ANIL AGGRAWAL'S
Internet Journal of
Forensic Medicine and Toxicology
The world's first online journal devoted entirely to forensic medicine and toxicology · Published 1 January and 1 July

VOL. 8, NO. 1
Downloaded from www.anilaggrawal.com · ISSN 0972-8074 (Online) · https://www.anilaggrawal.com/ij/vol_008_no_001/reviews/pb/page001.html

Book Reviews: Popular Books Section



...HIGHLY RECOMMENDED FOR ANYONE SEEKING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT NUCLEAR, BIOLOGICAL, AND CHEMICAL ATTACKS ...This is a must have book for any one interested in terrorist activities. For those of us in the forensic sciences, it is any excellent resource for researching and investigating terrorist related crimes. I would highly recommend this book for anyone seeking knowledge about Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical attacks...

America's Achilles' Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack (BCSIA Studies in International Security) *by* Richard A. Falkenrath, Robert D. Newman, Bradley A. Thayer, paperback, 6" x 9"

The MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138, USA: 354 Pages: Publication Date: June 26, 1998 (Fourth printing 2001): ISBN-10: 0262561182. ISBN-13: 978-0262561181: Price $30.00/£19.95

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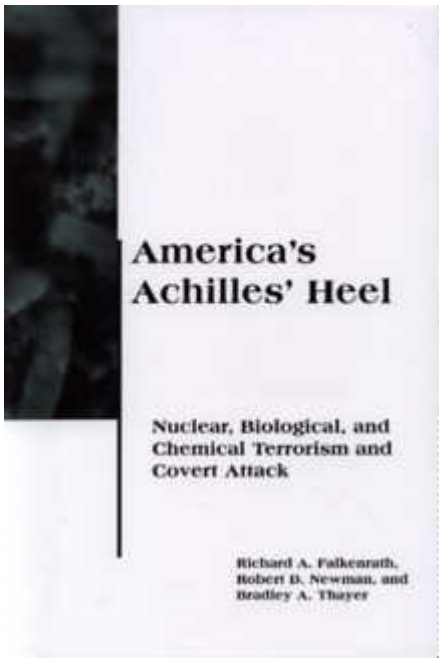

America's Achilles' Heel is a book written by Richard A. Falkenrath, Robert D. Newman, and Bradley A.Thayer. In the preface we find that the authors feel that the possibility of covert attack with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons upon the United States is a real and increasingly menacing problem. The introduction shows these three types of weapons share three common characteristics: very high casualties, portability, and accessibility. The introduction closes with an overview of the book. This book has short reports within it that the authors term as boxes. The first box just before the first chapter explains the Aum Shinrikyo, a terrorist group in Japan, that was responsible for the Tokyo subway bombings in 1995. From this beginning the authors write a book that takes the reader into the planning, development, and detonation of NBC weapons and the reasoning behind their use.

Chapter one defines state and non-state actors. It then discusses attempts to acquire NBC weapons by each of the actors. It seems that state actors (nations) want NBC weapons as attractive possessions. They use NBC weapons to deter neighbors and enemies. Non-state actors have a potential to use NBC weapons but motivational constraints and technological barriers have prevented large scales usage by this group.

Chapter two leads the reader to three conclusions. First, some of the key technical barriers to NBC weapons are disappearing. Second, NBC weapons can be delivered by covert means with little chance of detection. And third, these attacks on an unprotected population could create untold casualties.

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Chapters three and four analyze factors motivating state and non-state actors to carry out covert NBC attacks. Chapter three explains this threat from non-state actors and Chapter four looks at state actors. Chapter four ends with the statement that there is no reason to believe that the threat of unconventional NBC delivery is less serious than the threat of NBC delivery by ballistic missiles.

Chapter five explains ways the authors believe the United States should address and respond the threat of NBC attack. They believe four areas should be addressed when preparing the United States against attack. These areas are: (1) national strategy; planning and coordination; (2)

intelligence; and threat identification; (3) operational preparedness (4) fissile material security; and (5) declaratory policy and law. Chapter five also has a wonderful flow chart showing government agencies involved with terrorism defense and their relationships.

…I believe this book to be a very interesting review of the situation the United States is currently experiencing. With war eminent with Iraq and tensions escalating with North Korea, NBC attacks are becoming more and more likely. A reader in the United States could use this text to broaden their understanding of the risks of attack and results of such attacks…

Chapter six discusses political issues surrounding these matters. Good leadership is needed to put the proper preventive measures in place. Bureaucracy sometimes is hard to overcome and should not be allowed to prevent proper action in preparation.

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-Bryan Chrz

Dr. Bryan Chrz is an independent Medical Examiner for the Workers' Compensation Court of the State of Oklahoma, and consults for Kenyon International Emergency Services. He received numerous certificates of recognition for his activities during the Alfred P. Murrah bombing including a proclamation from the Governor of Oklahoma and a certificate from the U.S. Department of Treasury and U.S. Customs. He was honored by the Oklahoma Dental Association with the Benjamin Franklin Scroll Award for his contributions to the ODA Journal. He is a fellow of the



American Academy of Forensic Sciences. Dr. Chrz is a diplomate and officer of the American Board of Forensic Odontology. He also acts as an expert witness in criminal and civil trials. He is on the Board of Editors of Anil Aggrawal's Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology.

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