

BIOLOGICAL WARFARE–MYTH OR REALITY ?

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Biological warfare, biological weaponry and bioterrorism seriously concern few people. We usually tend to relegate such far-flung notions to the fringes of military-political discourse or intellectual imagery of fiction writers. But to our greatest dismay, nonetheless, there is a real threat not one conjectured by the writer who wants to be on the best seller list but one potentially and actually created by scientists and technicians in research labs around the world. Therefore along with natural and demological reasons, environmental perspectives in terms of water, air and vector-borne diseases take on newer, hitherto unknown and ominous proportions. With the threat of a full fledged Biological Battle looming large on our horizon, especially after the horrendous terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York and the Pentagon in the Washington D.C., USA on September 11, 2001 and the detection of actual cases of anthrax, a known bioweapon, first on October 4, 2001 in the office of the *Sun* tabloid and a resultant death, followed by three more cases of exposure in the same building and then trickling in of news that potent and pure strains of the bacteria were being sent by culprits by letters and further news of contamination and then shutting down of the US States Legislature after 31 members of staff tested positive for a virulent form of anthrax, the more our understanding on technical skills of manipulation of the biological world around us increases, so does the possibility of such technological advances falling in the wrong hands and backfiring on the entire human race. With the advancement of immunological, genetic and molecular biological knowhow, the seemingly docile microbiological world can be weaponised to create havoc on innocent populations. Outbreaks of known or unknown diseases over a large population within a short range of time can wipe out such population very quickly. Bomb shelters, radiation-proof chambers and other more sophisticated nuclear or chemical weaponry will not be able to counter such onslaught. It is through public awareness, extensive politico-military interventions and a state of worldwide alertness through the internet can such a menace be tackled. This paper deals with the countries concerned, current trends, potential biological weapons, their dissemination methods and operational effectiveness, international opinions and medical counter-weapons to tackle a Biological Warfare should one break out. It is only through Monitoring such covert activities and motivating public opinion can the human race hope to even slow down the fast approaching doomsday – the sixth Great Mass Extinction in the earth's history.