

**Combating Terrorism:  
In Search of Strategy, Priorities and Leadership**

**Congressman Christopher Shays (CT-04), Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs and International Relations  
Committee on Government Reform**

**National Governors Association  
Center for Best Practices  
National Emergency Management Association**

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Thank you for inviting me to speak at your policy summit on domestic terrorism. It is an honor to join you today as you embark upon this important discussion.

In the post-Cold War world, the multi-faceted phenomenon of transnational terrorism has replaced the monolithic Soviet menace as the preeminent threat to our safety and sovereignty as a nation. The issues you will confront over the next two days lie at the heart of national security policy as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The National Governors Association and the National Emergency Management Association play an integral role in shaping national counterterrorism policies and programs because terrorism strikes first in the buildings, the streets, the farms, the factories and public places that are your domains.

No early warning satellites will alert us to an attack. No command post in a Colorado mountain will direct the critical, early response.

Against so insidious an enemy, who relies upon surprise and mass fear as primary weapons, the federal government and states must work as partners in unprecedented ways to prevent the next attack, and failing that, be prepared to deal with the consequences.

In my view, we are not prepared.

By all accounts, we are particularly vulnerable to the use of biological agents in the type of “low probability, high consequence” scenario you are modeling here.

After spending ten years and more than \$50 billion to fashion a coherent federal counterterrorism program, only slow progress can be claimed against an insidious and adaptable foe. In the event of a major, multi-site attack involving the effective release of a contagious pathogen, current response capabilities would be quickly overwhelmed, washed away like a sand castle at high tide.

Today, more than forty federal departments and agencies operate programs to deter, detect, prepare for, and respond to terrorist attacks. While some inter-agency cooperation and information sharing has begun, substantial barriers – including congressional mandates – still prevent a fully coordinated counterterrorism effort. As the organizational chart gets more complex, the effort inevitably becomes less cohesive.

In the course of 19 National Security Subcommittee hearings on these issues over the past three years, we have found the fight against terrorism remains fragmented and unfocused primarily because no overarching national strategy guides planning, directs spending or disciplines bureaucratic balkanization.

A national strategy should be developed with a high-level statement of national objectives. This strategy should be coupled logically to a statement of the means that will be used to achieve these objectives.

Federal and state agencies should use the strategy as a roadmap in developing plans and programs to counter terrorism.

Essential to a sound strategy is a clear understanding of the threat. We found no formal assessment of domestic-origin threats that could be combined with existing assessments of the foreign-origin threat to establish the priorities required to determine allocation of funds.

The General Accounting Office recommends the use of established risk assessment criteria. It is a deliberate, analytical approach to identify which threats can exploit known vulnerabilities. Variables are ranked according to predetermined criteria, such as the probability of a threat targeting a specific asset or the impact of vulnerabilities being exploited by a specific threat. The process results in a ranked list of risks used to select safeguards to reduce vulnerabilities and create a certain level of protection.

A formal assessment of the domestic-origin threat, combined with existing assessments of the foreign-origin threat, should be developed to provide an authoritative, comprehensive and intelligence-based overview. It should be updated regularly and it should be shared with state and local authorities to the fullest extent possible.

And, as you know, there is no central office, or designated individual appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate, with budget authority over federal efforts to counter terrorism. Clearer leadership is required. Someone or some office needs to be in charge to provide leadership and insure monies are spent properly.

A central office for combating terrorism should be established with program and budget authority over all federal efforts to combat terrorism to ensure compliance with established priorities.

When pressed for a national strategy, the previous administration pointed to a pastiche of event-driven presidential decision directives and the Justice Department's five-year plan. Reactive in vision and scope, that "strategy" changed only as we lurched from crisis to crisis, from Khobar to the Cole, from Oklahoma City to Dar es Salaam.

When confronted with the need for government-wide coordination, President Clinton appointed a National Coordinator to the National Security Council staff. That person had no authority to influence budgets and no power to terminate obsolete or duplicative programs.

The Bush Administration is reviewing government-wide preparation to counter terrorism, focusing mainly on domestic preparedness. But, the new administration does not need to reinvent the wheel. The work Congress and expert groups like this have done on this issue is extensive. Those findings and recommendations generally concur with our Subcommittee findings and provide the new administration a roadmap to use in preparing the United States and its citizens for the next terrorist attack.

*The Second Annual Report of the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities For Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction* (more familiar to this group, I am sure, as the Gilmore Commission) concluded, “the United States has no coherent, functional national strategy for combating terrorism, and the next President should establish a National Office for Combating Terrorism.”

*The Phase III Report of the US Commission on National Security/21<sup>st</sup> Century* (the Hart-Rudman panel) recommended, “The President should develop a comprehensive strategy to heighten America’s ability to prevent and protect against all forms of attacks on the homeland, and to respond to such attacks if prevention and protection fail.”

*The National Commission on Terrorism* (created by Public Law 105-277) advocated enhancing planning and preparation to respond to terrorist attacks and creating stronger mechanisms to ensure funding for individual agency counterterrorism programs.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies’ report, *Combating Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Terrorism: A Comprehensive Strategy* stated, “The United States currently lacks a comprehensive strategy for countering the threat of terrorism....”

Bruce Hoffman, Director of Rand Corporation’s Washington office, in a study of terrorism stated, “A prerequisite to ensuring US resources are focused where they can have the most effect is a sober and empirical understanding of the terrorist threat, coupled with comprehensive and coherent strategy.”

Dr. Amy E. Smithson, a researcher on chemical and biological weapons at the Henry L. Stimson Center in Washington, concluded in a recent report entitled *Ataxia*, that the federal government has wasted large sums of money by mismanaging an array of domestic preparedness programs.

The specific effects of this strategic and organizational vacuum will become apparent as you work through your exercise today and tomorrow. I hope you will share your findings with our Subcommittee.

Let me share a similar experience with you. On March 27, 2000, we held a tabletop exercise and field hearing in Connecticut. The event was sponsored and organized by the Connecticut Department of Emergency Management. Together, we wanted to assess the impact of federal programs at the state and local levels, and to ask what needs to be done to improve their focus, their reach, and their effectiveness.

That scenario involved an Amtrak train that pulled into the Bridgeport station spewing thick black smoke. Local police, fire and emergency response personnel had been alerted by a 911 call from aboard the train. Only after the injured had been transported to local hospitals was it learned the smoke contained an intentionally introduced toxic chemical.

From that exercise we learned some clear lessons:

- Communications quickly break down or clog.
- Detection capabilities are too dispersed and take too long to arrive at the scene of a suspected incident.
- Decontamination equipment is limited.
- Many first responders lack access to full training and standard equipment.
- Federal and local emergency management procedures don't always mesh effectively.
- Already overtaxed health care facilities are not prepared to diagnose or treat mass casualties.

All the participants in that exercise agreed that more exercises were sorely needed. Many also expressed frustration and confusion over the jumble of federal counterterrorism agencies and programs, and the complexity of applying for help.

Another recent exercise ominously named "Dark Winter" was designed to simulate US reaction to the deliberate introduction of smallpox virus in three states during the winter of 2002. The players included former Senator Sam Nunn as President, David Gergen, as National Security Advisor, Governor Frank Keating as himself, and William Sessions as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Meeting as the National Security Council as the scenario played out, they faced many of the issues you will face today and tomorrow.

Initially, one smallpox case was reported in Oklahoma City. Additional cases were soon identified in Georgia and Pennsylvania. More cases appeared in Oklahoma. The source of the infection was still unknown. Due to the lengthy incubation period of smallpox, exposure had probably taken place at least nine days earlier. Consequently, exposed individuals likely traveled far from the epicenter of what was presumed to be a biological attack.

That exercise illustrated several important points I offer for your consideration here:

- An attack on the United States with biological weapons could threaten vital national security interests.
- Massive civilian casualties, breakdown in essential institutions, violation of democratic processes, civil disorder, loss of confidence in government and reduced US strategic flexibility abroad are among the ways a biological attack might compromise US security.
- Current organizational structures and capabilities are not well suited for the management of a biological weapons attack. Major fault lines exist between different levels of government.
- There is no surge capability in the US health care and public health systems, or the pharmaceutical and vaccine industries.

- Dealing with the media during a crisis such as a biological weapons attack will be a major challenge for all levels of government.
- Should a contagious biological weapon be used, containing the spread of disease will present significant ethical, political, cultural, operational, and legal challenges.

Lessons from the “Dark Winter” exercise will be subject of a hearing of the National Security Subcommittee on July 23. Many of the key players will testify on the role of first responders, assistance to state governments, national guard capabilities, the use of military assets, maintaining civil order and protecting public health in a biological outbreak.

What you learn here will add to the growing body of national knowledge about our increasingly likely, but still unthinkable, future.

Terrorists willing to die for their cause will not wait while we rearrange bureaucratic boxes on the organizational chart. Their strategy is clear, their focus keen, their resources efficiently deployed. Our national security demands greater strategic clarity, shaper focus and unprecedented coordination to confront the threat of terrorism today.

Thank you for what you are doing here, and for what you do every day, to secure a safer nation.

Hearings/Formal Briefings before the Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans<sup>1</sup>

Affairs and International Relations on Terrorism Issues:

Combating Terrorism: Federal Counterterrorism Spending	3/11/99
Combating Terrorism: National Domestic Preparedness Office	5/20/99
Combating Terrorism: National Guard Response Teams	6/23/99
Combating Terrorism: Medical First Responder	9/22/99
Combating Terrorism: Assessing the Terrorist Threat	10/20/99
Combating Terrorism: Medical Stockpiles	3/8/00
Combating Terrorism: Research Coordination	3/22/00
Combating Terrorism: Domestic Preparedness	3/27/00
Force Protection: Khobar Towers and Lessons Learned (Briefing)	6/27/00
Combating Terrorism: Federal Coordination (Briefing)	6/28/00
Force Protection: DoD Chemical/Biological Defense Plan	5/24/00
Force Protection: Individual Protective Equipment	6/21/00
Combating Terrorism: Threats, Risk, and Priorities	7/20/00
Biological Weapons Convention Protocol	9/13/00
Combating Terrorism: National Strategy	3/26/01
Combating Terrorism: Protecting Interests Abroad	4/3/01
Combating Terrorism: Federal Response (Joint with Transportation Committee)	4/24/01
Combating Terrorism: Stockpiles	5/1/01
Biological Weapons Convention Protocol	6/5/01

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information, contact the Subcommittee at 202-225-2548.