

Will this 'germ game' help us prepare for a terror attack using a bioengineered virus?

In June 2001, a group of government officials and journalists play-acted their way through a “germ game,” a fictional scenario in which the (then obscure) terrorist group called Al Qaeda sets off an outbreak of smallpox in US shopping malls. The exercise, called Dark Winter, proved influential in shaping US “pandemic preparedness” policy, promoting the notion that this country, and others, should stockpile vaccines, provide extra hospital beds, and make emergency plans in the event of a global disease outbreak that might never materialize.

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Much has changed since 2001, though, so on Tuesday, May 15, some of the original participants in Dark Winter returned for a new pandemic exercise, CladeX.

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The group's task: respond to a fictional outbreak.

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Someone has genetically modified a mostly harmless parainfluenza virus to kill. The fictional culprit is A Brighter Dawn, a shadowy group promoting the philosophy that fewer people—a lot fewer—would be a good thing for planet Earth.

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[The U.S needs to] invest more heavily in ultra-fast paper diagnostics and new vaccine manufacturing systems that could provide antidotes in months rather than years. All that is within reach, says [Dark Winter creator Tara] O'Toole. “We have the capacity, technologically and socially, to defend ourselves,” she says. “But we have to get it into our heads that it's a real threat.”

Read full, original post: [It's fiction, but America just got wiped out by a man-made terror germ](#)