

# Houston Area Model United Nations Standard Committee

# DISEC



Co-Chairs | Michael Bolanos & Valeria Diaz  
Topic A: Strengthening International Measures to  
Prevent and to Respond to Disease Warfare and  
Bioterrorism

Houston Area Model United Nations 50  
February 6 & 7, 2025

# Note to Delegates

## Delegates,

Welcome to the 50<sup>th</sup> annual Houston Area Model United Nations. My name is Michael Bolanos, and I am excited to be your chair for the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC). I look forward to meeting you and having meaningful, respectful conversations with all of you!

I am currently a junior at Rice University, double majoring in Integrative Biosciences and Visual Arts on the pre-med track. At Rice, I am secretary of Crochet Club, a Peer Academic Advisor, and the social chair for Rice Swim Club. I am also part of the executive board for HAMUN this year. I have attended HAMUN for 4 years, one of them in this very committee—I really enjoyed the topics discussed and the solutions we came up with when I was in DISEC. I have also staffed for HAMUN for 2 years as a vice chair and crisis chair, and I enjoyed facilitating challenging debates. I am eager to see what this committee has to offer when it comes to creating innovative solutions to ever evolving problems.

The objective of this year's DISEC committee is to address issues relating to global peace and security. Our topics this year will look somewhat different than previous years: 1) Strengthening International Measures to Prevent and Respond to Disease Warfare and Bioterrorism, and 2) Cybersecurity and the Role of Space-based Surveillance Systems. Throughout these topics, I hope to address the issues caused by the growing field of technology, especially relating to its looming threat to national security.

I am excited to see what creative insights and solutions you guys will come up with! I know that you all will create brilliant ideas and compromises. Throughout this process, I hope you are able to strengthen your skills in eloquence and gain insight on the destruction that innovation can bring. Remember to always have fun, and again, I can't wait to meet y'all!

**Michael Bolanos**

Chair of DISEC

bb72@rice.edu



# Note to Delegates

## Delegates,

Howdy! My name is Valeria Diaz, and I am a freshman aerospace engineering major at Texas A&M. Outside of academics, I enjoy taking part in club sports like beach volleyball and tennis. I also enjoy creative arts like pottery and ceramics! I am very excited to be your co-chair for DISEC at HAMUN 50.

Junior year, I joined Model UN because I was unsure of what career to pursue. While I excelled in math and science related courses, I knew I needed an outlet where I could learn and discuss current world issues and events at my own leisure. Model UN definitely proved fruitful as it helped me come out of my shell and learn to have discussion and debate in a collaborative manner. Ultimately, Model UN helped me realize that I want to pursue a career that encourages innovation and requires the efforts of the collective rather than the individual.

I was inclined to chair in DISEC because I am intrigued on how emerging technologies can affect international peace and cooperation. As an aerospace engineering major, I am especially excited to discuss issues relating to Outer Space, but also keen on examining biowarfare this year in committee!

A tip that helped me: you can never be too prepared! I believe anxieties lessen when I am more confident in the material that I have prepared and the information I have learned about a topic. Don't think you need to memorize *everything* to do well. Remember, the most important thing you should do in a committee is have fun! If there is anything you need or require clarification on, please feel free to contact me! I look forward to meeting you all this coming February.

Best of luck!

**Valeria Diaz**

Co-Chair of DISEC

valeriadiaz@tamu.edu







# Disarmament and International Security Co-Chairs | Michael Bolanos & Valeria Diaz Houston Area Model United Nations 50 February 6 - 7, 2024

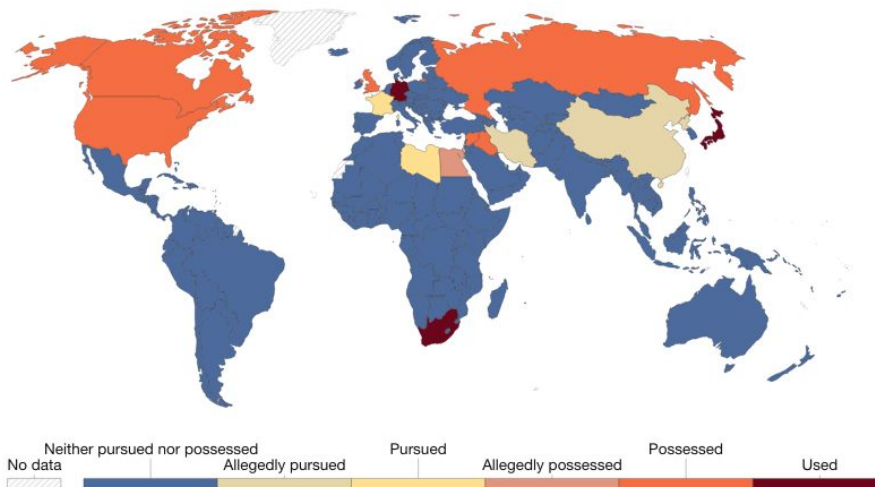
**"The threat of bioterrorism is real, and the consequences of an attack could be devastating. We must remain vigilant in our preparedness and ensure that the global community is ready to respond to such threats with swift and coordinated action."**  
— Ban Ki-moon, former United Nations Secretary-General, in a speech on global health security, 2008.

## Introduction

Today, we live in the golden age of innovation, marked by technological and scientific breakthroughs. The field of biology has brought significant promise, not only in healthcare, but in overall wellbeing. However, like all things, progress comes with concerns one being the potential misuse of biological knowledge to create weapons of mass destruction. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the dangers of what a single virus can drastically change the world not only on the health standpoint, but in every aspect of life. How can biology be weaponized and what are we doing to prevent the consequences of biological warfare? This committee will explore bioweapons development and focus on preventative measures for potential future threats.

### Historical biological weapons activity

The closest a country ever got to using biological weapons is recorded.



Data source: OWID based on ACA (2022), NTI (2022), and CNS (2008).

Note: "Allegedly" means one country charged another, but the claims were not confirmed by the country itself or impartial observers.  
OurWorldInData.org/biological-and-chemical-weapons | CC BY



# Disarmament and International Security<sup>5</sup>

Co-Chairs | Michael Bolanos & Valeria Diaz

## Houston Area Model United Nations 50

February 6 - 7, 2024

## What is DISEC?

The first committee of the Model United Nations, The Disarmament and International Security plays a pivotal role in Global Peace, military concerns, and security concerns. Since its inception in 1946, after the end of the second world war, the role of this committee is to foster cooperation between nations to ensure peace and security. As one of the largest committees at the Model United Nations Conference, this committee allows for a rich variety of perspectives and echoes the diverse global community it represents. From The first Topic in 1946, The elimination of Nuclear Weapons and The Control of Atomic Energy, to Cyber Attacks and Cyber Warfare in 2024, the topics of this committee have evolved with the growth of the technological field. It was, and still is, one of the most influential committees in the United Nations.

## History

After the formation of DISEC in 1946, many of the topics revolved around the committee were about chemical weaponry, nuclear disarmament, and Cold War conflicts. In the 1972, the biological weapons convention was formed to prevent the development, production, and stockpiling of biological and toxic weapons. Following the attacks on 9/11 and the 2001 anthrax attacks DISEC began paying more attention to biological weapons especially in the hands of terrorists and rogue states.



### 31 Exposed to Anthrax on Capitol Hill; House Shuts Down; Senate Offices Close

U.S. Seeks to Boost Security, Soothe Public

By JOHN LAMARCA and SUSAN SCHUMER  
Washington Post Staff Writers

Confronted by a mounting anthrax scare in Washington and New York, the federal government yesterday took steps to stop the spread of bioterrorism, increase homeland security and reassure a rattled public.

The Bush administration asked Congress for \$1.5 billion to stockpile emergency medicine, including 300 million doses of smallpox vaccine, enough to inoculate every American against a potential terrorist weapon considered even more lethal than anthrax. The money would also expand the capacity of health laboratories to deal with anthrax and pay for hiring hundreds of food inspectors to guard against tainted meat and poultry.

The Federal Aviation Administration announced that it will require criminal background checks on all



Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle, right, and Minority Leader Trent Lott hold a news conference at the Capitol.

Investigators See Tie in Letters in Fla., NBC and Daschle Cases

By JOHN LAMARCA and SUSAN SCHUMER  
Washington Post Staff Writers

The House suspended work and three Senate office buildings were closed yesterday as congressional leaders announced that 26 Senate staffers and five police officers had been exposed to anthrax spores that arrived in the office mail of Senate Majority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.) on Monday.

Almost simultaneously, New York Gov. George E. Pataki (R) added to the sense of national anxiety and confusion when he announced that anthrax microbes had been detected in his Manhattan office. Pataki and his staff began taking the antibiotic Cipro as a precaution.

The disclosures came amid growing evidence of connections between the anthrax sent to Daschle's office and similar episodes involving NBC News in New York and Florida lobbyist publisher American Media Inc. Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta said yesterday that preliminary testing indicates the strain of anthrax that infected workers at the Florida firm, killing one, is almost identical to the strain that arrived in a letter sent to NBC.

FBI officials previously disclosed that the letters sent to Daschle's office and NBC here, Trenton, N.J., postmarks, were written in similar block letters and contained similar references to Allah, as well as warnings that anthrax was enclosed.

Seeking to calm public fears, officials emphasized yesterday that the anthrax sent to Daschle's office is a common strain that responds readily to antibiotics. But they also reiterated suspicions, first outlined on Tuesday, that the anthrax powder may have been produced in a so-called "dirty" lab.

"There's been some attempt to collect it, perhaps refine it, and per-

## History Expanded

The use of weaponry and military intervention can be traced back to early times in history, used for empires to secure their dominance. Empires such as the Roman, Persian, and Chinese empires expanded their domain through military conquest to contain uprisings and maintain political alliances driven for control, resources, and power consolidation. Later on in history in the medieval era, conflicts and use of military intervention were caused by feudal conflicts and religious wars. The Crusades is one prominent example in history where European powers invaded the Middle East under the guise of religious duty. Fast Forward to the rise of the colonial era, this marked a period of extensive foreign interventions such as European powers that intervened in civilizations in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The Scramble for Africa, where European nations exploited regional conflicts and power struggles to justify their colonization of Africa, and The Boxer Rebellion, where an anti-foreigner uprising led to international intervention by western powers and Japan to protect their economic and territorial interests. The Post-World War Era and the Cold War led to a shift in military interventions. The creation of The United Nations and the establishment of international law introduced new norms regarding state sovereignty and human rights. These interventions were justified as protecting geopolitical interests, but they often exacerbated conflicts, caused significant casualties, and destabilized regions. In more recent decades, military interventions have continued to evolve, such as in Iraq, where the US led invasion was justified as preventing weapons of mass destruction, promoting democracy. However, the intervention left the country destabilized leading to prolonged conflict.

The history of military invention reveals both its necessity and dangers, but while interventions can save lives and promote stability, they often carry unintended consequences: political instability, economic collapse, and humanitarian crises. Understanding the motives, execution, and effects of these interventions is vital in evaluating their effectiveness and implications in the world today. I highly recommend to research more about these conflicts and interventions during conference and use them as sources for future solutions.

**THE FOUR PILLARS OF THE AGENDA**

**SECURING OUR COMMON FUTURE**

**DISARMAMENT TO SAVE HUMANITY**

**DISARMAMENT THAT SAVES LIVES**

**DISARMAMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS**

**STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS FOR DISARMAMENT**

Advances in science and technology continue to revolutionize human life. That's why we must remain vigilant in our understanding of new and emerging weapon technologies that could imperil the security of future generations.

**Opportunities and dangers posed by emerging weapon technologies**

New weapon technologies pose possible challenges to existing legal, humanitarian and ethical norms, non-proliferation, international stability, and peace and security. In the face of the growing automation of weaponry, new measures are necessary to ensure humans always maintain control over the use of force.

Considering the potential dangers posed by the weaponization of artificial intelligence and autonomous systems, scientists and scholars should keep in mind that technology should be used for peaceful purposes.

**Encouraging Responsible Innovation**

States should not conduct or knowingly support cyberactivity that intentionally damages or impairs the use and operation of critical infrastructure, and should not knowingly allow their territory to be used for both intentional and international wrongful acts using such technology.

We need to foster a culture of accountability and adherence to norms, rules and principles for responsible behaviour in cyberspace. It is very important that we take greater steps to encourage responsible innovation by industry, engineers and scientists.

**Important actions for Disarmament for Future Generations**

Encouraging responsible innovation and application of new technologies

Ensuring peace and stability in cyberspace

Raising awareness of the implications of emerging weapon technologies

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

# Topic Overview: Strengthening International Measures to Prevent and Respond to Disease Warfare and Bioterrorism

Bioterrorism is defined as the intentional release of biological agents to cause harm to humans, animals, or crops. Throughout history, disease has been weaponized—whether through sending diseased animals to enemy territories or through the contamination of food supplies. Although these tactics have evolved and changed throughout history, the motives remained unchanged: to gain power, control, or personal gain. The advancements in technology in the field of genetic engineering comes with the looming threat of mass destruction. With the creation of CRISPR, the creation of diseases and other biological weapons poses new risks in creating more efficient and dangerous biological weapons. Scientists may use these tools for the realm of increasing knowledge in science, but how do we see the line between knowledge and destruction. In the past the UN has passed resolutions to combat the misuse of biological tampering including the UN Council Resolution 1540 which requires the nations to adopt a legislation to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Challenges still persist in monitoring and compliance with these policies, fueling the need for further dialogue and action on this topic.

<https://disarmament.unoda.org/biological-weapons/>

## Key Provisions of the Convention

Article	Provision
Article I	Undertaking never under any circumstances to develop, produce, stockpile, acquire or retain biological weapons.
Article II	Undertaking to destroy biological weapons or divert them to peaceful purposes.
Article III	Undertaking not to transfer, or in any way assist, encourage or induce anyone to manufacture or otherwise acquire biological weapons.
Article IV	Requirement to take any national measures necessary to prohibit and prevent the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition or retention of biological weapons within a State's territory, under its jurisdiction, or under its control.
Article V	Undertaking to consult bilaterally and multilaterally and cooperate in solving any problems which may arise in relation to the objective, or in the application, of the BWC.
Article VI	Right to request the United Nations Security Council to investigate alleged breaches of the BWC, and undertaking to cooperate in carrying out any investigation initiated by the Security Council.
Article VII	Undertaking to assist any State Party exposed to danger as a result of a violation of the BWC.
Article X	Undertaking to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and information for peaceful purposes.





## Case Study: The 2001 Anthrax Attacks in the United States

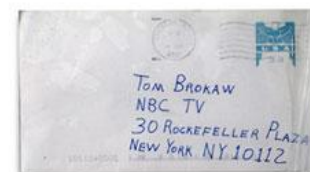
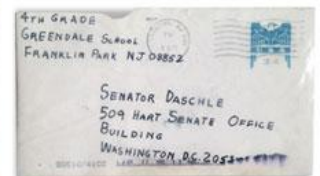
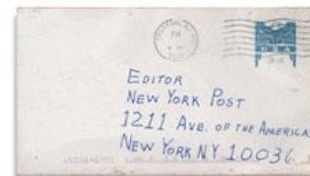
In 2001, the anthrax attacks, known as "Amerithrax," marked one of the most significant bioterrorism events in U.S. history. These attacks occurred shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks, exacerbating national fears and exposing vulnerabilities in public health and security systems. On September 18, letters containing anthrax spores were mailed to several media outlets, including NBC News and the New York Post in New York City. Some letters included menacing messages alongside powdered anthrax spores, which were easily dispersed into the air, increasing the risk of exposure.

In October, the attacks escalated when anthrax-laden letters were sent to the offices of U.S. Senators Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy. This resulted in several individuals, including postal workers and staff in mail-sorting facilities, developing symptoms of anthrax infection. By November, five people had died, and 17 others were infected. The victims ranged from postal workers to media personnel and individuals who unknowingly came into contact with the contaminated mail. The attacks highlighted the ease with which biological agents could be weaponized and underscored the vulnerabilities in mail-handling infrastructure.

The attacks had profound impacts on public health and security. They led to strengthened biosecurity measures, including stricter oversight of individuals with access to hazardous biological agents. Public awareness of bioterrorism surged, emphasizing the importance of clear communication among health authorities, government agencies, and media outlets during crises. Additionally, the incident highlighted the dual-use dilemma of biological research, as technologies intended for peaceful applications could be weaponized if misused. These events served as a wake-up call, prompting significant advancements in bioterrorism preparedness and response.



For information leading to the arrest and conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the mailing of letters containing anthrax to the New York Post, Tom Brokaw at NBC, Senator Tom Daschle and Senator Patrick Leahy:



The mailings took place in the Trenton, NJ, area on or about Sept. 18 and Oct. 9, 2001. Anyone having information, please contact America's Most Wanted at 1-800-CRIME TV or [www.amw.com](http://www.amw.com).

All information will be held in strict confidence. Reward payment will be made in accordance with the conditions of Postal Service Reward Notice 296, dated February 2000.



## Questions for Delegates

Past resolutions have been passed regarding the topic of bioterrorism including the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, prohibiting the development, production, and stockpiling of biological weapons. This treaty prohibits parties from developing or acquiring microbial or other biological toxins for hostile purposes. One of the limitations of this treaty is the verification of this prohibition to ensure compliance. This bring up a few questions that delegates should consider.

How can international standards for bioweapon research, production, and development be monitored and how should this be enforced uniformly throughout nations?

What steps can be taken to ensure compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention and how can the UN hold the violators accountable?

Delegates must learn how to come up with solutions to both allow for the research of biological specimens but prevent the proliferation of altering specimens to become bioweapons. Consider the role of modern biotechnology in both educational based research and the development of weapons for malice. Delegates must also consider practical ways to build global resilience against biological attacks if these weapons are made.



# Copyright Notice

The contents of this document and any supplementary material are the sole intellectual property of Houston Area Model United Nations.

It may not be reproduced, republished, or used without the express written permission of Houston Area Model United Nations. Please email [staff@houstonareamun.org](mailto:staff@houstonareamun.org) with any questions.

