

[Home](#) > [Press Center](#) > [Experts](#)

Tucker, Jonathan



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Biography

In Memoriam: Jonathan B. Tucker, Ph.D.

Jonathan B. Tucker, an arms control expert who specialized in chemical and biological weapons, died in Washington, DC. He was 56.

For the past four months, Jonathan managed the FAS Biosecurity Education Project. His colleagues remember him as a gentleman, an extraordinary scholar, and a humble soul.

Like his father Leonard Tucker, Jonathan served his country with distinction. In February 1995, he was a biological weapons inspector in Iraq with the United Nations Special Commission. As a staff member of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Syndrome, he spoke out courageously at a time when public candor was officially discouraged.

Jonathan was born into a family of engineers. Leonard Tucker and his brother Al headed Tucker Concrete Form Company in Malden. Jonathan visited the company offices as a child, and often traveled with his father. In 1967, at the age of 13, he accompanied his father to India, which sparked Jonathan's life-long interest in international affairs.

Jonathan studied at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. Then he followed in his father's footsteps by attending Yale University and graduated *cum laude* with a BS in biology.

Jonathan was an editor at *High Technology* and *Scientific American* where he covered military technologies, biotechnology, and biomedical research. He combined the highest standards of science with the best traditions of journalism.

After several years in science journalism and, seeking new challenges, Jonathan decided to go back to school for a Ph.D. in political science (with a concentration in defense and arms control studies) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He

also was a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the American Academy in Berlin, and a Fulbright Senior Scholar at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

After finishing his studies, Jonathan worked for the U.S. government as a AAAS Fellow at the United States Department of State, an arms control specialist and international-security analyst at the congressional Office of Technology Assessment, and a specialist in chemical and biological arms control at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). From 1993 to 1995, while at ACDA, Jonathan served on the U.S. delegation to the Preparatory Commission for the Chemical Weapons Convention in The Hague

In March 1996, Jonathan joined the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) of the Monterey Institute of International Studies in Monterey, CA. He worked there for nearly 15 years, first as the founding director of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Program and then, in 2000, as a Senior Fellow in the CNS Washington office where he specialized in biological and chemical weapons issues.

From May to December 2008, he was a professional staff member for the bipartisan Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism.

A prolific writer, Jonathan authored and edited four books that showed tremendously powerful scholarship and beautifully crafted prose, most recently *War of Nerves: Chemical Warfare from World War I to Al Qaeda* (Pantheon, 2006). Other titles included *Scourge: The Once and Future Threat of Smallpox* (Grove/Atlantic, 2001); and, as editor, *Toxic Terror: Assessing the Terrorist Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons* (MIT Press, 2000). *Synthesizing Security: Reaping the Benefits of Emerging Biological and Chemical Technologies While Preventing Malicious Misuse* is forthcoming in 2012 by MIT Press.

The Washington Post named Jonathan's book *Scourge* one of the best books of the year. And in a *New York Times* review of *War of Nerves*, a history of chemical warfare and efforts to abolish it, Jonathan was described as a gifted writer who "makes military science readable and wants a world secure from such repellent weapons."

At the time of his death, Jonathan was waiting on a security clearance to serve in the Department of Homeland Security. Family, friends, and colleagues will dearly miss him. He is survived by his mother Deborah and sister Anne.

In Remembrance:

2011 August 3: [Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists](#)

2011 August 2: [Washington Post](#)

2011 August 2: [The Ploughshares Fund](#)

2011 August 1: [James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies \(CNS\) of the Monterey Institute of International Studies](#)

Publications

2011 May 2: *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, "[Re-envisioning the Chemical Weapons Convention](#)"

2011 Spring: *The New Atlantis*, "[Could Terrorists Exploit Synthetic Biology](#)"

In the News:

2011 July 7: *Global Security Newswire*, "[BWC Review Conference Could Revive Verification Debate, Chairman Says](#)"

2011 June 19: *Foreign Policy*, "[The Tattered Germ Warfare Treaty](#)"

2011 May 24: *Science*, "[After U.S. Pressure, Smallpox Wins Reprieve Again](#)"

2011 May 18: *National Public Radio* - All Things Considered, "[WHO Looks at Destroying Smallpox Stocks](#)"

2011 May 13: *Nature*, "[WHO to Decide the Fate of Smallpox Stocks](#)"

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