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## **Chile Hosts Workshop on Preventing Bioterrorism**

### **Interpol releases bioterrorism incident preparedness guide at Santiago event**

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Washington -- A July 10-12 workshop concluded in Santiago, Chile, with participants from 26 countries discussing the importance of inter-agency cooperation at the regional, national and international levels in stopping terrorists from carrying out a biological attack.

The Americas Regional Workshop on Preventing Bioterrorism, staged by the global police organization called Interpol, with input from international scientific and legal experts, aimed to provide information in such areas as biohazards, laboratory security and bioterrorism identification.

Interpol said the workshop also included a simulated major bioterrorism event to underline the importance of interagency cooperation against such terrorist attacks. Interpol says bioterrorism refers to the "intentional release of biologic agents or toxins for the purpose of harming and killing civilians, animals, or plants with the intent to intimidate or coerce a government or civilian population to further political or social objectives."

Among those participating at the Santiago workshop was Andrea Lauritzen, from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Office of International Health Affairs. One part of that bureau works with U.S. government agencies to carry out policies regarding international bioterrorism, infectious diseases, environmental health and health in post-conflict situations.

Another participant, Steven Monblatt, the executive secretary of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism at the Organization of American States, was formerly the State Department's deputy coordinator for counterterrorism. Monblatt participated in a July 11 roundtable discussion at the University of Chile on the principal challenges facing the Americas in matters of counterterrorism.

Interpol Secretary-General Ronald Noble said in a July 13 statement that "many people still question if the threat of bioterrorism is real, and there can be no doubt that it is. Law enforcement agencies and other affected organizations cannot

simply sit back and wait for an attack to take place, as doing nothing is not an option."

In his July 10 speech at the workshop, Noble said the world's "most noteworthy bioterrorism attack" was the 2001 anthrax attack in the United States. Noble said that "although the attack was limited in its direct harm to people because anthrax is not contagious, and because it was delivered by mail sent to only a handful of individuals, it still caused five deaths and massive disruptions and losses throughout the world." That attack involved the mailing of letters containing anthrax bacteria to several news media offices and the offices of two U.S. senators.

Noble said there is "much evidence that terrorists have a strong interest in the use of biological weapons, and are planning to use them. We must always remind ourselves of this evidence because this helps us maintain our resolve to prevent such potential harm from actually occurring."

The secretary-general also thanked the State Department's Bureau of International Security and Non-Proliferation Office of Chemical and Biological Weapons Threat Reduction for its recent grant of \$554,000 to support Interpol's new project on biocriminalization. Noble said the project's goal is to assess the criminal and administrative laws relating to biological weapons, and to assist countries in drafting, enacting and enforcing such laws.

#### BIOTERRORISM INCIDENT PREPAREDNESS GUIDE RELEASED

The meeting in Santiago also marked the launch of the Interpol Bioterrorism Incident Preparedness and Response Guide. Compiled by experts from Interpol member countries, including the United States, the guide aims to help law enforcement agencies prepare for a bioterrorism incident.

Interpol said the need for awareness and training against potential bioterrorists "cannot be underestimated."

The workshop in Santiago was supported with funding from the Sloan Foundation, a New York-based nonprofit philanthropic institution. The Sloan Foundation also funded two previous counterbioterrorism workshops -- in South Africa in 2005, and in Singapore in March. Two more such workshops are scheduled -- in Russia at the end of 2006, and in Lebanon in 2007.

The State Department says on its web site that compared to other forms of terrorism, bioterror attacks can be "relatively low cost and easily replicated in multiple sites." It adds that in the case of a deliberately induced disease outbreak, governments must decide how to cooperate "to limit the international spread of disease and

develop effective response and recovery mechanisms."

The full texts of Noble's [speech](#) and the [Interpol Bioterrorism Incident Pre-planning and Response Guide](#) (PDF, 74 pages) are available on the Interpol Web site.

[Additional information](#) on bioterrorism, biodefense and health security is available on the State Department Web site.

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