

DISEC Committee Guide

MUNOG 2023

Topic 1: Measures to combat the excessive use of alternative warfare with special regard to chemical weapons and cluster bombs in Syria and Ukraine.

Statement of the problem

An alternative weapon or method of warfare is one that is unlawful, unethical and/or prohibited by international law. These practices include chemical and biological warfare, cyberattacks, cluster bombs, drone attacks, and other weapons that cause indiscriminate civilian harm. (Kitzen, 2020)

Since biological and chemical weapons are able to inflict long-term impairment on the health of humans, as well as the environment, their application can be injurious. The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention both prohibit the majority of pathogens, toxins or poisons, and chemical agents from being implemented in warfare. Biological weapons, such as anthrax or smallpox spread quickly and easily through the air or contaminated surfaces, bringing widespread illness and death, whereas chemical weapons, such as nerve gas or mustard gas can cause serious burns, respiratory difficulty, or even nerve damage. (*What Are Biological Weapons?* | EEAS, n.d.; *What Is a Chemical Weapon?*, n.d.)

Cluster bombs are another type of illicit warfare that causes severe harm to civilians. These weapons disperse hundreds of smaller bombs across a large area, making them difficult to control and correctly target. Many of these smaller bombs fail to detonate on contact and



can remain undetonated for years, posing a threat to people and impeding post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The use of cluster bombs is prohibited by the Convention on Cluster Munitions. (*Cluster Munitions*, 2016)

Cyberattacks are described as the use of digital technology to disrupt or harm another state's or organization's infrastructure, communication networks, and computer systems. Without the use of conventional weapons, cyberattacks can cause substantial social, economic, and political damage, as well as compromise critical information and personal data, leading to identity theft and espionage. Cyberattacks are an increasing threat for governments' national security, and several countries are spending considerably in cyber defense. (Kim et al., 2012)

Drone assaults are also becoming more of a problem in modern warfare. They are unmanned aerial vehicles that may carry out targeted strikes on enemy objectives while also causing collateral damage and harming civilians. Drones have been used to commit extrajudicial assassinations and to breach foreign countries' sovereignty. (Intern, 2017)

Illicit warfare tactics and weapons pose significant threats to civilian populations and violate international laws and conventions, so the international community must condemn and prohibit the use of biological and chemical warfare, cyberattacks, cluster bombs, drone attacks, and other forms of indiscriminate weaponry.

History, previous actions taken

Following World War II, the deployment of biological and chemical weapons became a growing challenge for the world community. The Geneva Protocol prohibited the use of these weapons in 1925, yet numerous countries continued to develop and stockpile them.



During the Vietnam War, the US military employed an herbicide called Agent Orange, which contained the poisonous chemical dioxin, to defoliate the jungle and deny the enemy cover. Agent Orange use resulted in long-term health issues for both Vietnamese citizens and US soldiers, including cancer, birth deformities, and neurological diseases. (*Geneva Protocol, 1925.; What Is Agent Orange?, n.d.*)

In 1984, the Indian government used a poisonous gas known as methyl isocyanate to kill over 3,000 people in Bhopal, resulting in one of the worst industrial disasters in history. The gas leak from a pesticide factory caused widespread panic and sorrow, and it left a legacy of health difficulties and environmental damage that is still present today. The entire community condemned the use of chemical weapons, and the Chemical Weapons Convention was signed in 1993, prohibiting the manufacture, storage, and use of these weapons. (*Chemical Weapons Convention, n.d.*)

In recent years, the use of cyberattacks has increasingly grown in importance for national security. Stuxnet, a computer worm first identified in 2010, was created to obstruct Iran's nuclear development by damaging the centrifuges that enrich uranium. The revelation of Stuxnet raised concerns about the advent of a new era of cyber warfare because it was widely thought that the US and Israeli security services had developed the malware. Over 200,000 computers were compromised by the WannaCry ransomware outbreak in 2017, which disrupted companies and public services globally. North Korean hackers were blamed for the attack, which brought attention to the need for increased international collaboration and cyber protection measures. (*Stuxnet Explained: The First Known Cyberweapon | CSO Online, n.d.*)



Conflicts like the Gulf War, the Yemeni war, and the Vietnam War and recently the Syrian Civil War and the war in Ukraine all saw the usage of cluster bombs. These weapons are challenging to operate and effectively target because they scatter hundreds of tiny bombs across a large region. Many of these smaller bombs fail to explode upon contact and can stay undetected for years, endangering communities and impeding attempts to rebuild after a battle. In 2008, the manufacturing, storage, and use of cluster munitions were made illegal by the signing of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.



Both the Syrian government and ISIL insurgents have used chemical weapons throughout the civil conflict, which started in 2011. Over 1,400 people were murdered by a chemical assault in the Ghouta neighborhood of Damascus in 2013, which sparked international outrage and even calls for intervention. Although the Syrian government denied responsibility for the assault, it promised to surrender its chemical weapons in 2014 as part of an agreement mediated by Russia and the US. Nevertheless, there have been claims of the continuous use of chemical weapons in Syria, notably a 2018 assault using chlorine gas in the town of Douma. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is responsible for looking into and confirming the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapon arsenal. (Bouckaert, 2013)

The deployment of several illegal warfare techniques by the Russian military has been a defining feature of the continuing conflict between Russia and Ukraine since it started in 2014. The crisis in eastern Ukraine started when Russia annexed Crimean Peninsula in March of 2014. Since then, it has intensified into a complete war. Cluster bombs, drones, cyberattacks, and other unconventional warfare techniques are allegedly being employed by Russian forces and separatist rebels to seize control of Ukrainian land. An array of different international human rights groups, such as Amnesty International and Human

Rights Watch, have recorded the application of cluster bombs by rebels in Ukraine who, supported by Russia.

Additionally, there is evidence of Russian military drone use in Ukraine. Russian drones have also been utilized to conduct targeted attacks against Ukrainian military sites and acquire intelligence. The Russian military has been able to undertake clandestine operations and obtain on-the-spot intelligence thanks to the employment of drones.

A weapon in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has also been cyberattacks. A significant cyberattack in 2017 that targeted the Ukrainian power infrastructure resulted in extensive disruption and the loss of energy for thousands of people. The Russian hacker collective SandWorm, which has been connected to the GRU, a military intelligence organization in Russia, was blamed for the attack. The use of cyberattacks by the Russian military has opened up a new front in the ongoing fight and allowed it to interfere with infrastructure and communications. (*Russia's War on Ukraine*, n.d.)

Important treaties and conventions

The Geneva Protocol of 1925, which forbids the use of poisonous gases and similar chemicals in conflict, also forbade the employment of chemical weapons, as was previously noted. Chemical weapons development, manufacture, stockpiling, and use are all outlawed by the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). One of the most well-regarded disarmament accords in the world, the CWC has been signed by 193 governments. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), which forbids the creation, manufacture, and stockpiling of biological agents and toxins for military uses, also forbids the deployment of biological weapons. A



significant international instrument for avoiding the use of biological weapons, the BTWC has been approved by 183 governments. (*Introduction to Chemical and Biological Weapons - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, n.d.)

Cluster munitions are prohibited from use, manufacturing, and transfer under the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which also mandates that nations aid victims of these weapons and remove impacted areas. 123 nations, including powerful military nations like Germany and the United Kingdom, have joined and 12 of which have signed the CCM. ('States Parties', n.d.)

An advisory text on how to apply international law to cyber operations is the Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare. The handbook places a strong emphasis on the need for cyber warfare to adhere to the same criteria of distinction, proportionality, and necessity as traditional combat. Several nations have started conversations about creating a new international convention on cyber warfare, and the United Nations General Assembly has also acknowledged the need to establish rules and principles for state participation in cyberwarfare. (Schmitt, 2017)

The 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons forbids the use of explosive relics of war and blinding lasers against people, among other weapons, and places restrictions on their usage. (*1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons*, 1980)

These treaties and conventions demonstrate the commitment of the international community to These treaties and conventions show the initiatives of the international community to safeguarding the fundamentals of humanitarian law and fostering peace and security. However, the ability of the international community to uphold these standards and punish those who violate them as well as the desire of governments to uphold their duties determine how successful these instruments will be.

Concise information on the most important countries involved

Russian Federation: Russia stated that its chemical weapons stockpile has been destroyed and is a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Claims that Russia used chemical weapons in Syria and Ukraine have been disputed by Russia. In addition to not having ratified (only as the Soviet Union) the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), Russia also maintains a sizable arsenal of biological agents and poisons. Russia has been implicated in using Cluster Bombs in the Ukraine with the aim of killing civilians. The country was also accused of conducting cyberattacks to sway elections in other nations and engage in espionage activities. (*Biological Weapons Convention Signatories and States-Parties | Arms Control Association*, n.d.; *Chemical Weapons Convention Signatories and States-Parties | Arms Control Association*, n.d.; *Council on Foreign Relations*, n.d.; Wintour & McKernan, 2020)

United States of America: Despite claiming to have destroyed its chemical weapons arsenal, the United States still possesses the ability to develop chemical agents for defense purposes. The US is a signatory to both the CWC and the BTWC. The US is also well-known for employing drone attacks, which have come under fire for killing innocent civilians. (*Biological Weapons Convention Signatories and States-Parties | Arms Control Association*, n.d.; *Chemical Weapons Convention Signatories and States-Parties | Arms Control Association*, n.d.; Intern, 2017)

Syrian Arab Republic: Syria has been charged with deploying sarin gas and chlorine as chemical weapons against its own people. These accusations have been denied by Syria, which has accused the opposition of employing chemical weapons. Although Syria has not signed the CWC, it has expressed its desire to do so and has destroyed a large portion of its chemical weapons inventory under international supervision. (*Chemical Weapons Convention Signatories and States-Parties | Arms Control Association*, n.d.; *Fact Sheets | Arms Control Association*, n.d.)

Ukraine: Ukraine has formally acknowledged the destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile and is a signatory to both the BTWC and the CWC. However, worries about the uses of chemical weapons have been exacerbated by the conflict with Russia in eastern Ukraine. Additionally, Russia has been accused by Ukraine of conducting hackers to spy on Ukraine and damage its infrastructure. (*Biological Weapons Convention Signatories and States-Parties | Arms Control Association, n.d.*; *Chemical Weapons Convention Signatories and States-Parties | Arms Control Association, n.d.*; 'Ukraine Conflict', 2022)

Israel: Israel has ratified neither the BTWC nor the CWC (it did sign the CWC, but it didn't ratify it). (Israel maintains a policy of ambiguity and has not formally acknowledged its nuclear capabilities, despite the fact that it is commonly thought to have nuclear weapons.) Israel has been charged of employing weapons that are illegal under international law, such as cluster bombs. (*Biological Weapons Convention Signatories and States-Parties | Arms Control Association, n.d.*; *Chemical Weapons Convention Signatories and States-Parties | Arms Control Association, n.d.*)

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