



Sam Nunn
Co-Chairman, Nuclear Threat Initiative
RAND/State of Georgia
Public Health Preparedness Event
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Thank you for being here today. I'm Sam Nunn, co-chairman of NTI. I'm joined by Mark Smolinski who heads NTI's Global Health and Security Initiative which develops and implements the biological programs of our foundation. The Global Health and Security Initiative is working around the world to prevent, detect and respond to biological threats.

Two summers ago, I was at an Aspen Strategy Group meeting with some of the nation's leading national security experts. At the beginning of a four-day conference, I asserted that given today's world, the fight against infectious diseases around the world must become a key component of America's national security. My assertion generated a great deal of debate and some dissent, but by the end of the conference, the views were virtually unanimous – with participants agreeing that the fight against infectious disease around the globe is a vital component of America's national security.

Today in America, our health experts and our security and intelligence experts barely know each other, and their interest and duties do not normally intersect. That is a longstanding mistake, and, for the sake of our security, we must correct it.

In reality, infectious diseases have been security threats for many years. In the summer of 1918, the so-called Spanish flu – which would eventually kill 50 million people -- hit military bases in the U.S. and troop ships carrying U.S. forces to fight in World War I. The flu killed 43,000 American troops in three months.

During World War I, the U.S. Malaria Control in War Areas (MCWA) program was created to protect U.S. troops from malaria in the southern United States, where some 600 military bases were located. The program later became the Centers for Disease Control, which today does a tremendous job in protecting the health and safety of all Americans and is admired for its research, its investigations and its action in saving lives and responding to health emergencies around the globe.

The world has changed dramatically. We'll never know how many disease outbreaks in the past never became global pandemics because infected people didn't travel. Today, the chance that a virus in one place will make it around the world is exponentially higher than before. Tom Friedman makes a powerful case that the world is flat economically speaking. I would submit that the world is even flatter with regard to infectious diseases.

The chance that you will be exposed tomorrow to a flu virus emerging today in Laos or Nigeria is far greater today than in 1918.

So NTI's focus is security, but our biological effort is much broader than what some would view narrowly as the fight against biological terrorism. Several points to explain why:

- The United States faces an increasing threat from naturally occurring infectious diseases. Illnesses unknown here a few years ago have emerged to kill hundreds of Americans, and old diseases such as measles and tuberculosis have reappeared.
- Whether a disease outbreak occurs naturally, or is intentionally released by terrorists, the response must be similar: disease surveillance, rapid response, strong communications, careful planning, quick decisions, clear responsibilities, strong leadership, and surge capacity that makes maximum use of outside partners. Government alone cannot defend against biological threats without vigorous participation from the private sector, the media and individual citizens.

That's why in partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Woodruff Foundation, NTI's Global Health and Security Initiative sponsored a series of exercises – begun here in Georgia in 2004 – to evaluate the State of Georgia's ability to respond to a biological threat.

The project had three goals: 1. To assess how prepared we are here in Georgia at the local level to respond to an epidemic. 2. To improve preparedness planning and training at the state level and improve relationships among the people who have to cooperate in a crisis. 3. To develop a model for improving preparedness that can be used by others in the U.S. and around the world to strengthen our defenses against a biological threat.

A key feature of the assessment came in the form of tabletop exercises, where participants are given disease scenarios (for example, the spread to Georgia of avian flu) and forced to take action to contain the outbreak, but also to involve law enforcement partners because of the suspicion that this had been intentionally introduced. These exercises vividly show the gap between what we know, and what we must know; between what we can do, and what we must learn to do.

This RAND study has provided assessments and recommendations that are not only being put into practice here in Georgia, but also offer promise for improving health systems elsewhere in the U.S. and around the world. In fact, NTI is talking now with national governments in Southeast Asia about running assessments based on the Georgia model in their countries.

You are about to hear the results from experts from the RAND Corporation and the Georgia Division of Public Health. We at NTI's Global Health Security Initiative were very gratified to learn from Georgia public health officials that lessons learned from the exercises allowed Georgia emergency response officials to mount an effective and

coordinated response to a real-life emergency – Hurricane Katrina – which occurred a month after the exercises were completed and brought tens of thousands of evacuees to our state.

In the fight against infectious disease, we are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe. We must win that race through planning and cooperation among government leaders, health officials and the private sector to identify and quickly contain an epidemic. As these Georgia exercises demonstrate, the cooperation and planning that is essential must start locally and move quickly, in real time, to state, federal and international coordination and communication.

I'd now like to introduce our speakers today.

Ted Turner, NTI and the Global Health and Security Initiative's founder and co-chairman;

Dr. Nicole Lurie, Senior Natural Scientist and Paul O'Neill Alcoa Professor, RAND Corporation, will share some of the details of the exercise and tell us how this project can be used as a model for preparedness around the world;

Dr. Patrick O'Neal, Medical Director for the Office of EMS/Trauma/Emergency Preparedness in the Georgia Division of Public Health, will share some the key lessons learned from the exercise;

Dr. James LeDuc, Influenza Coordinator, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will tell us more about the current threat of avian influenza and how we can be better prepared; and

Mr. Charles Lathram, Vice President, Security and Business Control, BellSouth; will tell us how Bell South is preparing for a potential pandemic.

We are very grateful to the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation and its president, Pete McTier, for their strong support of this project and for all that they do to support charitable, scientific and educational activities in Georgia.