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## COMMISSION ON THE PREVENTION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION PROLIFERATION AND TERRORISM

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**Opening Statement  
Senator Bob Graham  
WMD Commission Open Hearing  
10 September 2008  
New York City**

Good morning -- and on behalf of myself, our Vice Chairman Senator Talent, who will say a few words after me, and all of our Commissioners -- welcome to the first public hearing of the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism.

We are convened almost 7 years to the day of the 2001 terror attacks on the United States. In the aftermath of that day of infamy, Americans wanted to know how this could have happened here, and the Joint Congressional Inquiry, and the independent 9/11 Commission were established to investigate. The 9/11 Commission held its first hearing in this city in the Custom House on March 31, 2003. When that Commission reported to the American people in 2004, it wrote:

“The greatest danger of another catastrophic attack in the United States will materialize if the world’s most dangerous terrorists acquire the world’s most dangerous weapons.”

Congress received this warning, but it took Speaker Pelosi -- together with Minority Leader Boehner, Senate Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell -- to pass House Resolution 1, which included a provision establishing this new Commission.

Our mandate is to build on the work of the 9/11 investigations and complete a critical task: to assess how our nation is doing at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, and to provide a roadmap to greater security with recommendations for improvement.

This Commission is not focused on the rear-view mirror. There has not been an attack that we have to investigate. For that, we are incredibly fortunate. But it gives us an opportunity to be *forward* -looking – to examine the government’s current policies and programs, identify the gaps in our prevention strategy and its implementation and recommend how best to close them. Our report will be issued this fall, and our audience is the next President and the next Congress.

Our Commission is focused on nuclear and biological terrorism. We do that for a simple reason: a terrorist attack using these weapons would probably be a “gamechanger”; the impact on U.S. foreign policy and our national life would be so momentous that it could usher in a new world disorder. A nuclear or biological terrorist attack would be so catastrophic, and so consequential, that our government must explore every option, take every precaution, and pursue every sensible means to deter and prevent it.

The report card issued by the 9/11 Commission in 2005, a year after their report, gave U.S. efforts to secure weapons of mass destruction a “D.” More recently, the nonprofit group, “Partnership for a Secure America” graded it a “C.” Senator Sam Nunn, one of today’s witnesses, serves on the board of that group, and their assessment also concluded: “Today, almost seven years after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the threat of a new, major terrorist attack on the United States is still very real. A nuclear, chemical or biological weapon in the hands of terrorists remains the single greatest threat to our nation.”

And earlier this year, the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, asserted, ““Every senior leader, when you're asked what keeps you awake at night, it's the thought of a terrorist ending up with a weapon of mass destruction, especially nuclear.”

Our Commission has spent the last 4 months surveying what the government is currently doing to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. We have interviewed over 200 government and nongovernmental experts, and held 4 major Commission meetings. We have traveled to Sandia National Laboratory in New Mexico, as well as London and Vienna, to meet with counterterrorism and intelligence officials and with international organizations working to stem proliferation and terrorism. Later this month, we plan to travel to Russia and Pakistan.

Our government is not sitting idly in the face of this threat, but there is more that can and must be done. Over the last seven years we have seen innovation and great efforts in the counterterrorism arena – though most of this has been limited to defense and intelligence operations, and needs to be extended to include diplomacy and other means. In the area of nonproliferation, the old Cold War, pre-globalization regimes have not sufficiently adapted, and indeed, they are in disrepair.

Meanwhile, our enemies are not sitting idly either. The 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on terrorism concluded al Qaeda “has regenerated key elements of its homeland attack capability including: a safe haven in Pakistan, operational lieutenants and its top leadership,” and “continues to plan high-impact attacks” with “visually dramatic destruction.” To put it plainly, we are not safe.

But we can achieve a far greater measure of security. So our Commission is here today to review the current dangers posed by WMD proliferation and terrorism. Our next hearing, on October 1 in Washington, DC, will take the next step and examine how our government can intensify its efforts to prevent WMD terrorism.

We look forward to hearing from the witnesses, and very much appreciate their time and commitment. They each bring unique experiences and vital perspectives that will inform the work of this Commission.

First this morning, we will hear from Ms. Carie Lemack, founder of Families of September 11, who will say a few words on behalf of the families who suffered such grievous losses.

Next, we will hear from Mayor Michael Bloomberg, followed by Senator Sam Nunn, Co-Chair and CEO of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, and Dr. Matthew Bunn, Associate Professor at Harvard University – to talk about the nuclear threat. They will be followed by Tom Brokaw, Former Anchor and Managing Editor of NBC Nightly News, and Dr. Margaret Hamburg of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, who will talk about the biological threat. We will conclude with a panel of senior law enforcement officials including John Pistole, the Deputy Director of the FBI and Commissioner Ray Kelly and Chief William Bratton, the head's of America's largest police departments: New York and Los Angeles.

We need an unvarnished assessment of the risks posed by WMD proliferation and terrorism and what more our government must do to counter the threat of nuclear and biological terror attacks.

Thank you.

Vice Chairman Talent.