

(U) Terrorist Chemical and Biological Threats

(U) Documents recovered in Afghanistan in 2002 show that al-Qa'ida had been pursuing a biological warfare capability primarily focused on anthrax for mass-casualty attacks and that the group had crude procedures for making mustard agent and the nerve agents sarin and VX. Terrorist propaganda has included a call for sympathetic experts to develop so-called "weapons of mass destruction," but the propaganda also highlights the simple chemical and biological capabilities that novices can acquire. Efforts by foreign terrorist groups since 2010 have focused on encouraging supporters in Western countries to conduct simple chemical and biological attacks on their own.

- Al-Qa'ida and other terrorist groups continue to circulate information on how to produce simple poisons and toxins at home with legal, easy-to-acquire materials.
- Small amounts of these poisons and toxins could sicken or kill victims, and even attacks that fail to produce casualties could generate mass panic and economic damage.

(U) First responders are best positioned to see initial warning signs of a chemical or biological threat by accurately diagnosing symptoms of exposure or identifying production and weaponization efforts. Situational awareness, knowledge of precursors, and understanding of attack methods can offer increased opportunities to identify, report, and disrupt future terrorist plots involving chemical and biological threats.

