

CBRN Terrorism: Motives and Malefactors

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Abstract

With regards to the risk of CBRN terrorism, one cannot adequately address vulnerabilities or consequence mitigation in the absence of a thorough comprehension of the threat, specifically the identity of perpetrators and their respective motives, capabilities and preferred tactics. A variety of factors converge to make such an analysis an extremely difficult and complex endeavor, although substantial progress has been made in understanding the nature of our potential CBRN terrorist opponents. This progress has come about largely as a result of analysis of historical cases of the pursuit or use of CBRN materials by non-state actors, as well as close study of statements and treatises emerging from the terrorists themselves. Consequently, recent research allows for a preliminary profile of CBRN terrorists that can be used to inform other legs of risk assessment and reduction. The presentation will discuss the strategic, organizational and expressive motives for terrorists to use CBRN weapons, present a historical picture of CBRN terrorism and introduce recent findings and work on this topic. It will also identify basic gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the threat and provide recommendations for future research.