THE CENTRE FOR
LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

POLICY PROPOSALS

Biosecurity

THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSFORM THE UK'S RESILIENCE TO EXTREME RISKS

September 2022

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THE CENTRE FOR LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

Transform UK and global resilience to the full range of biological threats

Commit to funding the programmes and activities needed to build resilience to biological threats

- **Commit to funding and delivering on the 2022 Biosecurity Strategy Refresh**, including the production of a **detailed roadmap for implementation** within the first 100 days of a new government.

- **Establish the UK as a global leader in technological innovation** (and build on the aspirations laid out in the 100 Days Mission) by **directing R&D funds to explore technologies with the potential to mitigate biological risks**, and accelerate those which demonstrate promise.

Improve the government's ability to coordinate its response to infectious disease outbreaks and future biological events

- **Task the Cabinet Office National Security Secretariat team with producing a matrix to identify:**
  - **HMG team(s) responsible for implementing each objective in the biosecurity strategy refresh** and a timeline on which this will be evaluated.
  - **HMG team(s) responsible for the (i) prevention, (ii) detection and (iii) response to large-scale/high impact biological threats** that are (i) natural, (ii) accidental or (iii) deliberate in nature.

- **Task Cabinet Office with convening a permanent council with staff from relevant departments** (e.g. UKHSA, APHA, MOD etc.) **whose remit is the prevention of, and preparedness for, future large-scale and high-priority biological threats faced by the UK, regardless of their origin.** This council should serve as an official channel of coordination to ensure that there is regular dialogue between these stakeholders.

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Reduce the likelihood of accidental outbreaks from high containment labs

- **Require the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) team within the Department for Work and Pensions to generate an accessible (anonymised) database for all biosafety incidents that are reported** (e.g. accidental pathogen releases, occupational infections, needlestick injuries, etc.).

- **Require HSE to report the most recent date of its active programme inspections of all facilities working with HG3 and HG4 level pathogens.**

- **Require standardised biosecurity training for personnel working in BSL-3 or 4 labs** under the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act.

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Bolster the UK's national security to deliberate biological threats and strengthen similar efforts at a global level

National

- **Task the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CSS) with coordinating and implementing a biennial biological threat preparedness exercise**, in line with the recommendation from the 2021-2022 House of Lords 'Risk Assessment and Risk Planning' select committee report.
  - This exercise should be analogous to existing Center for Health Security training exercises (e.g. Atlantic Storm or Event 201) or the Nuclear Threat Initiative's Munich Security Conference exercise and cycle to reflect the full spectrum of potential biological threats (naturally occurring pandemics, accidents and deliberate events).
  - The exercise should require attendance from senior officials within relevant HMG teams and other stakeholder institutions.
  - Following completion of this exercise, CSS should produce a report outlining the vulnerabilities identified during the exercise and naming the teams responsible for owning and addressing these vulnerabilities.

- Once adequate tools are available, **implement genetic synthesis screening for all nucleic acid orders**, including those that are imported (e.g. those designed by SecureDNA or the International Biosecurity and Biosafety Initiative for Science).

Global

- **Boost funding and staff for the Biological Weapons Convention.**

- **Push for a dedicated, permanent UN office for responding to biological events**, building on the UN biorisk working group co-chaired by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and World Health Organisation.

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