

**Connecting the Dots
on Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism:
The Clear Danger and the Imperative of a Global Coalition Response**

Report on a Conference Sponsored by
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U.S. Senator Richard Lugar and NTI Co-Chairman Sam Nunn

Senators Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn called for the creation of a Global Coalition Against Catastrophic Terrorism at a conference of Russian and American legislators, officials and experts on nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons of mass destruction (WMD) held in Moscow on May 27. The Coalition would extend the global effort to combat terrorism in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Towers and Pentagon to preventing the quantum leap in destructive potential that would result if such terrorists got access to WMD. The conference, sponsored by the Nuclear Threat Initiative, took place on the tenth anniversary of the historic visit to Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan that launched the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, commonly known as Nunn-Lugar. The Global Coalition Against Catastrophic Terrorism would build on the foundation of the highly successful Nunn-Lugar program in the former Soviet Union, applying its principles globally to situations that pose similar risks of WMD terrorism.

To prevent the most dangerous people from gaining possession of the most dangerous weapons, the Global Coalition Against Catastrophic Terrorism would aim to eliminate “sleeper cells” of unsafeguarded ingredients for catastrophic terrorism – nuclear, biological, or chemical. If terrorists like Osama bin Laden get their hands on WMD, there will be no shield of deterrence or negotiation as there was between Washington and Moscow during the Cold War to prevent their use; terrorists will simply use them. The result – for example, a crude nuclear device detonated in lower Manhattan or downtown Moscow, or the release of smallpox in the U.S. or Russia – would dwarf 9/11 in destructiveness and transform our societies into camps of fear.

Unfortunately, the ingredients of WMD terror are all too readily available. Only a fraction of Russia’s huge store of nuclear bomb materials, enough for up to 80,000 or so devices, has yet been furnished with the latest protections under the Nunn-Lugar program. While Russia’s stocks are the largest, sleeper cells of bomb-making potential exist throughout the world as a result of nuclear weapons programs, as a byproduct of nuclear power projects, or in research reactors. Research reactors in nations from Serbia to Ghana use bomb-sized quantities of highly-enriched uranium as fuel. Pakistan and India continue to build nuclear arsenals aimed at one another but posing a wider global risk if they fall prey to seizure by extremists. The grim bottom line is that the wherewithal for nuclear terrorism exists in score of nations and in hundreds of individual buildings. Once these materials get out, they are extremely difficult to locate and retrieve. And once a terrorist fashions a bomb from them, no vaccine or antibiotic offers protection.

The ingredients of biological and chemical terrorism are also frighteningly available, since they are a widespread and necessary part of industry and scientific practice. There is no worldwide

effort to safeguard them from misuse, to detect attack in time for treatments to work, or to research and deploy better protections and treatments.

In short, “ sleeper cells” of the makings for catastrophic terrorism dot the globe, as do terrorists who would use them. It is time to connect the dots. The objective of the Coalition Against Catastrophic Terrorism is to extend what the U.S.-Russian Nunn-Lugar program has been doing for the past decade to the entire globe, and with global cooperation and partnership.

Conference participants called upon Presidents Bush and Putin to join in gathering international partners in a Global Coalition Against Catastrophic Terrorism.

The Coalition Against Catastrophic Terrorism would be spearheaded by the United States and the Russian Federation. President Putin was the first head of state to join the coalition against al Qaeda, in his much-publicized telephone call to President Bush on September 11 as the World Trade Towers fell. But the coalition against al Qaeda quickly gained the adherence of virtually all governments because all had a profound common interest. Members of the Coalition Against Catastrophic Terrorism would include every nation that has something to safeguard or that can make a contribution to safeguarding it -- including Europe, Japan, China, India, Pakistan, and the many nations that host research reactors that use weapons-grade fuel. All nations, whatever else might divide them, and however much they might differ over policies on the nuclear arsenals possessed by governments, can recognize a clear and profound common interest in unifying to keep WMD away from terrorists. Each member could make a contribution to the Coalition’s activities commensurate with its capabilities and traditions. The Coalition would extend the reach of its activities wherever in the world the means of WMD terror seek harbor.

Nations in the Coalition would cooperate to combat WMD terrorism in all phases –prevention, detection, protection, interdiction, and consequence management.

In the case of nuclear terrorism, examples of Coalition activities discussed at the conference included:

- Establishing common, “world-class” standards for inventory control, safety, and security for weapons and weapons-usable materials – standards of the kind worked out between Russia and the United States in the Nunn-Lugar program.
- Establishing progressively stronger standards of transparency, to demonstrate to others that standards are being met.
- Providing assistance to those who need help meeting the Coalition’s standards.
- Cooperating to provide effective border and export controls regarding nuclear materials.
- Devising cooperative procedures to find and regain control of bombs or fissile materials if they are lost or seized by terrorists. One possibility is a Coalition version of the U.S. Department of Energy’s Nuclear Emergency Search Team (NEST) – a “global NEST.” Another possibility is to agree to facilitate deployment of national NEST teams, in the way that many nations deploy canine search teams to earthquake sites to search for survivors.
- Planning and researching cooperative responses to a nuclear or radiological explosion, such as mapping the contaminated area, addressing mass casualties, administering public health measures like iodine pills and cleaning up contaminated soil.
- Cooperating on forensic radiochemical techniques to find the source of a nuclear incident from its residue.

In the case of bioterrorism, conference participants discussed an equally rich menu of possible actions that the Coalition Against Catastrophic Terrorism could take, including:

- Establishing common, “world-class” techniques for safeguarding biological materials in preparation, handling, and scientific use.
- Developing public health surveillance methods on a global scale to detect an incident of bioterrorism in its early stages. Such methods would also provide important benefits in combating infectious disease and improving global public health.
- Shaping normative standards for the conduct of scientific practice in the area of biotechnology and microbiology, including the possibility of making it a universal crime, punishable under national laws, to make or assist the making of bioweapons.
- Cooperating in research on diagnosis, prophylaxis (e.g., vaccines against bioagents), and treatment (e.g., antibiotics and antivirals).
- Cooperating in developing protective techniques like inhalation masks and filtered ventilation systems.
- Cooperating in developing techniques for decontaminating buildings that have been attacked (as was needed in the Hart Senate Office Building after anthrax-contaminated mail was sent there).
- Cooperating in forensic techniques for identifying the perpetrators of a bioattack (as was needed in the analysis of the anthrax mailings in the United States).

Conference participants emphasized that only by taking urgent, concrete action on a global scale could terrorism be stopped from escalating to catastrophic scale. The Coalition approach we advocate would open a new and more important front in the war on terrorism. It would also extend the principles of the successful Cooperative Threat Reduction or Nunn-Lugar program in a new way – from WMD in the former Soviet Union to WMD worldwide, from a U.S.-funded program to wider international participation, and from a focus on putting the Cold War behind us to focusing on the 21st century’s most riveting security problem.

In the context of U.S.-Russian relations, uniting against catastrophic terrorism as their highest priority would reflect the expressed determination of both President Bush and President Putin to move to a qualitatively new level in their relationship and to focus on the new problems of the 21st century at the same time they continue to deal with other issues such as arms treaties and treaty compliance, NATO, the Balkans, Chechnya, Iran, Iraq, missile defense, Jackson-Vanik, and trade issues. All these issues are important, and on some of them the United States and Russia differ. But the specter of WMD terrorism is more dangerous than any of them and should remind both nations that they have a deep and overriding common interest in combating terrorism. The Coalition concept can provide a new context within which the United States and Russia can pursue U.S. concerns about Russia’s bioweapons program and its nuclear technology exports. Russia’s technical expertise can be turned into a considerable asset in service of the Coalition concept, as befits one of the Coalition’s founding members.

Recalling the launching of the Nunn-Lugar program ten years ago, conference participants agreed to work to build international support for the concept of a Coalition Against Catastrophic Terrorism. Senator Lugar, as the senior Republican on both the Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees of the U.S. Senate, pledged to work with colleagues in the Congress to promote the concept. Senator Nunn pledged the assistance of the non-governmental Nuclear Threat Initiative in developing and promoting the Coalition concept. We are traveling to Norway after leaving Russia to discuss the Coalition concept with European policymakers and experts.