Opening Statement
Senator Jim Talent
WMD Commission Open Hearing
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New York City

Thank you, Chairman Graham.

I'd like to begin this morning with a few observations that speak to the challenge our nation faces in countering WMD proliferation and terrorism.

Our world today is more interconnected than ever before. In 1950, cross-border capital flows were less than $100 billion. In 2006, they were more than $6 trillion.

People are more capable of traveling to any corner of the earth. In 1950, there were 25 million international tourist arrivals in the United States. In 2006, there were 800 million.

And we are more scientifically and technologically adept – and comfortable sharing that knowledge. In 1950, there were 90,000 scientific articles published. In 2006, there were 900,000.

The same developments that have fostered globalization and economic growth, opportunity, and independence can also be leveraged against us by our enemies – including the terrorists seeking to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction.

Before 9/11, anything we heard about WMD proliferation was usually expressed in terms of state to state transfers. Many of us didn't think terrorists had the intent or the capability to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction. We now know that to be false. They most certainly have the intent, and given the right opportunities, could develop the capability.

In fact, Ted Gistaro, the National Intelligence Officer for Transnational Threats, recently said that, "We assess that al-Qaeda will continue to try to acquire and employ chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear material in attacks, and would not hesitate to use them if it develops what it deems is a sufficient capability."

Our adversaries are entrepreneurial, making use of the Internet, porous borders, and easy access to once closely-held information. In other words, the hallmarks of a globalized world.

The question for this Commission—and for the next Administration and Congress—quickly becomes, how do we stop them? How do we leverage the American entrepreneurial spirit in our intelligence, defense, law enforcement, and diplomatic communities? We will answer this question when our report is issued in the fall.