VELiM SEMINAR SERIES PRESENTS

Law in the Time of Anthrax

Thursday, 12 March 2009
4-6pm
Medical Foundation Building Auditorium K25
92-94 Parramatta Road

Dr Christian Enemark
Centre for International Security Studies
University of Sydney

Followed by 2 discussants
and a glass of wine in the foyer of the auditorium.
Outline of the Seminar

In 2009 Australia will adopt a new scheme to regulate the possession, handling, transfer and disposal of so-called ‘security-sensitive biological agents’. The scheme is modelled on U.S. ‘select agents’ regulations which were strengthened after the anthrax attacks of late 2001. Laboratory research on pathogenic micro-organisms is a difficult subject of security-oriented attention because, on the one hand, it vitally informs medical and public health responses to infectious disease threats of natural or deliberate origin. On the other hand, biological agents, and the knowledge of what makes them dangerous, can be diverted and used for malign purposes. Drawing on U.S. experiences, this presentation explores some of the dilemmas which arise when a government chooses to ‘securitize’ infectious disease threats using regulatory mechanisms. The challenge for biosecurity regulation, implemented to address concerns about biological weapons use, is to maximise security benefits while minimising interference with legitimate scientific research conducted for therapeutic ends.

Our Presenter

Dr Christian Enemark is Lecturer in the Centre for International Security Studies, University of Sydney. Prior to completing a PhD in international relations at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, he worked as a policy officer in the Attorney General's Department of New South Wales. After joining the University of Sydney in 2007 he became a Visiting Fellow at the ANU John Curtin School of Medical Research, and was appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to serve on the National Consultative Committee on International Security Issues. Since 2008 Christian has served as Director (Sydney) of the National Centre for Biosecurity, a collaboration of ANU and the University of Sydney. He is an Associate Investigator with the ARC Centre of Excellence for Policing and Security, and Chief Investigator for a three-year ARC project on ‘Infectious Disease, Security and Ethics’.