

The Nexus of Terrorism & WMDs: Developing a Consensus
How could a Leaders' Level G20 make a difference?

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BRIEFING NOTE

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ISSUE: What can the G20 leaders do to prevent terrorists' WMD attacks?

Bottom line: Preventing terrorists acquiring nuclear bombs that they can explode in major cities is an absolute requirement for civilization as we know it.

Fact: The nuclear bomb that CIA agent codenamed Dragonfire reported was in New York City one month after the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon could have killed 500,000 New Yorkers instantly.¹

Consider: After the first nuclear bomb destroys a major city, or the second, where will people choose to live and how will they—or we!—spend our time?

BACKGROUND/CONSIDERATIONS:

Nuclear weapons are the true weapons of mass destruction.²

9/11 awoke not just the United States, but the world, to the dangers of democratization of the means for mass violence. Using the superhighways of globalized technology, communication, finance, and transportation, a non-governmental terrorist cell killed more Americans in a single day on 9/11 than the Japanese government's attack on Pearl Harbor.

The international community recognized the threat terrorism poses to global order by immediately passing UN resolution 1373, requiring member states to freeze terrorist assets, deny terrorist groups support or safe havens, cooperate with other governments to prevent terrorist acts and prosecute those who commit them, and criminalize active and passive assistance for terrorist activity. The UN announced its "determination to take all necessary steps to ensure the full implementation of this resolution" and established a special Counterterrorism Committee, chaired by Sir Jeremy Greenstock, then British ambassador to the UN, to organize and monitor states' efforts to comply.

¹ This event and the argument summarized in this memo are developed in Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe (Times Books 2004). For more information visit www.nuclearterrorism.org.

² WMD is a misnomer that confuses more than clarifies. Typically included with nuclear weapons under this umbrella are radiological, chemical, and biological weapons. Radiological, or "dirty bombs," are weapons of mass disruption that will not cause widespread fatalities; chemical weapons can kill only in the hundreds or thousands if conditions are optimal (terrible carnage, but not beyond the capabilities of conventional explosives); biological weapons could potentially kill in the tens or hundreds of thousands, and future advances in biotechnology brings the spectre of even more deadly pathogens, yet the effects can be countered by vaccines and public health measures, as discussed at the end of this memo.

The U.S. was not the only victim. The World Bank estimates that the attacks of September 11, 2001 total cost to the world economy probably exceeded \$80 billion.

Nuclear bombs would provide the means to for mega-terrorists who already have powerful motive and ample opportunity.

The small nuclear weapon about which Dragonfire warned would have fit easily in the back of a SUV, but its 10-kiloton blast in Times Square on a workday would kill more than 500,000 Americans.

Many such nuclear weapons and fissile material from which equivalent bombs could be made remain in conditions that leave them vulnerable to theft and sale to terrorists groups.

Where could terrorists acquire a nuclear bomb or the fissile material required to make it?

Russia: the deadly detritus left over from the Soviet Union's Cold War stockpile--20,000 nuclear weapons and 60,000 weapons equivalents in nuclear material stored in numerous, and often vulnerable, sites across 11 time zones.

Research reactors: more than a weapon's worth of nuclear material remains at risky research reactors in twenty developing countries including Belarus, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, where it remains vulnerable to theft and sale to terrorists.

Pakistan: close historical links between elements in its security services and al-Qaeda and the unprecedented AQ Khan nuclear black market network call into question the security of its stockpile.

North Korea: the world's most promiscuous proliferator has been reprocessing plutonium for six new nuclear weapons and constructing a production line capable of creating an additional dozen a year.

Current efforts provide a start and a foundation on which to build. But on the current course,

Symbolizes the recognition of the international scope and responsibility of the problem of securing stocks of WMD.

While pledges have been made, both money and priority lacking.

UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (April 28, 2004) obliges sovereign states to adopt and enforce laws closing the loopholes exploited by black market WMD networks.

Provides a UN framework for securing nuclear weapons, materials, and technologies.

Lacks enforcement mechanisms.

Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)

Provides a framework for international cooperation among 15 member states in fighting

The G20 must make preventing nuclear terrorism and the spread of nuclear weapons that could arm terrorists an absolute priority.³

Financial resources commiserate with this mission must be made available. Financial and technical assistance should be provided where required.

Individuals of stature, reporting directly to each G20 leader, must be appointed in each state to focus this priority, have lead responsibility, and be held accountable.

When leaders of the G20 meet with each other and with those outside the Group of 20, they should place preventing nuclear terrorism high on their agendas.

2. A New “Global Alliance Against Nuclear Terrorism.”

The mission of this alliance should be to minimize the risk of nuclear terrorism by taking every action physically, technically, and diplomatically possible to prevent nuclear weapons or materials from being acquired by terrorists.

This will require securing all nuclear weapons and fissile material.

All nations should agree to (or acquiesce in) a policy of Three Nos: No Loose Nukes, No New Nascent Nukes, and No New Nuclear Weapon States.

This alliance will provide a framework for international cooperation in developing a robust nonproliferation regime to shut down the production, theft, sale, and transfer of nuclear technologies, materials, and knowledge.

Alliance members will participate in intelligence sharing and cooperation in counterproliferation—including disruption and preemption to prevent acquisition of materials and knowledge by nuclear wannabes.

Alliance leaders should meet regularly and form a secretariat (similar to NATO) that coordinates working groups on specific topics, develops work plans, and tracks performance in meeting established milestones.

3. Doctrine of the Three Nos (see attached slides on required steps for implementing each strand of this strategy).

No Loose Nukes

Will require securing all nuclear weapons and weapons-useable material to a gold standard.

International cooperation will be crucial for verification that all states implement the new standard.

This can build on the foundation laid by UN Resolution 1540 that requires “that all

In return, assured access to peaceful nuclear technologies, and international-guaranteed fuel for civilian nuclear reactors at one-half the cost of national production, plus removal and storage of spent fuel in secure, internationally-monitored sites will be provided.

Iran is the urgent test case.

European engagement is vital, but the U.S. must also hold direct talks and offer a grand bargain of incentives, while simultaneously threatening sticks, to convince Iran to freeze, and over time dismantle, its development of fissile material production facilities.

No New Nuclear Weapons States

Draws a line under the current eight nuclear powers and says unambiguously: no more.

North Korea is the urgent test case of the international community's resolve and seriousness in nonproliferation.

Requires robust strategy of carrots and sticks.

4. A fourth no: No Nuclear Weapons?

In the short run, too hard technically and politically. In the meantime, nuclear states must eliminate any role of nuclear weapons and nuclear threats from international affairs.

Operationally: accelerate current programs to reduce arsenals; no new nuclear weapons (canceling Bush administration programs to pursue); no nuclear weapons test (ratification of CTBT); no first use of nuclear weapons; and a universal policy of no use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.

No Loose Nukes

Actions Required:

- Make preventing nuclear terrorism an absolute priority
- G20 leaders must engage in a program to assure no nuclear weapons or materials are stolen
- Each should appoint individuals of stature reporting directly to them as commanders in the war on nuclear terrorism
- Develop new international “gold standard” for security of world’s nuclear weapons and materials
- Secure all nuclear weapons and materials to the gold standard as fast as technically possible on a set timetable
- Overcome bureaucratic obstacles, e.g., US-Russian liability and access disputes
- Accelerate Global Cleanout campaign to take back HEU from both Soviet- and US-supplied research reactors on fastest technically feasible timetable

Bioterrorism

Background:

The dual-use nature of biotechnology research makes it difficult to distinguish biological research programs with a military objective from those intended only for peaceful purposes.

Advancement of biology, genetics, etc. will continue to make it easier to produce deadly biological weapons.

The end of the Soviet Biopreparat program left thousands of weapons scientists unemployed and huge stockpiles of biological agents with minimal security.

The spread of SARS showed how a bioterrorist attack utilizing an infectious disease in one country could quickly spread across the globe.

Recommendations:

Limit the availability of potential weaponized pathogens.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) must be universally adopted with provisions for verification.

The UN Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change recommends: “States parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention should also negotiate a new bio-security protocol to classify dangerous biological agents and establish binding international standards for the export of such agents. Within a designated time frame, States parties to the Convention should refrain from participating in such biotechnology commerce with non-members.”

International cooperation in biodefense is required to deal effectively with the threat. Among the areas where states must collaborate:

Early detection and identification of outbreaks, both natural and caused by bioterrorists.

Improved public health systems to both deal with the effects of an attack in the target state and to halt or slow the global spread of an infectious agent.

Availability of vaccines and other therapeutics for all states.

Organized capability to distribute vaccines and therapeutics in a timely manner to prevent and mitigate damage.