
PRE-SCENARIO BRIEFING: ISSUES TO CONSIDER
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SUMMARY

The agenda originally planned for this summit has been changed. Summit discussion will now focus on how to respond to the reports of smallpox cases in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Turkey. The German Chancellor, the Dutch and Swedish Prime Ministers, as well as the other summit participants have agreed to postpone their departures briefly so they may meet together to discuss ways to cope with the crisis. Since smallpox no longer exists in nature, it must be assumed for the present that the discovery of smallpox cases represents a misdiagnosis, an accidental release from a laboratory, or a terrorist attack. Press offices in each country have released statements to inform citizens that their government is mobilizing all resources to respond to the situation and that their leaders will be attending an urgent summit with transatlantic leaders in Washington, DC tomorrow morning.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

These issues present themselves immediately:

1. Determining whether there has been an attack: All military, intelligence, and law enforcement services have been alerted to the possibility of terrorist attacks in Europe. Response is being coordinated with key allies. The UN Security Council will meet at 11:00 a.m. EST to consider the crisis.

2. International health response: The World Health Organization (WHO) has notified members of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) about the reports of smallpox cases in Europe. The GOARN members are health experts and institutions from around the world who have agreed to help respond to international public health crises. The GOARN is now working to assemble a team of experts from a number of countries to respond to the smallpox crisis, but this will take time to organize. The WHO itself is expected to be able to contribute a modest number of its own health experts in response teams to assist in the investigations, but this may also take one or more days to get started.

European Union member states have been notified of the smallpox reports through the EU Rapid Alert System for Biological and Chemical Attacks (RAS-BICHAT). This system allows EU member states to notify other member states of biological or chemical emergencies through a phone and fax protocol. RAS-BICHAT is also intended to rapidly identify and coordinate experts from member states who could comprise an expert response team. That coordinating effort has begun, but will take some time.

3. National and international smallpox vaccine supplies: Only a handful of nations have enough smallpox vaccine for their entire population. Best estimates are that there are only 700 million doses of vaccine in the world today, enough to vaccinate only 10% of the global population.

The WHO has 2.5 million doses of smallpox vaccine stockpiled in Geneva. The WHO Director-General may authorize the release of the stockpile should this become necessary. However, it is not clear how decisions will be made regarding distribution of this vaccine stockpile, and the WHO does not have the logistical capacity to physically transport its vaccine from Geneva.

4. Activating NATO: The North Atlantic Council will meet in Brussels at 9:00 a.m. EST to consider the crisis. NATO's mutual defense clause, "Article V," has been activated only once, after the attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001. NATO was formed to wage a conventional war with the Soviet Union; therefore, NATO's role in the current bioterrorist crisis is not clear.

5. Managing travel and commerce: Due to the limited supplies of vaccine, the leaders at the summit may wish to discuss travel restrictions and border closures as a means of controlling the spread of disease from person to person. The lack of controls at borders shared by European nations that have implemented the Schengen Treaty would make actions to restrict free movement of persons challenging to implement. A slowdown or shutdown of travel or commerce in reaction to this crisis would do serious damage to the \$2.5 trillion transatlantic economy.

6. Crafting a coordinated message: Public fears are running high in Europe, and anxieties could grow around the globe. The public statement made at the end of this summit will be an important opportunity to communicate expectations and maintain public confidence, which will be critical to the successful management of this crisis in the coming days and weeks.