

Conference Proceedings

POST-ATTACK PANEL: *Recovery and Investigation*

Transcript...

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Thank you for the introduction and welcome to the panel.

If I may, let me reinforce something Cindi said. We have some excellent presentations from the panelists; from some people with a great deal of expertise on the subject. So please let them get through their presentations and if we have any time at the end, we'll try to provide some opportunity to field questions and have our panelists provide some answers to your questions. If I may, let me provide a bit of an overview for the discussion. An article appeared in yesterday's LA Times that basically said that attacks of mass casualties may have been overstated, and in fact some of the dire warnings that we heard may indeed be counter productive to U.S. security interests.

John Parakinsky from the Monterey Institute says that the perception of the threat has begun to outpace the facts, and the forecast that the arrival of the turn of the century would, in itself, give rise to apocalyptic cults using weapons of mass destruction just hasn't appeared yet, and that in the view of this particular writer of the LA Times, the cinematic mass casualties disasters are not the most likely, but more the smaller scale, low tech, incidents. And then Jonathan Tucker says that the government's warnings, while helping to foster all of this new effort and a lot of additional resources could, in fact, be undermining our efforts to address this issue.

Last night, on CBS News, during the evening news, CBS had a report, that among other things says that training has started in 120 cities. We all know that's from legislation but it also says, and the folks from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture will be interested in this, that the Disease Center on Four Mile Island is being turned into a top secret lab to study human bio weapons. I'm sure that she was referring to USDA and that Lawrence Livermore Laboratory is in fact rushing to reengineer a machine which in a hand held version can quickly detect chemical and biological weapons and if it every gets cheap enough, one will go in every police car. And with the millions of dollars being pumped into this, eventually this says every cop, fireman, and paramedic in America will have such gear. Every small town police dept. will have a portable decontamination center. All a mayor has to do is ask.

Does anyone know where you can ask to get that? I'd be interested in hearing that. It all looks and sounds so thorough, so well thought out, it makes you wonder why more and more of the nation's top experts on this deadly subject are starting to ask, "Are we paying too much attention to the wrong kind of threat?" That's the long name of the panel up there that Cindi told you, but it's euphemistically being referred to as *The Gilmore Commission*. Well, with that in mind, Congress established a look at the efficacy and effectiveness of federal programs in trying to help state and local responders in a number of different areas. But as part of that effort, the Gilmore panel decided it needed a good overview of the potential threats from terrorists within the borders of the United States, not only addressing the well worn phrase if it's not a question of if, but when, but also looking at the issues of why terrorists might actually perpetrate such an event and what they might use to do it.

It will not surprise most of you that part of that analysis determine that terrorists acts have become more lethal; that there is clearly more concern now about the so-called weapons of mass destruction. This analysis chose to use the term chemical/biological, radiological and nuclear for the very fact that there is not a good universally agreed-upon definition of what a weapon of mass destruction is. What, in fact, mass casualties are. There are different definitions at the federal level, and it seems like different

agencies have their own idea about how they would define mass destruction or mass casualties or even how these particular weapons would be designed to include things that might be outside the unconventional sense. But this report talks about chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear as only a piece of something that might be generally called weapons of mass destruction. And the supposition that there might be less restraint now on terrorists to use one of these unconventional weapons particularly in the wake of the *Aum Shinrikyo* 1995 Tokyo subway bombing. Perpetrators: This particular analysis really discounts, for the purpose of the analysis, and for the purpose of the effort of this panel, nation state actors. And for the reasons that you can read in the report if you're interested. It also discounts to a certain extent state sponsored surrogates who may be terrorists, and again, for the reason that the United States has a tendency to engage in acts of retribution or retaliation for any such incidents, even perhaps in recent history on the basis of that information. Nevertheless, the types of perpetrators that this particular analysis addresses is to the greatest extent are those listed on this slide, religions fanatics, apocalyptics, millenniumists, right wing and left wing organizations, both individuals and perhaps even the lone actor.

And some of the motivations that terrorists might have, for perpetrating an act, still a political statement in any context, but nevertheless, any one of these, killing enemies, negotiating advantage, trying to undermine the government. And in fact, there is a huge arsenal that is potentially available to a terrorist or terrorist organization not only in the CBRM arena, but more particularly, and probably more likely in the conventional field. But you will notice that I have two categories of conventional up there—straight conventional and then what we would refer to as a second order—weapons of mass destruction effect. Dallas Jones who spoke to you a few minutes ago knows this particular scenario well. It's a scenario of chemical storage tanks and a very simple explosive to set off a chain reaction among industrial or other types of chemical facilities that then could have very wide spread effects beyond the simple device used to create the incident itself.

There are some special issues covered in the report, and I'm not going to talk about them this morning because one of our panelists will talk about the agricultural issue, and my distinguished co-chair is going to talk a little bit about state sponsorship before the panelists begin their discussion this morning. But this is a list and there is probably a longer list that could be discussed, but this analysis concludes that there are many inherent difficulties in producing an unconventional weapon that truly has mass destruction effects—mass casualties in the thousands or tens of thousands. Everything from the expertise required to do it, to sophisticated equipment in facilities to delivery systems, to inherent safety risks, to terrorists—Any number of those, and I encourage you to read the more thorough analysis in the report. But I hope some of our panelists will address some of those issues this morning.

Clearly OMB is still the benchmark against which we measure this and is used as the lesson to prove the rule that despite enormous resources, despite a long program with a number of attempts and a lot of testing, OMB was not able to accomplish what it intended to do, to actually kill a lot of people. It unfortunately killed 12 and provided both physical and psychological to thousands more behind the shield of their religions front. But nevertheless it still stands out as the single instance where non state actors used an unconventional weapon against the civilian population.

The conclusion here, and I'll stop with this thought, is that this analysis suggests that the media depictions of the disastrous terrorist attack using a chemical or biological, radiological or nuclear weapon are lower on the probability scale in the view of this analysis, and that the more likely event is going to continue to be the weapon of choice for terrorist, the conventional weapon, or perhaps a smaller scale chemical or biological weapon that will not have the effect of killing a lot of people, but nevertheless could have significant effects in terms of the psychological impact of that particular event. With that I will conclude and ask my co-chair for comments from her perspective as the executive director for the National Commission on Terrorism.