

- mustard gas – blisters / burns exposed tissues, fatal if untreated
- nerve agents (such as sarin and tabun) – can cause convulsions, unconsciousness, and death if untreated immediately
- **What is bioterrorism?**

“Bioterrorism is the intentional use of organisms such as viruses and bacteria to harm or kill people.

In many cases the targets of these attacks are civilians, not the military. People or countries may use this method of attack because it is a way of harming their opponents without directly engaging in military combat or other types of overt warfare.

Bioterrorism has been used throughout the centuries. In the 6th Century B.C., the Assyrians poisoned the wells of their enemies with a deadly fungus. In 1346, during the an attack on the Black Sea town of Kaffa, the Tartar army hurled plague-ridden bodies over the walls of the city. In 1767, during the French and Indian War, the English gave blankets laced with smallpox to Native Americans loyal to the French.

According to experts, the biggest bioterror hazards now are anthrax and smallpox, although other possible threats include bubonic plague, botulism and tuberculosis.”

(<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/july-dec02/bio.html>)

- **The smallpox threat**

“Officials are concerned that smallpox could be used as a biological weapon by terrorists who wish to harm the United States. The smallpox virus, which was eradicated worldwide in 1980, is a highly contagious disease that can kill up to 30 percent of individuals infected. Routine smallpox vaccination was stopped in the US in 1972, and the vaccine is only available through the Center for Disease Control (CDC). The virus is currently stored in two World Health Organization repositories, one in Russia and one in Atlanta, GA. However, some believe that countries like Iraq have secret supplies as well.

According to the CDC, a smallpox outbreak could spread rapidly, since few people have an immunity to the virus and many health personnel might fail to recognize its symptoms. Plus, Americans' increased mobility could allow smallpox to more easily spread.”

(<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/july-dec02/bio.html>)

- **Are there weapons of mass destruction?**

“Hans Blix heads UNMOVIC, the U.N. team searching for Iraq's biological, chemical and missile programs. So far, Blix said that Iraq ‘appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance, not even today, of the disarmament that was demanded of it.’

Blix also said that the 12,000-page Iraqi weapons declaration submitted last month seems to be a reprint of old Iraqi reports and does not answer questions about what kinds of weapons of mass destruction the government of Saddam Hussein may have.

Blix did not specifically ask for more time to inspect Iraq but made it clear that his team has only just begun its work.”

(http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan-june03/iraq_report.html)