

The review of the book *Living Weapons* by G. D. Koblentz

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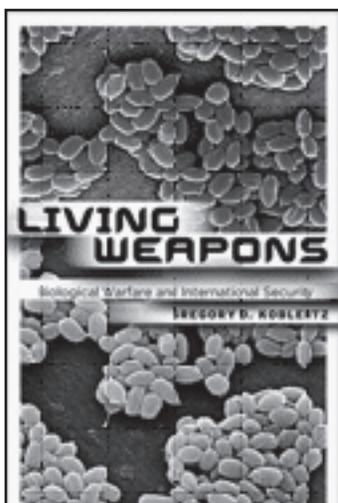
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Thousands of publications about bioterrorism and biological weapons were published from the year 2001. It may seem that this subject should not arouse any more interest, but nonetheless still numerous publications are being published. One of them is the book entitled 'Living Weapons' written

by Gregory D. Koblentz, Deputy Director of the Biological Defence at George Mason University (USA).

The book is divided into five chapters. **First chapter** presents short history and characteristics of biological weapons. The author highlights, that the side, that would use such weapons, will always have a significant advantage over the attacked part, because of the diversity of agents, their striking power and difficulties in organizing the defence. The advantage would increase especially after the unexpected attack. The experiences of Japanese army from II World War caused the biological weapon to have been declared useless at the operational level, but still it is assessed that in the strategic dimension it may have striking power equal to or even higher than a nuclear weapon.

In **chapter two** the author analyses the difficulties in preventing the use of biotechnical achievements in biological weapon production. They are fostered

by the lack of precise ways to differentiate between offensive research programmes and defensive ones as well as difficulties in controlling the production ban, which is favoured by the industrial espionage acts. This chapter depicts the causes and circumstances of passing Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1972. It comprises the verification procedures, on the ground of which the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) was acting to prove the accusations that Iraq under the dictatorship of Hussein reputedly produced the biological weapon.

In the next chapter the author analyses how the level of secrecy of production hinders the control performed by civil authorities. Keeping classified information secure gives the producers considerable independence and comfort of evasion of responsibility, creates the atmosphere of spreading corruption and unlawful sale of technology or materials for aggressively oriented countries and terrorist groups. The author mentions here the examples of former USSR, Russia and Northern Africa, where the production of biological weapon was kept secret years ago.

In **chapter four** it is explained, why there are governments that tend to disregard biological weapon and the intensions to use it by their adversaries. Association of deep secrecy with difficulties in differentiation of defensive and offensive programmes as well as the opacity of intentions of the producers render these programmes hard to assess by intelligence units. Any mistakes may provoke the governments to take various actions including military ones.

The author approaches with sharp criticism the case of mistakes made by American secret services before the Iraqi invasion during the presidency of George W. Bush Jr. under the pretence of the necessity to

destroy Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Americans finally admitted, that it was either a huge mistake of the secret services or, as some people claim, a mystification of Iraqi threat carried out in order to justify the intervention.

Chapter five focuses on the biological threats, which may be created by terroristic groups and countries sponsoring terrorism. It will be a huge challenge to strengthen international law and enhancing the effectiveness of secret services.

At the end the author highlights the fact that there is no one golden mean or method, which would help to eliminate threat created by a biological weapon. Opposing the threat would be possible by improvement of infectious diseases prevention, enhancing the transparency of various researches and biotechnological implementations, improvement of secret services and developing effective executive directives to the convention prohibiting conducting researches, producing and using biological weapons.