

Seeking weapons of mass terror

Countries where al-Qaida or similar groups might acquire nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or the know-how to build them.

Nuclear weapons or fissionable material:
North Korea, Russia, Pakistan, China.

Nuclear know-how:
North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Russia, Pakistan, China.

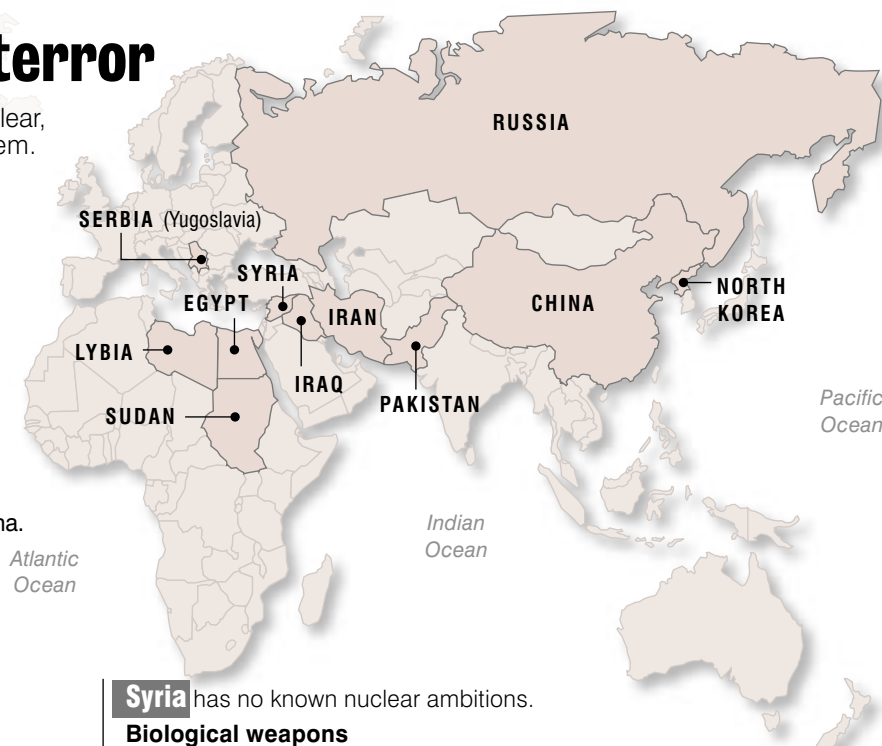
Radioactive material for "dirty bombs":
Any country - including the U.S. - that produces radioactive waste and doesn't secure it properly.

Sources: GlobalSecurity.org; Center for Non-Proliferation Studies

Weaponized smallpox:
North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Russia.

Anthrax:
North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Russia, Syria, Pakistan, Egypt

Chemical weapons:
North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Russia, Syria, Pakistan, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, China.



A shopper's guide

Very roughly ranked by likelihood of selling or providing mass weapons to al-Qaida or similar groups.

North Korea is a shopper's paradise for terrorists or rogue states seeking weapons of mass destruction, the materials or expertise to build them, or the missiles to deliver them.

Nuclear weapons

Might already have two nuclear bombs. U.S. intelligence officials believe the reactivated Yong Byon reactor could produce weapons-grade plutonium by the end of March.

Biological weapons

One of four countries thought to have weaponized smallpox. Also has conducted research into weaponizing anthrax, plague, yellow fever, typhoid, cholera, typhus and botulinum toxin.

Chemical weapons

Possesses thousands of tons of nerve agents sarin, soman, tabun, VX, and adamsite, mustard, hydrogen cyanide, cyanogen chloride and phosgene.

Missiles

Has hundreds of short-range missiles and has tested ballistic missiles believed to be able to reach the western United States.

Iraq is thought still to be trying to develop nuclear weapons, but progress has been impeded by U.N. sanctions and U.N. weapons inspectors. U.S. officials last year estimated Iraq could produce a nuclear weapon within two years, if it could acquire the fissile material with which to build it.

Biological weapons

Thought to have weaponized smallpox. Has weaponized anthrax, botulinum toxin, ricin, aflatoxin and wheat cover smut, and has conducted research on burcelliosis, hemorrhagic conjunctivitis virus, rotavirus, camel pox, gas gangrene toxin and plague.

Chemical weapons

Has manufactured thousands of tons of mustard, sarin, tabun and VX. Claims to have destroyed such weapons stocks but has not documented their destruction. Has employed chemical weapons against Iranian forces and internal dissidents.

Iran may be the next nation to acquire nuclear weapons. A reactor in Bushehr could produce weapons-grade plutonium in about a year, some analysts think.

Biological weapons

Began conducting offensive biological weapons research during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. Believed to have weaponized smallpox. Has conducted research on anthrax, foot and mouth disease, botulinum toxin and mycotoxins.

Chemical weapons

Has manufactured and stockpiled mustard, sarin, hydrogen cyanide, cyanogen chloride and phosgene.

Russia After the United States, Russia is the world's foremost nuclear power, with thousands of warheads, some unaccounted for. Russia and former Soviet republics are also the leading sources of nuclear bomb-making expertise.

Biological and chemical weapons

The former Soviet Union produced hundreds of tons of biological agents and thousands of tons of chemical agents. Officials say these have been destroyed. But Soviet chemical, biological and nuclear scientists remain the principal source of expertise for rogue states.

Syria has no known nuclear ambitions.

Biological weapons

Has conducted research into anthrax, botulinum toxin and ricin, but it is not known whether Syria is producing these biological agents.

Chemical weapons

Has a "mature" chemical weapons program, having produced and stockpiled hundreds of tons of mustard, sarin and VX.

Pakistan has between five and 25 relatively low-yield nuclear weapons, based on a Chinese design. Its nuclear scientists have been approached by Osama bin Laden.

Biological weapons

No known program, but has the biotechnology infrastructure sufficient to develop one.

Chemical weapons

Claims not to have any, but India believes Pakistan has produced blood, blister, choking and nerve agents.

Libya There is no confirmed evidence of Libyan interest in acquiring nuclear weapons.

Biological weapons

Has a small research program, but there is no evidence Libya has produced biological agents.

Chemical weapons

Has manufactured more than 100 metric tons of mustard, sarin, tabun, lewisite and phosgene at its Rabta facility. Employed chemical weapons in Chad in 1987.

Egypt has no known nuclear ambitions.

Biological weapons

Pursuing a program since the early 1970s. Research has been conducted on anthrax, Rift Valley fever, plague, botulinum toxin and encephalitis.

Chemical weapons

The first Arab country to produce, stockpile and use (in the Yemeni civil war) chemical weapons. Possesses tons of mustard, phosgene, sarin and VX.

Sudan has served as a "custodian" for Iraqi chemical agents since 1991. Iraq and Sudan together began producing mustard gas at a facility in Wau in 1995.

Serbia In the wake of the Kosovo war, Osama bin Laden is thought to have made overtures to disgruntled Serbian scientists. Serbia has no nuclear weapons program, but now-closed nuclear power plants produced enough weapons-grade plutonium to build several bombs.

Biological weapons

No known capability.

Chemical weapons

Has four chemical warfare facilities, which have produced hundreds of tons of nerve agents sarin, tabun, soman and VX, as well as mustard gas, phosgene and lewisite.

China has about 2,000 nuclear weapons but no interest in arming extremist groups. It faces Islamic insurgencies in western provinces.

Biological and chemical weapons

Claims to have destroyed three chemical and biological weapons facilities, but U.S. intelligence believes China has retained a "moderate" stockpile of chemical weapons.