

Egypt Biological Chronology

[2007-2003](#) | [2002-1970](#)

Last update: May 2010

*This chronology is no longer being updated.
For current developments, please see the [Egypt Biological Overview](#).*

2007-2003

18-22 August 2008

An Egyptian government representative attends the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Meeting of Experts in Geneva, Switzerland. Egypt, a State Signatory of the Convention, attends the meeting and in line with the meeting rules participates in discussions without the right to take part in the making of decisions.

—*List of Participants BWC/MSP/2008/MX/INF.5*, 22 August 2007, p. 34, www.unog.ch.

20-24 August 2007

Three Egyptian government representatives attend the Biological Weapons Convention Meeting of Experts in Geneva, Switzerland. Egypt, a State Signatory of the Convention, attends the meeting and in line with the meeting rules participates in discussions without the right to take part in the making of decisions.

—*List of Participants BWC/MSP/2007/MX/INF 3*, 24 August 2007, p. 29, www.opbw.org.

21 November 2006

Speaking at the Sixth Review Conference of the Convention on Biological Weapons (BWC) H.E. Ambassador Sameh Shoukry of Egypt, a Signatory State, said that although Egypt had signed the Convention on 10 April 1972 and was committed to the humanitarian and moral objectives of the BWC, Egypt was deeply troubled by certain deficiencies regarding the implementation of the treaty as well as the continuing conditions in the Middle East. He pointed out that Israel not only sits on an arsenal of nuclear weapons, but has consistently refused to sign the Biological Weapons Convention, thereby once again obstructing international efforts towards the elimination of the threat of the proliferation of WMD. He concluded by urging the international community to address this issue in an effective and practical manner so as to achieve this objective universally and in a non-discriminatory manner.

—*Statement of Ambassador Sameh Shoukry Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations, Geneva, Sixth Review Conference of the Convention on Biological Weapons (BWC)*, 21 November 2006, www.unog.ch.

20 November 2006

In the course of responding to questions from the press at the Sixth Review Conference of the Convention on Biological Weapons (BWC) the United States Assistant Secretary for International Security and Nonproliferation, Mr. John C. Rood observes that: "Egypt is another state which sits outside the treaty. I think in the area of universality with only 155 countries party, there is room for significant growth and we do think that an Action Plan

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with significant milestones, actual activities, directed activities to achieve universality, is important. Again, in the Chemical Weapons Convention context, that's been successful in raising the membership of the CWC. We'd like to see that success emulated in the Biological Weapons Convention context." In subsequent reporting on the U.S. State Department's USINFO website Mr. Rood's remarks are characterized in a way that emphasizes the importance of his mention of Egypt. "Rood, at a later press conference, singled out Egypt as another country that stands outside the treaty framework. With 155 members of the BWC, he said, "there is room for significant growth."

— "Remarks to the Press at the Sixth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention: John C. Rood, Assistant Secretary for International Security and Nonproliferation," 20 November 2006, www.state.gov; Jacqui Porth, "Nations Need to Step Up Biological Weapons Treaty Enforcement," USINFO website, 20 November 2006, <http://usinfo.state.gov>.

26-28 April 2006

The Preparatory Committee for the Sixth Review Conference meets in Geneva from 26 to 28 April 2006. A representative of Egypt, a State Signatory of the Convention, attends the meeting and in line with the meeting rules participates in discussions without the right to take part in the making of decisions.

— *Report of the Preparatory Committee to the Review Conference BWC/CONF.VI/PC/2*, 3 May 2006, p. 2, www.opbw.org.

28 January 2005

The United Kingdom releases its third quarterly report on Strategic Export Controls, covering the period 1 July to 30 September 2004. The report notes the issuing of licenses for the export to Egypt of "NBC respirators, components for NBC respirators, NBC clothing, NBC decontamination equipment, [and] civil NBC protection clothing."

— *Strategic Export Controls: Quarterly Report - July to September 2004*, (January 2005), p. 36, www.fco.gov.uk.

19-30 July 2004

As part of the preparations for the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the BWC which is to be held in Geneva in December 2004 a Meeting of Experts is convened in Geneva. Although Egypt has not ratified the treaty, an Egyptian delegation attends the meeting.

— *The CBW Conventions Bulletin*, No. 65 (September 2004), p. 13.

7 June 2004

The United Kingdom releases its annual report on the application of strategic export controls in 2003. The report notes the legitimate export of a variety of restricted items to Egypt; "civil NBC protection clothing, NBC respirators, NBC clothing, [and] NBC filters."

— *United Kingdom Strategic Export Controls, Annual Report 2003* (June 2004), pp. 123, www.fco.gov.uk.

20 December 2003

Ahmad Abu-Zayd, Chairman of Egypt's People's Assembly Arab Affairs Committee, urges Israel and all Mideast countries to follow Libya's example and dismantle their WMD programs.

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— "Egyptian official urges Israel to dismantle nuclear, chemical Weapons," *BBC Monitoring*, 20 December 2003, <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>.

12 December 2003

The *Jerusalem Post* carries a major report on Egypt's military build-up. It notes that Egypt's stocks of chemical and biological weapons, and advanced ballistic missile capability remain a large threat to Israel. The report goes on to say that Egypt's biological arsenal includes advanced strains of toxins, and bacterial and viral agents and that Egypt has varied means of dispersing these weapons, including artillery shells, aerial bombs, and advanced ballistic missile systems.

— Caroline B. Glick, "A grave and gathering threat," *Jerusalem Post*, 12 December 2003, p. 1.

16 October 2003

Speaking in Putrajaya, Malaysia, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher describes impending U.S. moves to apply sanctions on Syria as inappropriate and unjustifiable. The United States is considering sanctions against Syria "for its alleged ties to terrorist groups and purported efforts to obtain nuclear, biological and chemical weapons."

— "Egypt denounces US moves to sanction Syria," *Agence France Presse*, 16 October 2003, <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>.

8 October 2003

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) reports that the Pentagon is selling surplus biological protective suits and laboratory equipment that could be used to manufacture biological weapons on the Internet at bargain prices. Several of these items have been resold to Egypt, the Philippines, and the United Arab Emirates among others.

— "Equipment sold by Pentagon could be used for bioweapons production," *Agence France Presse*, 8 October 2003, <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>.

July 2003

Suspicious white substances, thought to possibly be anthrax, are repeatedly found in U.S. Embassy buildings in Cairo and Alexandria. Buildings were evacuated to allow samples to be taken for testing and for decontamination to take place. It is unclear how the substance entered the building, but suspicions center on the locally provided security forces, who currently guard the external entrances.

— Jamal Shahin, "US Embassy considers stationing Marine guards on the streets of Cairo," FBIS document GMP20030707000224, 3 July 2003, www.fbis.gov.

22 May 2003

Egyptian biologist Dr. Wajdi Abd-al-Fattah Sawahil, professor of micro-genetic engineering in Cairo, claims that Israel uses Palestinian detainees as guinea pigs in BW research and is "producing new types of diseases, viruses, bacteria, and some genetically modified substances that specifically attack body cells contain a Palestinian hereditary substance."

— Jamal al-Majaydah, "Egyptian Scientist: Israel produces viruses that attack Palestinians only," FBIS document GMP20030522000144, 22 May 2003, www.fbis.gov.

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[Back to Top](#)

2002-1970

December 2002

An assessment of WMD in the Middle East notes that too few Middle East experts know that Egypt possesses a biological weapons program or that Egypt is pursuing new unconventional weapons. Prior to the November BWC convention, U.S. Undersecretary of State, John Bolton, commented on several Middle East countries and their WMD programs, but did not address Egypt's WMD programs. The oversight was most likely intentional in deference to Egypt's important role in backing the United States in an anticipated invasion of Iraq.

— Al Venter, "A Circle of WMD in the Middle East," *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst* 1 December 2002, www.janes.com.

19 March 2002

Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee states that Egypt has likely maintained a biological weapons program since the early 1970s.

— Amy Sands, "Deconstructing the Chem-Bio Threat," *Federal News Service*, 19 March 2002.

January 2002

According to Middle East analyst Anthony Cordesman, the United States believes that although Egypt had biological weapons by 1972 and likely retains BW capability, there is no major organized BW production program at this time. However, Cordesman writes that Israeli reports indicate different findings in support of an active program. The Israelis point to comments made by former President Anwar Sadat, who in 1970 stated that Egypt has biological weapons stored in refrigerators ready to use against Israel if need be. The program might include "plague, botulism toxin, encephalitis virus, anthrax, Rift Valley fever and mycotoxicosis." Egypt signed the BWC in 1972 but has not ratified it.

— Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Arab-Israeli Military Balance in 2002: Trends in Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Weapons* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2002), p. 13.

December 2001

A list of "who has what" regarding biological weapons notes that Egypt has "known research and development."

— Tamar A. Mehuron, "Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Air Force Magazine*, Vol. 48, No. 12 (December 2001), p. 11.

November 2001

Jane's Defense Weekly speculates that the U.S. decision not to sign the BWC verification protocol may have been affected by the presence of biological weapons programs in other countries, including Egypt, though the United States has not publicly named Egypt as a BW-ready state.

— Andrew Koch, "USA Rejects BWC Protocol," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 28 November 2001, www.janes.com.

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September 2001

Egypt is thought to have supplies of the causative agents for anthrax, cholera, plague, and botulism. Though it is not clear from the article whether Egypt has weaponized these agents, they can all be delivered as an aerosol. In addition, Egypt has also developed the causative agent for smallpox, which may be delivered via missile (but again, it is not clearly stated whether Egypt has weaponized the agent).

— Jim McBeth, "Toxic Weapons: As Old as the History of War Itself," *The Scotsman*, 26 September 2001, p. 4, <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>.

January 2000

Egypt reportedly has the potential to produce biological weapons.

— Richard Engel, "Egypt: Reaping Peace Dividend," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Vol. 34 (2), 12 January 2000, p. 23.

October 1999

In talks with Egyptian Defense Minister Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen states that the Pentagon would like to see friendly states such as Egypt refurbish passive defenses including gas masks and decontamination units and plan for the consequences of a biological weapons attack.

— Jim Mannion, "Cohen Holds Talks with Egyptian Defense Minister," *Agence France Presse*, 21 October 1999; Richard Engel, "Egypt: Reaping Peace Dividend," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Vol. 34 (2), 12 January 2000, www.janes.com.

April 1998

US officials are criticized for advertising the biological and chemical weapons threat emanating from Middle Eastern countries without adequately mentioning Egypt and Israel. Egypt's chemical and biological weapons programs have "an extensive history." However, Egypt is not suspected of having a chemical or biological weapons arsenal ready for immediate use.

—Dana Priest, "US Goes Easy on Allies in Arms Control Crusade," *Washington Post*, 14 April 1998.

November 1997

According to the Stimson Center, nine nations including Egypt have chemical and biological weapons.

— Barbara Slavin, "Biochemical Weapons: Poor Man's Nukes," *USA Today*, 27 November 1997, p. 17A, <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>.

29 August 1997

In its annual report the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) says: "no evidence exists that Egypt has eliminated its biological warfare ability, which has existed since at least 1972 and served as a spur to the treaty itself."

— Lisa Hoffman and Scripps Howard, "U.S. Accuses 7 of Biological Arms Violations," *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio), 29 August 1997, p. 22A, <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>.

December 1996

At the Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, Egyptian delegate Mounir Zahran states that all Middle East countries, with the exception of Israel, established in 1990 a WMD-free

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zone.

—"Document Notes Support for Intensification of Work on a Verification System," M2 Presswire, 4 December 1996.

September 1996

The Egyptian foreign minister states that "the region must be totally free from all weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivering vehicles."

—"Egypt Stresses Just and Comprehensive Peace," *Xinhua News Agency*, 24 September 1996.

7 August 1996

The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) Annual Report for 1995 states that "the United States believes that Egypt had developed biological warfare agents by 1972. There is no evidence to indicate that Egypt had eliminated this capability and it remains likely that the Egyptian capability to conduct biological warfare continues to exist." [This text repeats the statements of the previous year: see 30 May 1995]

— *Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Annual Report, Section VII: Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control Agreements* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1996), p. 68; Barbara Starr, "Egypt and Syria are BW Capable, Says Agency," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 21 August 1996, p. 15, www.janes.com.

February 1996

In an article providing an overview of Egypt's military capabilities, *Jane's Defence Weekly* says, "There is no evidence that Egypt holds or is developing biological weapons."

— Robert Lowry, "Country Briefing: Military Still Looks to West for Doctrine," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Vol. 25, No. 9, 28 February 1996, p. 22, www.janes.com.

30 May 1995

The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) releases its Annual Report on Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control Agreements for 1994. In the section on compliance with the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) the report states that "the United States believes that Egypt had developed biological warfare agents by 1972. There is no evidence to indicate that Egypt had eliminated this capability and it remains likely that the Egyptian capability to conduct biological warfare continues to exist."

— *Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control Agreements* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1995), p. 15.

February 1995

Commentator and military analyst Danny Leshem, writing in Israel's *Yediot Aharonot*, states that not enough attention is paid to Egypt's biological weapons program and asks "...and who can assure us that Egypt does not continue holding a stockpile of biological warfare materials, whose possession Anwar Sadat declared in 1972, a short time before Egypt signed the treaty banning biological weapons?"

— "Agreement Near on 11 Industrial Parks for the Self-Rule Areas," *Mideast Mirror*, Vol. 9, No. 40, 27 February 1995.

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December 1994

In an article discussing prospects for successful arms-control efforts in the Persian Gulf region is Egypt is mentioned as being one of several Arab states currently possessing some chemical and/or biological weapons capabilities.

— Ronald Mason, "Buying Time to Face New Weapons Arms-Control Efforts in the Gulf May Fall on Stony Ground," *Jane's International Defense Review*, Vol. 27, No. 12, 1 December 1994, p. 33, www.janes.com.

May 1993

During the 1960s, Egypt apparently recruited German scientists for its biological weapons program.

— "Wolfgang Lotz," *The Times of London*, 19 May 1993, <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>.

April 1993

Egypt has a program of "military-applied research" for biological weapons but no known data exists on the creation of biological agents to support offensive military programs. The military BW program began in the 1960s-1970s period, and President Sadat confirmed the storage of biological agents in refrigerating plants.

— "Country Reports: Egypt," *Middle East Defense News*, Vol. 6, No. 13, 5 April 1993.

23 February 1993

In a report produced by the U.S. Congress Egypt is listed as one of three states considered to be "possible" possessors of biological weapons. For the purposes of the report "possible" is defined to mean "[t]hose countries reported by Western officials, generally off the record, as seeking to acquire [biological] weapons or a production capability, or as being suspected of possessing [biological] weapons."

—U.S. Congress, *Countering the Chemical and Biological Weapons Threat in the Post-Soviet World, Report of the Special Inquiry into the Chemical and Biological Threat of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives*, 23 February 1993, p. 12-13.

January 1993

In Moscow, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service releases a report, "A New Challenge after the 'Cold War': Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction." The report includes an account of WMD programs at various stages of development in 16 countries, including Egypt. Addressing the issue of Egyptian BW activities the report states that "the country has a program of military applied research in the sphere of biological weapons, but no data has been obtained on the creation of biological agents in the interests of military offensive programs." The report also expresses some concerns regarding classified research being conducted on at "a U.S. naval military-medical laboratory for the study and development of means of combating particularly dangerous infectious diseases." Finally the report claims that "[t]oxins of a varying nature are being studied and techniques for their production and refinement are being developed at the present time in a national research center."

— *Russian Foreign Intelligence Service Report: Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, FBIS Document JPRS-TND-93-007, 5 March 1993, p. 48. [translation of *Moscow Novyy Vyzov Posle "Kholodnoy Voyny": Rasprostraneniye Oruzhiya Massovogo Unichtozheniya* in Russian, 1993, p. 1-118.]

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30 January 1989

Time magazine reports that "[a]ccording to Pentagon sources" Egypt is one of "at least nine nations developing biological weapons."

—"World notes: Iraq," *Time*, 30 January 1989, www.time.com.

22 June 1972

Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Mamduh Salim states that Egypt's enemies would never use BW because they are aware that Egypt has "adequate means of retaliating without delay."

— Julian Perry Robinson, *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare: Volume II: CB Weapons Today* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 1973), p. 241.

10 April 1972

Egypt signs the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). However, Egypt is concerned that the BWC does not explicitly ban the use of biological weapons and lacks robust verification provisions. Egypt does not ratify the convention.

— "Document Notes Support for Intensification of Work on a Verification System," *M2 Presswire*, 4 December 1996.

17 February 1972

At the Arab Socialist Union National Congress, when asked to comment on Egypt's response to a possible Israeli BW attack, President Anwar Sadat stated: "The only reply to biological warfare is that we too should use biological warfare. I believe that the density of the Israeli population confined in a small area would provide the opportunity to reply with the same weapon if they should begin using it. Briefly, we have the instruments of biological warfare in the refrigerators and we will not use them unless they begin to use them."

— Julian Perry Robinson, *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare: Volume II: CB Weapons Today* (Stockholm, SIPRI, 1973), p. 241.

1972

According to a 1996 U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency report, Egypt began developing biological weapons in 1972. There is no evidence indicating the program has been eliminated. There is no specific mention of whether the weapons have been developed for an offensive or defensive strategic purpose.

— Dana Priest, "U.S. Goes Easy on Allies in Arms Control Crusade," *The Washington Post*, 14 April 1998; Barbara Starr, "Middle East/Africa: Egypt and Syria are BW Capable, Says Agency," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 8, 21 August 1996, p. 15; "Israel Claims that Syria Is Making VX Nerve Gas," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, Vol. 27, No. 18, 7 May 1997, p. 6.

Early 1970s

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat confirms that Egypt has a BW stockpile. No specific agents are mentioned. [Note: Varying reports offer different dates as to when these comments were made by Sadat. Some sources claim that these comments were made in 1970, whereas others list the date to be around 1972.]

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— "Egypt's Biological Weapons Program," Federation of American Scientists website, www.fas.org; Dany Shoham, "Chemical and Biological Weapons in Egypt," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 5, (Spring-Summer 1998), p. 54.

[Back to Top](#)

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