall
Advisor, Aird & Berlis
Former Foreign Minister of Canada

President of the European Commission

Played by Erika Mann
Member of the European Parliament

Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

Played by Werner Hoyer
Member of the Bundestag
Foreign Policy Spokesman, FDP
Former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

President of France

Played by Bernard Kouchner
Member of the European Parliament
Former Minister of Health of France
Founder of Médecins sans Frontières

Prime Minister of Italy

Played by Stefano Silvestri
President, Istituto Affari Internazionale
Former Deputy Minister for Defense

Prime Minister of the Netherlands

Played by Klaas de Vries
Member of House of Representatives of the States General
Former Minister of Interior of the Netherlands

Prime Minister of Poland

Played by Jerzy Buzek
Member of the European Parliament
Former Prime Minister of Poland

Prime Minister of Sweden

Played by Jan Eliasson
Ambassador of Sweden to the U.S.
Former Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs at the United Nations

President of the United States

Played by Madeleine Albright
Founder, The Albright Group, LLC
Former Secretary of State of the United States

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Played by Sir Nigel Broomfield
Former Director of the Ditchley Foundation and
Former Ambassador of the UK to Germany

Director General, World Health Organization

Played by Gro Harlem Brundtland
Former Prime Minister of Norway and
Former Director-General of the World Health Organization

Executive Secretary of the Summit

Played by Eric Chevallier
Associate Professor, Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris &
the French Ecole Nationale d'Administration

The scenario presented players with reports of smallpox cases in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Turkey (cases ultimately emerged in North America as well). During the 8-hour summit meeting, participants wrestled with the enormity and rapid pace of the emerging epidemic, the tension between domestic politics and international relations, the challenge of controlling the movement of people across borders, and an international shortage of critical medical resources such as smallpox vaccine.

It quickly became apparent that decisions about international coordination and such issues as whether and how to share limited stocks of vaccine would be difficult. Several participants noted that existing international organizations—NATO, the EU, and the UN—are not well suited to respond to the challenges posed by a bioterrorist attack of this scope and complexity. The group looked to the WHO to manage distribution of vaccine, but Gro Harlem Brundtland, reprising her previous position as Director-General of WHO, indicated that WHO resources were limited.

When participants were told that dock workers in Rotterdam were infected—resulting in the closure of the second largest port in the world—and that Polish citizens were streaming into Germany to try to obtain vaccine that was not available in their own country, the leaders were forced to confront the economic and political consequences of the crisis. Debate ensued about the advisability of closing borders, quarantining cities, and limiting the movement of people.

Atlantic Storm described an attack with smallpox, but the lessons of the exercise are relevant to all threats to biosecurity. A full analysis of the exercise is available on the *Atlantic Storm* website, as is *Atlantic Storm Interactive*, a web-based retelling of the exercise. Here are the main conclusions:

- **Preparation will matter:** Countries must begin working together now to prepare systems that will support a collaborative international response to destabilizing epidemics, whether of natural cause or the result of bioterrorism. National leaders will not be able to create such systems in the midst of a crisis.
- **Increased knowledge and awareness are essential:** National leaders must become as knowledgeable of the unique challenges posed by bioterrorism and destabilizing epidemics as they are of “traditional” terrorism and national security threats.
- **“Homeland” security must look abroad:** Homeland security cannot be achieved without attention to the abilities of neighboring states and allies in preventing and responding to large epidemics. Biosecurity will only be achieved through a holistic approach to homeland security—one that looks beyond national boundaries.
- **The World Health Organization’s authority must be aligned with expectations:** World leaders should provide the WHO with resources and authority commensurate with the broad and serious expectations they have of the organization’s role in responding to international epidemics of infectious diseases. Today the WHO has concrete and serious budgetary, political, and organizational limits which will only be overcome through concerted action by the WHO’s member states.
- **Effective communication between nations and with the public is critical:** Plans that seek to engage citizens constructively in emergency response should be established and tested well in advance.
- **Adequate medical countermeasures must be developed:** The current lack of medical countermeasures to infectious diseases and the inability to quickly increase global production of those that do exist may force leaders to employ disease control options such as border closures that could be socially, politically, and economically destabilizing and serve to turn a crisis into a catastrophe.
- **Biosecurity is one of the great global security challenges of the 21st century:** One of the great challenges of our century is preventing the deliberate use of disease as a weapon for killing millions, destabilizing economies, and disrupting societies. One of our great *opportunities* is to take steps that will make us both strong and resilient in the face of destabilizing epidemics—be they natural or intentional.

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Further information on Atlantic Storm can be found at:

www.upmc-biosecurity.org
<http://transatlantic.sais-jhu.edu>