



Former Senator Sam Nunn
Co-Chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative
Remarks to the Pacific Health Summit
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George, thank you for that warm introduction, and thank you for your dedication to the causes of global health and security. The world is safer, healthier, and more prosperous because of your leadership in the world of business and the world of civic engagement.

Bill, I want to thank you for the relentless energy and effectiveness you bring to helping human beings around the globe. You are a great philanthropist and an inspiration to all of us.

I'm honored to be here for this important conference on preventing the spread of infectious disease.

The foundation I represent, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, is working to reduce the global threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. I view the fight against infectious disease as a security imperative as well as a health imperative.

A health pandemic can kill millions and lead to panic, riots, and economic collapse—all of which can destabilize, cripple or topple governments. But it may be nonsense to say it's a health issue if millions die in an epidemic arising from natural causes, but it's a security issue if millions die in an epidemic triggered by terrorists. The security lies in the effect, not the cause. They're both health issues; they're both security issues.

NTI's Global Health and Security Initiative starts from the belief that bioterrorism will be an equal threat to nuclear terrorism in the years ahead. We believe that the threat posed by biological agents challenges our traditional ways of thinking about prevention, deterrence, nonproliferation and response, and requires that we think anew. Our GHSI team is headed by Terry Taylor.

Whether a disease is naturally occurring or intentionally caused, the essential elements of an effective response are to detect the outbreak, diagnose the disease and take

the right measures to treat it and contain it – immediately. One important factor is in our favor: the critical steps for fighting infectious diseases are also steps needed to protect against bioterrorist attacks. In many cases, we may not know whether an infectious outbreak is deliberate or an act of nature for weeks or months.

We believe that recognition of three fundamental points is essential to significantly increase our security against biological threats:

First, in the biological arena, like the nuclear arena, we are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe. We must develop genuine partnerships among the private sector, governments and academia. Cooperation is essential not just among nations, but among the national governments and local governments, between the public sector and the private sector -- from doctors, to nurses, to hospitals, to pharmaceutical companies, vaccine manufacturers, to those who are on the front lines of fighting disease. At the national level, our health officials and our security officials must develop working relationships and cooperative procedures *before* a health crisis.

Second, we must be able to rapidly deliver technological capability to the frontlines – to those who are combating disease. In the event of a pandemic, millions of lives may depend on how quickly we detect the outbreak, disseminate information to the health care community, and deliver a fast and effective response at the local, state, federal and international levels.

Third, this task can only be accomplished on a global basis. National borders can't defend us against disease. We have no prospects of a missile defense system to shoot down germs. Thailand is not safe if Laos is not. Japan is not safe if Thailand is not. The United States is not safe if Japan is not. And as we've seen lately, Italy, Canada and the Czech Republic aren't safe if the United States is not safe. In the 21st century, especially when confronting biological threats, we cannot defend our country by defending only our country.

NTI's Global Health and Security Initiative is focused on two priority areas for action:

1. Improving the global capacity for enhanced disease surveillance, early detection and response; and
2. Promoting the safe and secure practice of the biomedical sciences.

On the first front, we have been involved in two regional disease surveillance networks in challenging regions of the world -- the Middle East and South-East Asia.

In South East Asia we have just supported an unprecedented six-country exercise to practice the regional response to a human influenza pandemic. We are proud to have partnered with the Rockefeller Foundation who initiated and helped develop MBDS –

namely the Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance Network. You will hear from the partners tomorrow.

We started our work on disease surveillance and response – working together with the organization Search for Common Ground – in an unlikely and difficult spot – the Middle East.

Today, the Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance, or MECIDS, is still a work in progress, but nonetheless a remarkable, groundbreaking initiative. Top public health officials from Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority are working together side-by-side, developing regional strategies and capabilities to detect, control and respond to infectious disease threats. There is important private sector participation as well, with IBM and Becton Dickenson joining forces with us in developing the consortium. The bottom line: we believe that this remarkable cooperation will help the people of the Middle East and beyond recognize that infectious disease poses the same threat to those they love as to those they hate.

On the second front, NTI is fostering an international discussion on strategies to guard against the destructive application of biological research and development while supporting the open and constructive pursuit of valuable science. A highlight includes NTI's support for the creation of the International Council for the Life Sciences, an independent, membership- based organization working with the life sciences community and governments to develop and promote global best practices, standards and training curricula for biosecurity and biosafety.

W.H.O. Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan has observed that: “For the first time in human history, we have a chance to prepare ourselves for a pandemic before it arrives.” This is our call to action and requires innovative ideas, committed partnerships and sustained engagement. Each of you has much to contribute to these important discussions. I look forward to learning from you during this conference.