

**Prepared Statement of
The Hon. Thomas H. Kean
Former Governor, State of New Jersey
Former Chair of the National Commission on Terrorist
Attacks Upon the United States
before the
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
Committee on Homeland Security
and Government Affairs
United States Senate
March 28, 2006**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Levin, distinguished members of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, it is an honor to appear before you today. This subcommittee, under both its past and current leadership, has made a profound contribution to the national security of the United States.

Your investigative and oversight work on the question of the safety, secure storage, and interdiction of nuclear materials continues to be a vital part of the nation's non-proliferation efforts. I commend this Committee for its leadership.

Mr. Chairman, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, (better known as the 9/11 Commission) made 41 recommendations when it issued its report in July, 2004.

We think each of those recommendations is important. The ten former Commissioners worked very hard this past year to get those recommendations written into law and implemented into action. We made some useful progress, but a lot of work remains to be done.

The Most Important Recommendation

Of all our recommendations that need attention, *surely the most important* is to prevent terrorists from gaining access to nuclear weapons. These are the weapons Usama bin Laden has promised to get and to use.

We know that he has been working to acquire them for more than a decade, as we document in our report. We know that he has been scammed by con artists, but we know he keeps trying.

Testifying in a Federal courtroom in early 2001, an al-Qaeda member explained his mission: “it’s easy to kill more people with uranium.” We know bin Laden’s intent. We know he is patient. We know he plans carefully.

We do not think that a nuclear attack is the most likely event. Attacks of the kind we saw in Madrid and London mark the more likely pattern. But a nuclear event is possible, and it would have profound and incalculable consequences.

It would put millions of lives at risk. It would devastate our economy and way of life. It must be elevated above all other problems of national security, because it represents the greatest threat to the American people.

The Commission’s report could not be more clear: “preventing the proliferation of these weapons warrants a maximum effort....”

How Are We Doing?

So how are we doing? What progress are we making against the proliferation threat? What progress are we making keeping weapons out of the hands of terrorists?

The Commission believed, as I know Senator Nunn believes, that it is most important to secure nuclear materials at their source. The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, better known as the Nunn-Lugar program, is carrying out important and useful actions to secure nuclear materials at their source, and in some cases to transport materials to more secure locations.

People in government – especially at the Defense, State and Energy Departments – are working hard to implement these programs. I commend them for their important work.

On the policy front there are some positive signs.

- President Bush and President Putin made an agreement in Bratislava last year, and it gave the bureaucracy a push.
- American inspectors now have additional access to weapons storage sites in Russia.
- Liability issues—which had delayed efforts to eliminate plutonium from dismantled weapons—seem to be getting resolved.
- More of the vulnerable nuclear facilities in Russia are receiving security upgrades
- The current Defense Authorization Act includes amendments by Senator Lugar that cut bureaucratic red tape and will speed up the work of the Nunn-Lugar program.

These are good steps. But they are not nearly enough.

What is most striking to us is that the size of the problem still totally dwarfs the policy response:

- The Nunn-Lugar program to secure nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union is 14 years old. About half of the nuclear materials in Russia still have no security upgrades whatsoever.
- At the current rate of effort, it is going to take another 14 long years to complete the job. Is there anybody anywhere who thinks we have 14 years?
- This is unacceptable. Bin Laden and the terrorists will not wait. The challenge is bigger than the former Soviet Union:
 - o Some 40 countries have the essential materials for nuclear weapons.
 - o Well over 100 research reactors around the world have enough highly-enriched uranium present to fashion a nuclear device.

- o Too many of these facilities lack any kind of adequate protection. The terrorists are smart. They will go where the security is weakest.

Our own agencies need to make protecting the nation from a possible WMD attack an absolute priority. We are disappointed to hear, for example, that the FBI is not further along on preventing weapons of mass destruction.

In short, we still do not have a maximum effort against what everybody agrees is the most urgent threat to the American people.

When is an issue a priority?

Everyone knows when an issue is the highest priority. It is a priority when our leaders are talking about it.

- Why isn't the President talking about securing nuclear materials?
- Apart from the superb efforts of this Committee, why isn't the Congress focused? Why aren't there more hearings and greater Member interest?
- What about the media? Why aren't the airwaves filled with commentary if everyone agrees that the crossroads of terrorism and nuclear weapons is the most serious threat to our security?

Next Steps

The President should develop a comprehensive plan to dramatically accelerate the timetable for securing all nuclear weapons-usable material around the world.

He should request the necessary resources to complete this task.

He should publicly make this goal his top national security priority, and ride herd on the bureaucracy to maintain a sense of urgency.

The Congress should provide the resources needed to secure vulnerable materials at the fastest possible rate.

The Congress should work with the President to build public support for this effort.

The President and the Congress need to work together on a bipartisan basis. There is simply no higher priority on the national security agenda.

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