Preventing Catastrophic Terrorism
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I am honored to be here in London with this important group for this important subject. I thank my friend and leader, Vartan Gregorian, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York for cosponsoring this conference. I also thank John Chipman and the International Institute for Strategic Studies for hosting us. Most importantly, I thank Bob Einhorn and Michele Flournoy of CSIS and each of the policy institutes that have been involved in this project and the report being released here today.

I am here because I believe:

1. The gravest danger in the world today is the threat from nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.
2. The likeliest use of these weapons is in terrorist hands.
3. Preventing the spread and use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons should be the central organizing security principle for the 21st century.

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union created a vulnerable supply of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and materials, as well as know-how. The rise of global terrorists created a new demand for these weapons and a new willingness to use them.

The acceleration of scientific discovery and the increased access to new technology – combined with this rising supply and demand – has put us in a perilous new arms race: terrorists are racing to acquire nuclear, biological and chemical weapons -- we ought to be racing to stop them.

The media tells us that in October of 2001, top U.S. government officials received a highly classified intelligence report, warning that terrorists had acquired a 10-kiloton nuclear bomb and planned to smuggle it into New York City, where it could, according to reliable estimates, kill a million people.

This intelligence report was later judged to be false. But it was never judged to be impossible or implausible – either in New York or anywhere else in the world.
This should focus our attention on two fundamental questions:

First, if the report had been accurate, and the bomb had gone off, what would we wish we had done to prevent it?

Second, why aren't we doing that now?

Many people despair and say the job is "mission impossible." The job is an awesome challenge, but it is not impossible. Significantly reducing the risk is both essential and doable. There are clear, specific and cost-effective steps we can take. For example: How difficult is it for terrorists to attack us with a nuclear weapon?

That depends on how difficult we make it. The most effective, least expensive way to prevent nuclear terrorism is to secure nuclear weapons and materials at the source. Acquiring weapons and materials is the hardest step for the terrorists to take, and the easiest step for us to stop.

By contrast, every subsequent step in the process is easier for the terrorists to take, and harder for us to stop. That is why homeland security and the defense against catastrophic terrorism must begin with securing weapons and fissile materials in every country and in every facility that has them.

Even small improvements in security can make a big difference in our future. Let me give you an example. Warren Buffett, who is one of America's most successful investors and who is financially supporting NTI's work, recently wrote me a letter containing some revealing statistics. He notes that:

- "If the chance of a weapon of mass destruction being used in a given year is 10 percent and the same probability persists for 50 years…the chance of getting through the 50 year period without a disaster is .51 percent." [That is one-half of one percent]
- If the chance of a catastrophe can be reduced to one percent each year, there is a 60.5 percent chance of making it through 50 years.
- My math is obviously not as good as Warren Buffett's, but according to my calculations, this means that if we make it ten times harder for terrorists or nations to use a weapon of mass destruction, we can make it 120 times more likely that we will make it through the next fifty years without suffering an attack. Some countries can contribute more than others, but each contributing partner should realize that every ounce of risk reduction has real leverage.

We cannot reduce risks with only a series of national plans – though these are essential. We must develop a global partnership. That's because terrorists determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction will go anywhere in the world to acquire them – and the chain of prevention is only as strong as its weakest link. On the positive side, we have a strong platform to build on.

Much has been done with the United States and Russia working together:

- Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus have been denuclearized; and
- Over 800 missiles, over 800 launchers and over 100 bombers have been destroyed – eliminating more than half of the Soviet's strategic nuclear arsenal.

Other countries have made important contributions as well, including:

- Support for the denuclearization of Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus;
- Environmental restoration of destroyed missile launchers;
- Securing nuclear weapons materials; and
- Science and technology centers giving employment opportunities to former Soviet scientists.

But much work remains to be done. In Russia alone:

- More than 20,000 nuclear warheads still sit in more than 120 separate nuclear weapons storage sites.
- Hundreds of metric tons of bomb-making materials are dispersed through Russia's network of nuclear facilities, which employ nearly one million people.
- Nearly two million rounds of nerve agents are housed in a decaying chemical weapons storage facility in Shchuchye. One artillery shell alone is small enough to fit in a briefcase and has enough lethal doses to kill a hundred thousand people.

And the threat extends well beyond Russia and the former Soviet Union. There are 100 nuclear research reactors and other facilities in 40 countries using highly enriched uranium -- the raw material of nuclear terrorism. Some of it is secured by nothing more than an underpaid guard sitting inside a chain-link fence. We know of at least two dozen circumstances requiring immediate attention.

Project Vinca showed we know how to respond. This project brought together teams from the United States, Russia and Yugoslavia to remove and secure two and a half nuclear bombs worth of vulnerable highly enriched uranium from a poorly protected research reactor in Belgrade. We must accelerate this work now with leadership from Russia and other nations represented in this audience.

A big step to expand the threat reduction partnership occurred last summer when the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States agreed to provide $20 billion over the next 10 years – with half coming from the United States and half from the other countries – to support projects to "prevent terrorists, or those that harbour them, from acquiring or developing nuclear, chemical, radiological and biological weapons; missile, and related materials, equipment and technology."

The goal of this conference is to strengthen and expand this global partnership – a partnership that itself builds on what the U.S. and Russia started in 1991. The four-volume report being released at this conference provides an important foundation for the G8 and other partners. You have made an exhaustive assessment of the world's efforts to reduce the threats from weapons of mass destruction; you have identified the shortfalls in these programs, you have recommended the next set of objectives, and you have proposed ways to overcome the most serious obstacles to these critical security goals.

The report being released today was authored by more than a dozen policy organizations from across three continents to fulfill and expand the promise of the Global Partnership. I have never seen so many nongovernmental organizations from so many countries so united in identifying a world security threat and proposing an imperative agenda. But it is impossible to respond otherwise – for we are facing dangers that threaten all nations and must be prevented by all nations.

Michele Flournoy, one of the project directors, will brief you shortly on the findings and recommendations in the report, but I would like to summarize some of the central points from my reading of the four-volume report.

1. Nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, materials and know-how – wherever they are in the world – all represent a grave danger. We must secure all of it, everywhere, now, to reduce the terrorist threat.
2. Tactical nuclear weapons should be accounted for and secured.
3. Weapons-grade nuclear materials should be secured and then destroyed.
4. Chemical weapons – every one of them – should be secured and then destroyed.
5. Biological weapons facilities of the former Soviet Union should be open and transparent. Former weapons scientists should use their talents in peaceful ways – improving our defense against bioterror and strengthening our defense against contagious disease. I would add as an aside that I believe we have a responsibility and an opportunity to build support for a global fight against infectious diseases as well as bioterrorism.
6. Political momentum for the Global Partnership will depend on the strong, consistent support of national leaders and opinion-makers. That means every country must declare it a national priority to keep weapons of mass destruction out of terrorist hands. Twenty billion dollars must be a floor, not a ceiling, and every country must make concrete financial pledges before the next G8 meeting in June. Russia must expand its capacity to put new funding to good use, must contribute more of its resources and must resolve the legal, tax and access issues that have been barriers to cooperation on threat reduction.
7. Finally, the Global Partnership must be a top priority at the G8 meeting in France this June and in the future. We will hear later today from several members of the G8 Senior Officials Group on the progress that's being made toward that end.

This report has broad support across more than a dozen nations – and can provide the persuasive force to bring together a global partnership of many nations – if we use it wisely.

Let me close with a personal story that reflects my faith in the people in this room, the partnership we have put together, and our prospects for succeeding in launching and sustaining the Global Partnership.

In August of 1991, a few days after the hard-line communist coup failed and Mikhail Gorbachev returned to the Kremlin, I met with him there in his office. I asked him whether he had been in command of the Soviet nuclear forces throughout the coup attempt. He did not answer my question and looked away. That was answer enough for me.

On my return to the U.S., I began working on legislation in the U.S. Congress to help secure the soon-to-be former Soviet Union's nuclear weapons and materials, even though I knew many of my colleagues would oppose this as aid to the Soviet military.

But I also knew the Carnegie Corporation had funded an analysis of this threat, so Senator Richard Lugar and I brought the authors of the study to Washington to persuade small groups of skeptical Senators that action was needed to prevent a national security calamity for the United

States and the world. After overwhelming initial opposition to the idea, the Senate voted 86-8 two months later to approve $400 million to secure these nuclear weapons and materials.

It was the most dramatic short-term turnaround on a major issue I have ever seen in the U.S. Senate. It convinced me of the power of a partnership between policymakers and outside experts who master policy, understand politics and can speak in plain language.

In my view, this consortium of research institutions gathered here today can serve the same intellectual role for the Global Partnership as the work supported by Carnegie served for the passage of the Nunn-Lugar program.

We must work together to set high expectations and build support for what the G8 must accomplish in France this June and beyond. We must use all of our political and persuasive power to see that this job gets done.

The stakes are high. We are well past the time when we can 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 just a question of direction; it's a matter of speed.

Let me close with my original question. If a nuclear weapon goes off in Moscow, Paris, Tokyo, or some other major city, what would we wish we had done to prevent it?

We must do it now -- with this report -- with this conference -- with our efforts to build this Global Partnership.