



**BLACK DAWN: A WMD Terrorism Exercise**  
**News Conference**  
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It's not often – surely not often enough – that representatives of the European Council, the Commission, NATO, IAEA and member states come together to find ways to defend against our greatest threat.

In the exercise we conducted yesterday, al Qaeda operatives acquired highly enriched uranium from civilian research reactors, made a crude nuclear device, and then exploded the device near NATO Headquarters. Current and former senior European officials who participated in the exercise were asked to make the kinds of decisions that they would face in real life if this nightmare scenario came true.

Staging an exercise involving a nuclear terrorism event is not a new idea. But most exercises have focused on what to do *after* a catastrophic attack. The purpose of *this* exercise was to develop recommendations for preventing that attack.

Unfortunately, governments generally don't invest in preventing threats until they have first suffered from the threats. But in the case of terrorist threat with nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, we can't afford to wait for a first strike.

Our challenge is to get our governments to take all the aggressive preventive measures they would take after a strike, without first having to endure a strike.

There are several unforgettable lessons that I believe many of the participants took away from *Black Dawn*.

First, the threat of WMD terrorism is real.

A terrorist nuclear attack on U.S. or European interests is consistent with al Qaeda's objectives and its profile. It is well within al Qaeda's operational capabilities to recruit the technical expertise needed to build a crude nuclear device. The hard part is getting the nuclear material – but we do not make it hard enough. There is enough poorly secured nuclear material in the world to make tens of thousands of weapons. Once the material is missing, it is difficult – if not impossible – to detect and interdict.

The most effective, least expensive way to prevent nuclear terrorism is to lock down and secure weapons and fissile materials in every country and in every facility that has them. No terrorist can launch a nuclear attack without weapon-grade material – plutonium or highly enriched uranium.

Second, it could happen here in Europe.

There are numerous targets in Europe that are attractive to al Qaeda and other extremists. The jihadist network in Europe has expanded significantly. Europe is now a key base of operations and recruiting for al Qaeda -- which has cells in virtually every European country.

Even if some terrorists would prefer to strike America, that should offer no comfort to Europe. First, our economies are so tightly intertwined, if nuclear terrorism hits us, it will stagger you. Second, if terrorists obtained nuclear materials in Europe, where some of the most vulnerable nuclear materials happen to be, security and logistical concerns could lead them to select a target here instead of in the United States.

The third impression we should all take away is the most positive and encouraging: We can take concrete steps to significantly reduce the risk of terrorists acquiring nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. The action agenda is clear. The goals are finite. We just have to have the political leadership, focus and will.

Participants yesterday voiced support for specific recommendations for action -- by the European Union, NATO, individual European governments, the United States and Russia -- that can be taken now – before an attack occurs, including as top priorities:

- Launch a “Global Cleanout” of HEU at research facilities worldwide;
- Accelerate efforts to consolidate, secure and eliminate the most dangerous materials, such as HEU and plutonium;
- Accelerate the consolidation of Russia’s nuclear weapons stockpile;
- Expand efforts to employ former weapons scientists and personnel;
- Increase transparency and accelerate destruction of tactical nuclear weapons;
- Drastically increase and accelerate funding for chemical weapons destruction;
- Establish a global partnership to reduce the risk of weapons of mass destruction, most specially -- bioterrorism;
- Engage in biosafety/biosecurity confidence-building measures with Russia;
- Strengthen international nonproliferation regimes and work towards their universal implementation;
- Enhance and expand export controls;
- Build national and international capabilities for detecting and interdicting weapons of mass destruction;
- Establish international mechanisms for information sharing and crisis management;
- Improve counterterrorism measures, specifically by adding all countries to the international passport control database and beginning a regular pattern of anti-terrorism exercises focused on missing material or missing weapons.

Europe has a lead role to play, not only in contributing resources, but also in removing obstacles to implementation, and getting the job done. Time is not on our side. We can no longer take satisfaction with a step in the right direction. A gazelle running from a cheetah is taking steps in the right direction. It's no longer a question of direction; it's a matter of speed. We are not moving as fast as we can or as fast as we must.

I'll close with the question I put to the participants at the end of the exercise: If a nuclear weapon goes off today in Brussels, Moscow, Tokyo, New York, or Paris – what will we wish we had done to prevent it? Why aren't we doing it now?