



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 15, 2010

Government Panel Predicts WMD Attack by 2013

The official report from a blue-ribbon panel warns that terrorists with weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are likely to attack somewhere in the world in the next three years, and the United States could be a prime target.

According to the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism, the likelihood is high that by 2013 terrorists will use WMDs in an attack somewhere in the world, and while several nations with terrorist ties are now in a race to produce nuclear weapons, the commission's report says that an attack using biological weapons is the more likely scenario, with potentially devastating consequences.



Among its recommendations, the commission said it believes that "the U.S. government needs to move more aggressively to limit the proliferation of biological weapons and reduce the prospect of a bio-terror attack."

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The commission, co-chaired by former U.S. Senators Bob Graham (D-Fla.) and Jim Talent (R-Mo.), originally reported its findings in December 2008. During a June 10 press conference to announce legislation aimed at addressing dangers from terrorism, members of the commission joined with members of the House Homeland Security Committee to address the commission's findings.

"The consequences of a biological attack are almost beyond comprehension," said former Senator Graham. "It would be 9/11 times ten or a hundred in terms of the number of people who would be killed." Noting the millions of Americans who died as a result of the epidemic flu virus of 1918, Graham predicted that a lab-generated biological agent in the hands of terrorists could prove far worse. "Today it is still in the laboratory," he said, "but if it should get out and into the hands of scientists who knew how to use it for a violent purpose, we could have multiple times the 40 million people who were killed 100 years ago."

In December 2008, at the same time the commission presented its findings, former Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell offered a similar assessment of the likelihood of a biological attack, telling a Harvard University audience, "With weapons of mass destruction that could result in the death of many people — chemical, biological, nuclear — we assess biological as the more likely," adding that "it's better than an even chance in the next five years that an attack by one of those weapons systems will be conducted in some place on the globe."

While emphasizing the likely scenario of a biological attack, the commission also warned of the danger that exists of nuclear attacks, and cited efforts by both Iran and North Korea to produce a nuclear



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weapon. It also cited the specific danger that Pakistan poses to the United States, warning that while the country is officially an ally of the United States, “the next terrorist attack against the United States is likely to originate from within the Federally Administered Tribal Areas” of Pakistan, which has been identified as a haven for terrorists. “Were one to map terrorism and weapons of mass destruction today, all roads would intersect in Pakistan,” the report stated. Said Graham, “We think time is not our ally,” warning that the United States “needs to move with a sense of urgency.”

During the June 10 press conference, which highlighted the introduction of a bi-partisan bill aimed at addressing the issues cited by the report, Representative Bernie Thompson (D-Miss.), who chairs the House Homeland Security Committee, recalled that when former Senators Graham and Talent addressed the committee with the commission’s findings, “both were quite clear ... that something bad will happen somewhere between now and 2013.” Thompson described the “Weapons of Mass Destruction Prevention and Preparedness Act of 2010,” which is being sponsored by Representatives Peter King (R-N.Y.) and Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.), as “comprehensive legislation to address the WMD threat.”

Representative Dan Lungren (R-Calif.), a member of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology, said the legislation demonstrates the seriousness with which Congress is taking the threat of WMDs on the nation and its efforts to ensure the security of Americans. “You can’t deal with an enemy unless you know that enemy, you admit that enemy’s strength, you try to understand their weaknesses, and you try to understand your own vulnerability,” he said. “That’s what this bill does.”



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