

Terrorism NATO WMD

On November 1st, the Atlantic Council of Canada hosted Ted Whiteside, head of NATO's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Centre, for a roundtable discussion on how NATO is addressing terrorism and WMD concerns. Speaking from the broadest possible definition of NATO – that is, its 26 member states, as well as the seven Mediterranean Dialogue nations, and the 20 partner countries – Whiteside's presentation offered a unique glimpse into the current WMD defence planning.

"Acts of terrorism, previously used for 'maximum attention with minimal loss of life' are now largely designed for maximum casualties." Whiteside attributes this phenomenon to several reasons. First, terrorist discourse is increasingly accepted and therefore legitimized in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere. The end result of this is an environment from which terrorists can operate and draw support. Secondly, due to the increase in suicide attacks in the last decade, the public has become somewhat desensitized to these horrific acts which require increasingly spectacular acts to achieve the same desired effects. A real worry is that non-state actors will attempt to gain access to fissile material for nuclear weapons, or chemical, radiological and biological agents from the large global WMD stockpiles. NATO endeavours to address these broader security concerns and to propose solutions to protect Alliance forces as well as NATO populations and territory.

The presentation included an overview of NATO operations against terrorism, such as: Operation Active Endeavour, in

which the NATO standing fleet inspects ships throughout the Mediterranean to prevent disruptive attacks to the shipping industry; the NATO-led provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan; and the fledgling NATO mission to train Iraqi troops. Although NATO is clear to point out that these operations are distinct from 'coalition' forces, they do operate in assistance with other forces on the ground. For Whiteside, this distinction was imperative to gain the 26 member consensus needed for NATO action. That said, he asserts that NATO members are a like-minded group, committed to eradicating terrorism.

The Alliance response to the proliferation of WMDs is structured around two basic international agreements: the 1972 *Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention* and the 1970 *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty* (NPT). The former, he asserts, lacks the implementation mechanisms needed to give it real teeth in implementation. This is compounded by the increasingly prolific examples of dual-use technologies. For example, technology used to modify plant resistance to insects could be applied to military purposes such as altering a pathogen for weapons production. Furthermore, the fact that biological weapons have been used, such as the US anthrax attacks of 2001, adds the cost of stockpiling vaccines for these diseases which otherwise would not be necessary.

NATO considers the NPT to be the cornerstone of non-proliferation regimes, but it is important to continue to work for full compliance and universality. Many analysts note that the possession of nuclear weapons by Pakistan, India and Israel have placed great pressure on the NPT. Furthermore, Mr. Whiteside suggests that some nations may be unaffected by the traditional nuclear deterrence theory. For instance, the erratic leadership of North

Korea may perceive retaliation for an attack they have perpetrated as acceptable.

NATO has implemented several mechanisms in response to these current challenges. These include:

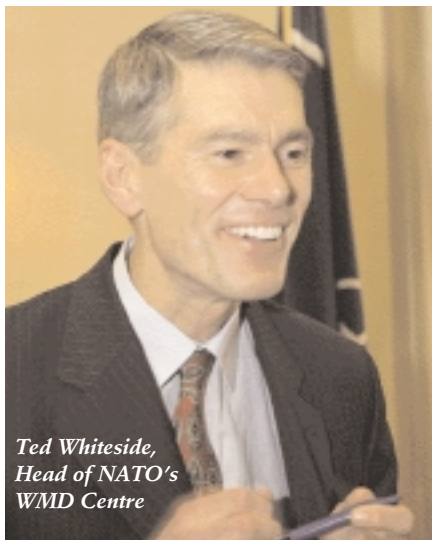
- Deployable nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) laboratories to identify, within hours, the nature of an attack against civilians or NATO troops.
- An NBC Joint Assessment Team to assess the effects of an NBC event, advise commanders on the effects of the agent so that appropriate experts can be contacted for technical advice.
- Coordinating and stockpiling of medicines to be shared between member states in the event of an attack.
- Creation of a disease surveillance system in which troops report symptoms and maladies via satellite to be compared against standard illness levels to discern a possible trend of increased disease symptoms. This system will alert NATO commanders to a biological outbreak.

NATO endeavours to educate senior level commanders to improve the operational understanding of CBN defence and expand and strengthen training. The creation of the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defence Battalion reflects this defence training expansion and was deployed in Athens during the Olympics.

Whiteside outlines what he perceives to be another grave threat to international stability – ballistic missile proliferation. It becomes worrisome that, with an ever-increasing range and accuracy, North Korea and Iran may be developing nuclear weapons and have missiles with a range in excess of 1,000 kilometres. According to Whiteside, NATO is looking into acquiring in-theatre missile defence systems to protect Alliance troops from missile attacks when deployed on missions.

Based on this roundtable discussion, it would appear that NATO has made real gains towards protecting its member states from terrorism and WMD use by non-state actors. Although, as Mr. Whiteside asserts, there is no foolproof plan. "Based on a combination of threat in both capabilities and motivations, as well as empirical evidence of actual interest," the risks of a WMD attack are real but improbable. However, given the consequences of such an occurrence, the Alliance must prepare for the unthinkable. **FL**

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Ted Whiteside,
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