

Preventing CW and BW proliferation:

The Australia Group

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Australia Group [AG] Objectives

- * The AG focus is chemical and biological materials and technology.
- * The AG aim is to stop development of chemical or biological weapons (CBW).
- * In common with the other export control arrangements, aim is to make it harder and more expensive for potential proliferators to obtain the ingredients they need.

AG History

- * Created in 1985 by states concerned that Iraq was diverting legitimate trade in chemicals/equipment to the production of chemical weapons.
- * Now also looks at biological agents.
- * Is now helping states meet their CWC and BWC obligations.
- * Grown from 16 to 41 participants, with many others using the control lists.

Photo: UN workers seal leaking Iraqi 122mm rockets for destruction, which were reportedly filled with the chemical nerve agent Sarin, destroyed by Iraq after the Gulf war.



(AAP Image/AP Photo/UK Ministry of Defence, 1998)

How we work

- * Australia is the permanent Chair.
- * Secretariat in Canberra with support from others.
- * Annual plenary meeting in Paris.
- * Technical, policy, information exchange, developing best practices ...
- * All decisions (including on membership) reached by consensus.

AG Control Lists

- * Core work – effective and practical harmonised control lists
 - * Chemical weapons precursors;
 - * Dual-use chemical manufacturing equipment and related technology;
 - * Biological agents;
 - * Dual-use biological equipment and related technology;
 - * Plant pathogens and Animal pathogens.

On-going work

- * Updating the control lists is on-going task
 - * adding and revising to match advances in technology.
 - * culling and clarifying as dictated by experience.
- * Results all published on the AG website and freely available for all to use.
- * Should not impede the normal trade of materials and equipment used for legitimate purposes.

Photo: Australian CBRN Defence exercise on HMAS Canberra

OP SLIPPER - HMAS CANBERRA



Chemical attack exercise on HMAS CANBERRA

Photography by LSPH Damian Pawlenko

Current Issues

- * AG plenary meetings are supplemented by specialist forums – on technical aspects of the lists and exchange of experience on implementation & enforcement challenges.
- * Some current issues:
 - * emerging threats: Syria (see statement on AG website).
 - * controls on intangible transfers .
 - * technological advances (eg synthetic biology, nanotechnology).
 - * non-state actors / terrorism.

Syria

- * Syria's chemical weapons program and biological activities of concern were a particular focus of the 2012 Plenary
 - * participants agreed on the importance of increased vigilance with regard to dual-use exports to Syria
 - * and to subject exports to Syria to particular scrutiny
 - * non-members are encouraged to be similarly vigilant with regard to dual-use exports to Syria.
- * Ongoing concerns over Syria's CW threats caused the AG to issue a specific media release expressing those concerns on 27 January 2013.

2012 AG Plenary Outcomes

- * Five pathogens were added to the List of Plant Pathogens for Export Control
 - * *Peronosclerospora philippinensis* (*Peronosclerospora sacchari*)
 - * *Sclerophthora rayssiae* var. *Zea*
 - * *Synchytrium endobioticum*; *Tilletia indica*
 - * and *Thecaphora solani*.
- * The List of Biological Agents for Export Control was amended:
 - * to clarify the control on botulinum neurotoxin producing species; and
 - * to clarify the scope of *Staphylococcus aureus* toxin
 - * to clarify the scope of enterohaemorrhagic *Escherichia coli*.
- * Further changes have been recommended by an intersessional meeting of the Implementation Meeting convened in Bonn last December
 - * Strengthening the language on agitators, impellers and blades
 - * Clarifying the scope of the *Clostridium Perfringens* Toxin entry
 - * Strengthening controls on single-use (disposable) bioreactors.

The role of non-members

- * The effectiveness of the AG's control lists derive from their collective application.
- * Proliferators exploit any openings: need to work with all producers and transit points.
- * Also intangible technology and brokering of concern.
- * Encourage all states to apply AG guidelines and adopt the AG control lists.

AG and Trade

- * The Group has proved to be an important instrument in ongoing international efforts to impede the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.
- * At the same time, the Group remains committed to expanding trade in chemical and biological items for peaceful purposes and maintaining active chemical and biotechnological industries.

Shipping containers at the P&O container yard at Sydney's Port, Botany. (AAP Image/Mick Tsikas)



AG Outreach

- * Outreach briefings to over 50 countries each year on results of Plenary.
- * Outreach visits so far in 2012-13: Vietnam, Thailand, Columbia, Pakistan, Malaysia and China.
- * Difficult to meet demand but recognise importance.
- * Looking to other innovative methods of engagement.

Further Information

- * Further information at www.australiagroup.net.
- * includes the Australia Group Guidelines, Common Control Lists and the Australia Group booklet (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Russian, Spanish).
- * Or engage any AG partner: we are keen to help.