

**CATASTROPHIC TERRORISM:
ARE WE PREPARED?**

An Evening Address by:

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The subject which I have been asked to address this evening is the quality of our nation's preparation for an incident of "Catastrophic Terrorism". This is a difficult subject to talk about anytime, especially after a full day of work. It is obviously a deadly serious and complex subject and it requires thoughtful reflection. Only part of the subject can be discussed in meaningful terms in a short period of time. Even Shakespeare had two or three hours in one of his plays to communicate a theme or an idea. In the few minutes that I have this evening, I am going to focus only on the subject of the organization of the Government to respond to a major terrorist incident - - especially one involving major biological, chemical, or nuclear consequences - - and the kind of political leadership that is required to increase our chances of preventing such a horrible event, or, failing that, to ensure that we react to it in the best way possible.

I am informed that those of you who are here tonight come from a variety of backgrounds. Some of you work for government agencies. Some are business executives or managers. Others of you are military officers. Many of you have experience in other areas. It is a fairly safe bet that to the extent that you think about politics at all, one of the things which irritate you most, is the diffusion - - or even the absence - - of responsibility and accountability among political leaders. If a Navy combatant runs aground or collides with a tanker, the Commanding Officer is usually relieved of command even if he was asleep at the time in his Sea Cabin. If a CEO presides over an 80% decline in revenue, he is soon limited to worrying about how to fill his day from the vantage point of his kitchen at home.

In politics, however, things are too often much different. When a crisis or major mistake occurs, it is common for finger-pointing and blame-shifting to commence immediately. It is always the fault of another branch of government, another agency, another political party, or

another individual. When is the last time that you heard a major American political figure resign because he accepted accountability for a serious failure or blunder of his department or agency? Many failures of leadership, of course, do not come to light at all. Or, they become public only after a crisis occurs or the offending government official has left office and someone else has assumed the watch.

It is in this context that I address the subject of our country's preparation for a catastrophic attack by terrorists. Parenthetically, I should note that I am talking about **international** terrorism, not domestic terrorism of the kind we witnessed in Oklahoma City and which has been so much the subject of attention this week. I should also note that I do not presume to have all or even most of the answers to the issues which I will discuss. It is my purpose to stimulate debate on the issues and more importantly, to stimulate a *plan of action* by Government officials to deal effectively with the horrible possibility of a catastrophic terrorist attack against Americans. It is imperative that we never reach circumstances where finger-pointing and blame-shifting become inevitable.

I submit, however, - - and this is the main theme of my remarks - - that our nation's defenses against a catastrophic terrorist attack lack a Strategic or a comprehensive National Plan - - and that they are poorly organized. I further submit that it is critical that our political leadership be equal to the severity of the threat and the complexity of the challenge, and that until recently, it has not been.

What is the basis of my conclusion? What is the status of our plans to respond to a catastrophic terrorist attack? What is the nature of the threat against which we must be prepared?

Does the Federal Government, including the Armed Forces, have a role to play, or should our response capabilities be placed exclusively in the hands of state and local authorities, including law enforcement and emergency medical, fire, and management agencies?

I bring to this subject more than a passing or an academic interest. In the FY 1989 Defense Authorization Act, Congress assigned major new responsibilities to the Armed Forces in the fight against illegal drug trafficking. In addition to my job as Assistant Secretary, I was given the task of developing and implementing appropriate policies and plans to govern first, the day-to-day counterdrug working relationship of the Armed Forces with the relevant Executive Branch departments and agencies, including law enforcement agencies, and second, the working relationship with each of the individual states and particularly, the National Guard of each state. I controlled a counterdrug budget of \$1.2 Billion, so the Department of Defense had considerable influence in the inter-departmental and inter-agency discussions, but it soon became clear that the most formidable challenge in implementing congressional directives and President Bush's National Drug Control Strategy, was in organizing the various levels of Government effectively. Every department and agency of the Federal Government and each of the states had their own ideas about how to proceed. Many of the same issues are present in the context of the preparations for a catastrophic terrorist attack.

Until the mid 1990s, terrorism was not viewed by the American public as a threat sufficiently serious to our national security as to require decisive action. It was still perceived to be a form of violence that took place in the Middle East, or at least elsewhere. Two events in the early and mid-1990s brought the threat home to our collective consciousness. First, the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York in February 1993. Second, the 1995 bombing of the

Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Those events were accentuated by the 1995 incident in which a Japanese cult group released the nerve agent *sarin* into the Tokyo subway system and by the bombs that destroyed U. S. military barracks in Saudia Arabia and the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The bombing attacks alone inflicted over 6,000 casualties.

By the mid-1990s, American political leaders had been sensitized to the threat. A 1995 White House publication declared that “ Weapons of mass destruction - - nuclear, biological, and chemical . . . pose a major threat to our security” An April, 1996 publication of the Office of the Secretary of Defense declared that “ The end of the Cold War has reduced the threat of global nuclear war, but today, a new threat is arising from the global spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Hostile groups and nations have tried - - or have been able - - to obtain these weapons, the technology, and home grown ability to make them or ballistic missiles that can deliver the massive annihilation, poison, and death of these weapons hundreds of miles away. For rogue nations, these weapons are a ticket to power, stature and confidence” In a November 1997 op-ed article, Bill Cohen, the then Secretary of Defense declared that “Terrorist groups and even religious cults will seek to wield disproportionate power by acquiring and using those weapons that can produce major casualties.” He further noted that the Department of Defense has begun to treat the threat of chemical and biological weapons as a likely and early condition of warfare and that “Most ominous among these threats is the movement of the front line of the chemical and biological battlefield from foreign soil to the American homeland.”¹

In 1998, an independent commission lead by the current Secretary of Defense concluded

¹ Milton Leitenberg, “False Alarm,” Washington Post, August 14, 1999, p. 15

that the threat of an attack involving a weapon of mass destruction has matured so rapidly that the United States could be subjected to such an attack in the near future “with little or no warning.”² In July of 1999, another commission concluded that weapons of mass destruction “pose a grave threat to U.S. citizens”³ Last summer, yet another commission announced its finding that “International terrorism poses an increasingly dangerous and difficult threat to America.”⁴ This commission’s conclusion was underscored by the December 1999 arrests in Jordan and at the U.S./Canadian border of foreign nationals who were allegedly planning to attack crowded millennium celebrations.

The difficulty of responding to the threat is made greater by the fact that it is no longer necessary for an enemy of our nation to deliver a weapon of mass destruction with an aircraft, a missile, or some other large weapons platform. Last August, the Deputy Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies noted that advances in technology could well make the United States more vulnerable to a biological attack than to a nuclear attack. Genetic research to develop new drugs could create the tools to develop a virulent new bug. Even simple devices such as nasal spray could spread a disease as deadly as anthrax.⁵ Three years ago, government officials made a very public demonstration of the fact that a 5-pound bag of anthrax the size of a 5-pound bag of sugar would, if properly disbursed, kill half of the people in Washington, D.C.⁶ At a conference of the National Academy of Sciences in February of this year, distinguished scientists and physicians grimly calculated that the death toll from a terrorist

² Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States: Executive Summary (Washington: GPO 1998)

³ Report from the Commission to Assess the Organization of the Federal Government to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (“Commission on Organization”), July 14, 1999

⁴ Report from the National Commission on Terrorism, p. iv

⁵ “Researcher Suggests \$30 Billion for Bioterrorism Defense,” Washington Post, August 23, 2000, p. 6.

⁶ See, e.g., John J. Hamre, Remarks to the Adjutant Generals Association of the United States, February 3, 1998.

smallpox attack could be in the millions.⁷ In an editorial opinion only two days ago, former Senator Sam Nunn expressed the view that “The likeliest nuclear attack against the United States would come not from a nuclear missile launched by a rogue state, but from a warhead in the belly of a ship or the back of a truck delivered by a group with no return address.”⁸ In support of this opinion, he noted that more than 1,000 tons of highly enriched uranium and 150 tons of plutonium still exist in the Russian nuclear complex (enough to build 60,000 to 80,000 weapons), that the storage sites are poorly secured, that Russian weapons scientists have no steady paychecks, and that Osama bin Laden has said that acquiring weapons of mass destruction is “a religious duty” for his group of terrorists.

There is some good news! For example, there are substantially fewer international terrorist incidents today than in the mid-1980s. Moreover, many of the groups that previously targeted America’s interests, friends, and allies have disappeared. Some countries that once supported or excused terrorism, now condemn it.

Unfortunately, the terrorist threat is also changing in ways that make it more dangerous and more difficult to counter. In the decade of the 1970s and 1980s, for example, most terrorist organizations attempted to calibrate their attacks to produce just enough human suffering to attract attention to their cause, but not so much as to alienate public support. There is little doubt that in recent years, a growing percentage of terrorist attacks have been designed to kill as many people as possible.

The motivation and the organizational structure of today’s terrorists are also changing.

⁷ John Donnelly “Bioterrorism Threat Finds New Urgency,” Boston Globe, February 3, 2001, p.1.

⁸ Sam Nunn, “When Bush Meets Putin,” Washington Post, June 12, 2001, p.A25.

Ideological war, a desire for revenge, and a growing hatred of the United States are trends that can now be detected. Terrorists and their networks are also less affiliated with nation-states. They may in fact, constitute a very small group of individuals. They are more difficult to predict, track and penetrate. And, they rely upon a variety of sources of support. It has been rightly observed that all of this “raises the stakes in getting American counterterrorist policies and practices right.”⁹

The first and highest goal or priority in defending against terrorist attacks is, of course, the *prevention* of any attack. Ideally, weapons of mass destruction and their means of production and delivery should be eliminated. Even if all of the nations of the world agreed to such a course of action, however, it would be impossible to monitor and police all small, independent terrorist groups.

The problem is similar to that which we face in attempting to control the entry of illegal drugs into our country. When I was in the Pentagon, I visited the Port of El Paso, Texas to inspect the work of the Texas National Guard teaming with the Border Patrol and the U. S. Customs Service. The magnitude of the drug interdiction problem was made manifest to me by two hard facts: first, that it took several hours for a National Guardsman and a Customs Agent to search one large truck; second, that 800 vehicles passed through the Port each day. It is also true

⁹ Ibid., p. 6

that on an average day, over one million people enter the United States legally. Thousands more enter illegally.

Thus, government leaders necessarily have to be prepared for “worse case” circumstances, i.e., if prevention of a terrorist attack does not succeed. While the odds of a catastrophic attack taking place may be relatively low, the *consequences* of such an attack would clearly be very great. By definition, a “catastrophic” attack would likely involve ten of thousands of casualties. Our nation cannot afford to take a “business as usual” approach to such a horrible possibility. I submit, however, that that is precisely what the political leadership of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government has been doing.

Successful preparation involves several elements. It requires LEADERSHIP. It requires a comprehensive STRATEGY. It requires effective ORGANIZATION and COORDINATION.

The problem is complicated by overlapping legal jurisdiction, fragmentation of effort, redundancy, an absence of standards, the complexity of the structure of the Federal Government, and by the widely varying resources and expertise of the individual departments and agencies of the Federal Government, the states, and local communities.

A Strategic Plan or National Strategy must, of course, involve much more than just a plan for the Federal Government. The initial and primary domestic response to a catastrophic terrorist incident would almost certainly be made by state and local entities. The nature and extent of Federal involvement will depend upon the circumstances. But, any plan of preparation must be national in scope. There must be an understanding in advance of the roles and missions of the

various departments and agencies of the Federal Government and those of state and local governments. Advantage must also be taken of the vast Federal resources that can be brought to the task, including such things as equipment, research and development, and trained personnel who have relevant skills and experience.

It is easy to imagine the kinds of chaos that could result from a terrorist attack that affected dozens of communities in several states. Local police, hospitals, and other local responders could be quickly overwhelmed. The governors of the states might have opposing views on such matters as whether or not to use the National Guard to quarantine interstate highways, who has priority on badly needed federal resources in the region, etc. Jurisdictional issues, such as what governmental body has overriding authority to take certain actions would arise immediately. Even Constitutional questions, such as the power of the states versus the power of the Federal Government, the extent of the Federal Government's authority to use federal troops, privacy issues, etc., would be likely to need prompt resolution.

Coordination of the efforts of the many Federal agencies that would be involved and coordination between those agencies and the corresponding state and local agencies would prove to be particularly difficult. It would be critically important for everyone involved in the response effort to understand clearly how authority and responsibility was divided, i.e., who was in charge of what at each stage of the response. Officials within several of the departments and agencies of the Federal Government have attempted recently to formulate response plans, but they have received little or no *effective* guidance from the Government's **political** leadership. This has

inevitably resulted in poor integration of effort and substantially reduced effectiveness. I will illustrate some of the existing organizational confusion with examples.

Subsequent to the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, various Presidential Decision Directives or PDDs were issued by the Clinton Administration for the purported purpose of assigning responsibilities among certain of the Federal agencies. The FBI was given “lead agency” responsibility for what is called “crisis management,” which has been defined as predominantly a law enforcement response. The Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA, has been given “lead agency” responsibility for what is called “consequence management, which is to include measures to protect public health and safety, to restore essential government services, and to provide emergency relief to government, businesses and individuals. The Department of Justice has acknowledged, however, that “there is often no clear point in time when resolution of a terrorist incident moves from the crisis to the consequence management stage. Indeed, these phases may occur simultaneously or, in some cases, the consequence management phase may actually precede the identification of a terrorist event.”¹⁰

Similar uncertainty exists in regard to the role of the Department of Defense. Most students of the problem agree that as in the nationwide fight against illegal drug trafficking, DoD should remain in a role of *support* to other Federal agencies. To that end, a program was unveiled in May, 1998 to set up 27 (later increased to 32) specially trained Army National Guard Teams capable of responding to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons attacks in all 50

¹⁰ “Five-Year Interagency Counterterrorism and Technology Crime Plan,” U.S. Department of Justice, _____, 2000 p. 21.

states. The first 10 of these Civil Support Teams were to be certified as ready by April, 2000. I will say more about these teams in a moment.

Having said that the Armed Forces should remain in a role of **support** to other agencies, I should also observe it is not outside the realm of reality to contemplate a situation where the scale of a terrorist attack is so great and the damage to our transportation, communications, medical, governmental systems and other infrastructure so vast, that civilian Federal, state and local agencies are simply overwhelmed. Should the Department of Defense be given “lead agency” responsibility in such circumstances? What should be the role of the Federal troops? Do current legal authorities provide for such a role? What government official can answer these questions?

During the last Administration, responsibility within the White House for matters relating to the preparation for a catastrophic terrorist incident was vested on the staff of the National Security Council in a “Director of Weapons of Mass Destruction Preparedness.” The Director reported to one of four Special Assistants to the President who carries the additional title of “National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counterterrorism.” The National Coordinator reported to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. None of the three political positions required confirmation by the U.S. Senate. You can begin to see some of the organizational difficulties. I believe that the National Security Council is also too small and too ineffective to bring together large and competing bureaucracies and too focused on day-to-day developments and crises to develop and implement long-term strategies. Moreover, it commands no troops and its budget is miniscule in comparison with Cabinet-level departments and major agencies.

In 1998, the organizational obstacles to an effective response to a catastrophic attack were highlighted in an assessment by a private consulting firm. That firm noted that “Interagency coordination is no small task, even among agencies accustomed to participating in the national security community. Bring into the mix agencies with little experience in national security activities, states and territories, and a private sector reluctant to express their own vulnerabilities in a public forum, and the degree of complexity becomes evident”.¹¹ The consulting firm went on to observe that “Since agencies are balancing multiple policy objectives, expressions of presidential policy in a specific area do not always overcome a reluctance by government bureaucracies to spend their own budgets executing someone else’s priorities.”¹² The consulting firm concluded that “A real strategy has not been offered, nor have solutions to bureaucratic obstacles.”¹³

Matters had not improved much by early 1999. The Homeland Defense Working Group of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) issued a report which addressed the issue of the role of the Armed Forces in a plan of response to a terrorist attack. It concluded that if such an incident was threatened or actually took place in *wartime*, the Defense Department would have to take the lead responsibility because only the Armed Forces would have “the managerial and logistical capabilities to mount the all-out defensive effort called for by the enormity”¹⁴ of such a threat. CSIS further concluded that “Inadequate or insufficiently understood legal authorities for a military rolepose significant national security risks,” and that “today DoD is not prepared for this mission.”¹⁵

¹¹ Hicks & Associates, Inc. “Homeland Defense: Threats and Policies in Transition,” July 23, 1998

¹² Id.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ Fred C. Ikle’, “Defending the U.S. Homeland,” CSIS Report, January, 1999.

¹⁵ Id.

While it is true that Federal funding for defending against terrorism has increased in recent years and that various broad organizational and programmatic schemes have been initiated, the funding and new programs have taken place in what has been characterized as “the absence of the critical analysis and rigorous prioritization needed to establish clear and well-defined requirements for these efforts.”¹⁶ The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) has argued that in the absence of such measures, coordination among Federal agencies can’t be ensured.¹⁷

Strategic planning had still not improved by the summer and fall of 1999. In a July 1999 report to Congress, the congressionally mandated, and thus bipartisan Commission to Assess the Organization of the Federal Government to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction declared that the “nation lacks a comprehensive policy and plan to meet the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”¹⁸ This conclusion is of more than passing interest since this particular commission was chaired by John M. Deutch, who served as President Clinton’s Deputy Secretary of Defense (1994-1995) and as his Director of Central Intelligence (1995-1996). On September 15, 1999, yet another bi-partisan commission, this time the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century” concluded that the United States is not prepared to defend itself against terrorist threats at home.¹⁹

¹⁶ First Annual Report of the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities For Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, December 15, 1999, p.3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Report of the Commission on Organization pp.v,9

¹⁹ Steven Lee Myers, “Federal Commissions Predicts Increasing Threat of Terrorism,” New York Times, September 21, 1990

In October, 1999, the Department of Defense finally took some additional organizational steps to deal with this complex challenge. The U. S. Atlantic Command was replaced by a new U. S. Joint Forces Command. Shortly thereafter, a new Joint Task Force for Civil Support was created and charged with providing troops with special skills and equipment to support the FBI, FEMA, and other federal agencies in the event of a terrorist incident in the United States which requires significant consequence management.

So far, so good. But, the Joint Task Force is headed by a junior General Officer, a Reservist, who has a small staff located in Norfolk. The initiative also appears to be based upon a false premise, namely, that a military officer should be in charge of what is, in reality, a high-level, federal/state/local **political leadership**/management challenge. As I noted earlier, a catastrophic terrorist attack would almost certainly affect people in several states and hundreds of communities. Political and managerial pressures and problems created by the competing demands of state and local officials for military resources and expertise would escalate very quickly and necessarily require the immediate intervention of senior federal civilian officials. Unfortunately, under the DoD organizational scheme that was in place until this last January, immediate civilian oversight of this critically important responsibility was not placed in the hands of the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary, any of the four Under Secretaries (two of which were created by the current Administration), or even any of the Assistant Secretaries of Defense. Rather it was assigned to a very junior official who was not a presidential appointee.

The latest broad-based evaluation of our nation's preparation for a catastrophic incident of terrorism was completed some eighteen months ago. In its first of three annual reports to Congress, the bi-partisan Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for

Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, also known as the Gilmore Commission because it is chaired by Governor Gilmore of Virginia, concluded that “valid concern remains that the United States is still not appropriately organized and prepared to counter and respond to the threat of either mass casualty or [chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear] terrorism.”²⁰ Last October, Senator John Kyl of Arizona was interviewed regarding his proposed legislation to bolster new counterterrorist technologies, tighten controls over biological pathogens and crack down on terrorist fundraising. He was quoted as saying that “Everybody talks about trying to do something about terrorism, but little action ever ends up occurring.”²¹

Another interesting development also occurred last October. After fire chiefs and other local government officials complained earlier last year about the Federal Government’s fragmented approach to counterterrorism, then Representative Tillie Fowler of Florida introduced legislation to clear up the confusion. Her bill would have created a high-level White House coordinating council and required the preparation of an annual terrorism preparedness strategy. When it was asked to comment on the bill, the GAO declared that counterterrorist programs “remain fragmented because key interagency management functions are conducted by different departments and agencies.”²² The bill was passed by the House of Representatives last July without a single negative vote. In October, however, and after Clinton Administration officials lobbied against the bill, it failed in the Senate. Representative Fowler was later quoted as saying “It is truly appalling and disappointing that there has been a lack of cooperation...on this. The National Security Council has had two years and hasn’t done the job. The Justice

²⁰ First Annual Report of the Advisory Panel, *Ibid.*, p.3.

²¹ Vernon Loeb, “Senator Presses For Bill to Combat Terrorism,” *Washington Post*, October 3, 2000, p.23.

²² Vernon Loeb, “After Counterterrorism Bill Fails, Nation’s Preparedness is Debated,” *Washington Post*, October 9, 2000, p.21.

Department hasn't done theirs. And I just think that's sad. We've got lives of Americans at stake, and who knows where an attack will take place?"²³

But how about those 32 National Guard Civil Support Teams, the first 10 of which were supposed to be ready to go by April, 2000? Don't ask. The Department of Defense Inspector General recently issued a report in which the IG concluded that after three years and \$143 million, the National Guard has been sidetracked by inadequate guidance and training and by ineffective or potentially unsafe equipment. Thirteen months after the target date, not a single team had received certification or was even fully operational.²⁴

The evidence is essentially undisputed, therefore, that the Federal Government is not effectively prepared for the kinds of action that a threat of this importance requires. I submit that the lack of preparation is the result of the absence of a Strategic Plan, an ineffective organizational scheme, and poor political leadership.

One of Napoleon's more obvious Maxims of War was that in formulating a plan for a military campaign, it is imperative to foresee everything that the enemy may do, and be prepared with the necessary means to counteract it.²⁵ A Strategic Plan of defense against a major terrorist attack, that is, a truly comprehensive national approach to the establishment of policies, programs and operations can, in my opinion, be formulated effectively only by the Federal Government. But, and this is an important qualification, while a Strategic Plan must be more than the sum of the plans of the individual states or the individual Federal departments and

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The Associated Press, "National Guard Anti-Terrorism Teams At Risk," Washington Post, February 26, 2001, p.4; Tony Capaccio, "Pentagon Mismanaged Chemical and Bio Defense Team, Audit Says," Bloomberg.com, February 4, 2001.

agencies, however good those individual plans may be, the National Plan must be developed with the active support and recommendations of state and local authorities. Policy guidance must identify national objectives, set clear priorities, and identify lines of authority and responsibility with precision. The policy guidance must be understood and enthusiastically -- or at least aggressively-- implemented by the several Federal, state, and local departments and agencies which must be involved in efforts to prevent an attack and, and failing that, to respond effectively to it.

The indispensable element in the preparation of a plan of preparedness, however, is the sustained, personal leadership and commitment of the President. Only the President, or at least the Vice President working as the representative of the President, can set national priorities, bust through bureaucratic log jams, and hold all Federal departments and agencies accountable, and integrate a government-wide preparation effort. Any national strategy must have “the direct leadership, guidance, and imprimatur of the president. Only [in] that way can a strategy have a truly national tenor,” and express the direction of the nation’s Chief Executive on the most appropriate division of roles, missions and responsibilities.²⁶ The President is the nation’s Captain of the Gate. He is uniquely the steward of all the people, and as such, he is - - to quote President Theodore Roosevelt - - “ bound actively and affirmatively to do all he (can) for the people, and not to content himself with the negative merit of keeping his talents undamaged in a napkin.”²⁷ President Bush exercised such leadership in his efforts to combat illegal drug trafficking. His first televised speech to the nation was for the purpose of announcing his first National Drug Control Strategy.

²⁵ Napoleon I: Maxims of War, 1831

²⁶ First Annual Report of the Advisory Panel, *Ibid.*, p.3.

²⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, Autobiography (1913)

It is, of course, unrealistic to expect a President to personally manage even a threat of this magnitude on a daily basis until it appears imminent. For almost two years, however, I have argued in various conferences that there is no reason why a Vice President can't exercise the responsibility. The complexities of (1) developing a strategy, policies, and programs, (2) building support on Capitol Hill, and (3) executing specific executive actions to meet this threat, also require sustained leadership and day-to-day managerial attention in the interagency process by the most **senior** officials of the government, i.e., presidential appointees who have been confirmed by the Senate. Low-level "working groups" of representatives from various federal agencies, no matter how diligent, cannot resolve the jurisdictional, resource, political turf, and other obstacles that inevitably and continuously arise during interagency deliberations.

Regrettably, leadership from the President and Vice President was lacking in the last Administration. This is not a partisan or an isolated personal opinion. Even the Commission on Organization, that is, the one chaired by President Clinton's former Deputy Secretary of Defense and Director of the CIA, even that commission concluded that the efforts of the U.S. Government, at least the efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, had been "neither effective nor [did they] command an appropriately high policy priority in the Executive branch of government."²⁸ The National Security Council staffer who was overseeing \$11 Billion in counterterrorist programs last fall also agreed that the federal efforts have been fragmented.²⁹

Last October, just before the election, then Secretary of Defense Cohen admitted the failure of the Clinton Administration. Four and a half years after the Department of Defense had

identified the threat and three years after he himself had declared in an op-ed piece that the threat of terrorist attack with chemical and biological weapons is a likely and early condition of warfare, Mr. Cohen stated in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies that no comprehensive policy to protect the country existed. He was quoted as saying that “We have yet to begin the debate on homeland defense,” and that “if you think about it in terms of terrorism coming to U.S. soil, the prospects are that you will see multiple attacks that will occur nearly simultaneously.”³⁰ After acknowledging that the Department of Defense would be asked for assistance in the event of mass casualties from multiple attacks, he went on to say that “We need to work this out in advance, so we don’t have the kind of constitutional challenge or confusion taking place in those times of crises.”³¹

Work out in advance? Just how far in advance is he thinking about? The former political leadership of the Federal Government was talking about this threat as early as 1995. Are we to wait until intelligence sources indicate that an attack is imminent to work out a Strategic Plan or some kind of a comprehensive national policy? What were the leaders of our Government doing for the previous five years?

Speaking of the role of the government in 1982, President Reagan observed that “The top priority of the federal government is the safety of this country.” Permit me to be even more explicit. If we don’t effectively “provide for the common defense,” to refer to the Preamble of our Constitution, we may end up with neither the ability nor the opportunity to “insure domestic Tranquility...promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty....”

²⁸ Commission on Organization, p.173

²⁹ Vernon Loeb, “After Counterterrorism Bill Fails, Nation’s Preparedness Is Debated,” Ibid.

³⁰ “Cohen stresses the Need for Homeland Defense,” InsideDefense.com. October 3, 2000.

³¹ Id.

A similar point was made by Winston Churchill in November 1936 in a speech on the floor of the House of Commons. During the course of a Defense debate on the rapid growth of the German Air Force, he turned to the Government's excuses for delays over the previous three years in embarking upon a rearmament program. "I have heard it said," he declared, "that the Government had no (political) mandate for rearmament until the General Election. Such a doctrine is wholly inadmissible. The responsibility of Ministers [i.e., government officials] for the public safety is absolute and requires no mandate. It is in fact the prime object for which Governments come in to existence."³²

Some three years later, Churchill was more explicit about the duty of political leaders when their nation is threatened. Writing to Lord Halifax, the Foreign Minister in the Chamberlain Government, Churchill asserted that "public men charged with the conduct of...war should live in a continual stress of soul. Faithful discharge of duty is no excuse to [Government] Ministers: we have to contrive and **compel** victory."³³ After he became Prime Minister, Churchill held and expressed the view that in wartime, it is "quite impossible to draw any precise line between military and non-military problems,"³⁴ and he reorganized the British government to ensure that "a stream of coherent thought [was] capable of being translated with great rapidity into coherent action."³⁵

In this context, I have been very encouraged by the recent steps taken by the new Bush Administration to address the catastrophic terrorism issue. Early last month, the President declared that :

³² Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991), p. 565.

³³ *Id.*, at p. 635.

³⁴ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. II, p.18.

“Today, numerous Federal departments and agencies have programs to deal with the consequences of a potential use of a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapon in the United States. Many of these Federal programs offer training, planning, and assistance to state and local governments. But to maximize their effectiveness, these efforts need to be seamlessly integrated, harmonious, and comprehensive.”

“Therefore, I have asked Vice President Cheney to oversee the development of a coordinated national effort so that we may do the very best possible job of protecting our people from catastrophic harm.”³⁶

Fortunately, our nation is not now at war - - at least not in the traditional sense. But, the dangers we face at the start of the 21st Century are no less real. We must be prepared for them. Speech-making about the nature of the dangers is not sufficient. Ordinary efforts by lower ranking officials to meet these dangers by organizing the Government, or efforts to perform operational requirements which are not guided by a clear strategy, are not sufficient. Leadership from the political **leaders** of the nation, including the development of a comprehensive, detailed plan of defense and effective action to implement the plan, are what is required. Leadership and action which **compel** readiness and preparation.

I would like to close with a reference to a man that I admired greatly during my time at Dartmouth. John Sloan Dickey, the 12th President of this great institution, was a very distinguished lawyer, educator, and statesman. His Convocation and Valedictory Addresses to undergraduates were works of art.

In his Convocation Address to entering Freshmen in 1950, only five years after the conclusion of World War II, he made an observation which I believe is relevant to our work on

³⁵ David Jablonsky, *Churchill, The Great Game and Total War* (Portland: Frauk Cass, 1991, p.101.

³⁶ Statement by the President, The White House, May 8, 2001.

the serious matters which are the subject of this conference. "I doubt," he said at that time, "that there are many of us here today who are not sharply aware that this particular perch in the universe, which we call earth, is rapidly becoming a precarious place for raising human beings. And if, as one fine Dartmouth man put it in the title of his book a few years ago, there is 'no place to hide,' the only course left open to men who are not yet ready to roll over and die is to face it....I...believe that there is a grace in the universe which stands with men who face front. I also believe that a man is helped in the hard business of facing front by his understanding why he faces what he does....A healthy starting point is found in the reminder that mortal organisms have been facing trouble larger than themselves since life began."

We recently elected new national leaders for at least the next four years. As the new Administration organizes itself and begins to engage in actions which are commensurate with the challenges and dangers we face, including the threat of catastrophic terrorism, people like those in this room - - i.e., people who can offer helpful experience and insight - - must "face front" and step forward to help our new leaders. At a time when America is being tried for size, we must continue to accept our share of the burden. Let's hope that we prove ourselves worthy of the privilege of being citizens of a country which is so blessed.