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**“The Day After an Attack, What Would We Wish We Had Done? Why Aren’t We  
Doing It Now?”**  
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Congressman Roemer, thank you for the chance to address this panel today.

As you know, the Nuclear Threat Initiative -- the organization I co-chair -- is dedicated to reducing the threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. We believe we have to heighten awareness if we want to reduce the risk to our citizens and the world. That is why we recently produced the video docudrama *Last Best Chance* -- which portrays a terrorist plot to set off nuclear bombs in the United States and Europe. We believe seeing the danger is the first step to improving security, and that public understanding is essential if these challenges are to get on -- and stay on -- the front burner for policymakers.

In that spirit, we believe the country owes you and every member of the 9/11 Commission a huge debt of gratitude. You made the nation aware of the threats we face and the key steps we have to take to make ourselves more secure. I believe your greatest contribution is what you and the Commission members are doing after you made your recommendations. You refused to go away. Instead, you are staying on the job until the government does its job. Thank you for your hard work, your vision of a safer America and most of all for your persistence and your determination.

The 9/11 Commission Report said clearly that we have to make a “maximum effort” to prevent a nuclear 9/11, and Commission Chair Thomas Kean and Vice Chair Lee Hamilton have emphasized this in their public remarks.

Commission Chair Thomas Kean has said: “A nuclear weapon in the hands of a terrorist is the single greatest threat that faces our country today.”

Commission Vice Chair Lee Hamilton has said: “You have to elevate this problem above all other problems of national security, because it represents the greatest threat to the American people.”

I agree. In my view, the threat of terrorism with nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction presents the gravest danger to our nation and the world.

- We know that al Qaeda is seeking nuclear weapons. We don't know how many other groups may also have similar ambitions.
- We know that nuclear material al Qaeda desires is housed in many poorly secured sites around the globe.
- We believe that if they get that material, they can build a nuclear weapon.
- We believe that if they build a nuclear weapon, they will use it.

A terrorist nuclear attack on one of our cities could kill hundreds of thousands of people, shatter our economy, erode our civil liberties, give blackmail power to the terrorist group that carried out the attack, and would give disruptive threat power to other groups or individuals who have no nuclear weapons, but who have destructive intent.

So American citizens have every reason to ask, "Are we doing all we can to prevent a nuclear attack?" The answer is "no, we are not."

In his last year in office, when President Reagan was asked what he believed was the most important need in international relations, he talked of the need to cooperate against a common threat. He said: "What if all of us discovered that we were threatened by a power from outer space -- from another planet. Wouldn't we come together to fight that particular threat?"

I submit that when weapons of mass destruction are at the fingertips of individuals and groups who are eager to use them to inflict massive damage to mankind, President Reagan's question "wouldn't we come together to fight that threat?" should be front and center for the United States, for Russia, and for the world.

We have, however, taken important steps. Let me name a few.

- The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program has been working since 1991 to secure and destroy weapons and materials in the former Soviet Union. In addition to helping Russia remove and safeguard thousands of warheads and dangerous materials, this funding helped Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus implement a critically important decision to give up all their nuclear weapons. Today, we and the Russians have completed between 25 and 50 percent of the job of securing nuclear weapons and materials, depending on definitions. This program has recently gained renewed support on Capitol Hill and in the White House, and has now been expanded to allow work outside the former Soviet Union – thanks to Senator Lugar's leadership.
- Three years ago, the G8 made a commitment to match the U.S. in threat reduction funding each year for the next 10 years - and non-G8 nations have joined this emerging Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.
- Former Secretary of Energy Abraham and his Russian counterpart Minister Rumyantsev last year launched a Global Threat Reduction Initiative to remove and secure highly enriched uranium from research facilities around the globe.

- In 2003, Libya committed to give up its nuclear weapons program, adhere to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and Test Ban, and sign the additional protocol that would allow the IAEA to do more intrusive monitoring of the country's nuclear facilities. Hopefully, the Khan nuclear distribution network has now been terminated. Although without his cooperation, it is difficult to have any confirmation on this point.
- In April 2004, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution that requires countries to establish and strengthen domestic laws against export, sale or transfer of nuclear materials and technology and establish stringent standards for nuclear materials security.
- The Bush Administration also has worked with other nations on the Proliferation Security Initiative, which allows nations to interdict transport of nuclear weapons, their delivery systems and related technology.
- President Bush and President Putin, at their most recent summit meeting, agreed to enhance and accelerate cooperation to secure at-risk weapons and materials.
- They also promised to:
  - A) Work on the return of highly enriched uranium from U.S. and Russian-designed research reactors around the world.
  - B) Work to convert reactors to run on low-enriched uranium fuels.
  - C) Share best practices to improve security at nuclear facilities bilaterally and with other nations.
  - D) Enhance our emergency response capabilities to deal with a nuclear or dirty bomb incident.

These are indispensable steps toward greater security. Now that the two Presidents have begun to pay personal attention to this agenda – it is essential that both Presidents also become personally involved in eliminating the bureaucratic disputes that have blocked our progress, that they provide more resources, and that they lead a global effort to address and reduce the nuclear threat. Nothing is more urgent.

Increasingly, we are being warned that an act of nuclear terrorism is inevitable. I am not willing to concede that point. But I do believe that unless we greatly elevate our effort and the speed of our response, we could face disaster. We are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe, and the threat is outrunning our response.

Let me offer my own – admittedly highly subjective – evaluation of our progress. By “our,” I mean the United States and Russia. In measuring the adequacy of our response to today's nuclear threats – on a scale from one to ten, I would give us about a three, with the summit between Presidents Bush and Putin moving us closer to a four.

Let me explain my sense of urgency – and why, despite all of the important steps we have taken, I give us such a low mark – by describing four nuclear-related threats we face today.

**Threat 1:** Let's assume for a moment that a terrorist group gains access to nuclear material, builds a weapon and blows up one of the great cities of the world.

The day after – what would we wish we had done to prevent it?

- We would wish we had made our top priority a global effort to upgrade the security of all nuclear weapons and weapons-usable materials at their source to prevent theft or diversion.
- We would wish that the U.S. and Russia had insisted on bilateral transparent accountability of tactical nuclear weapons in both the U.S. and Russian arsenals. We don't know how many tactical nuclear weapons the Russians have or where they are located – we hope that they do.
- We would wish that the G8's Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction had met its commitments and directed its resources aggressively against the most urgent dangers – as it pledged to do almost three years ago in Canada.
- We would wish we had moved faster to implement the Global Threat Reduction Initiative to remove and secure nuclear weapons materials from research reactors around the world. At NTI, we call this the “Global Cleanout.” It has just begun, and there's a big job ahead.
- We would wish we had stopped commerce in highly enriched uranium, thereby cutting off the wide distribution of this bomb-making material around the globe.

The day after – I believe we would wish we had done all of these things. Why aren't we doing them now?

**Threat 2:** Now imagine a terrorist group with insider help acquires radiological materials, and detonates a dirty bomb in New York's financial district, dispersing radiation across a 60-square block area.

The day after a dirty bomb attack – what would we wish we had done to prevent it and to mitigate the damage if it occurs?

- We would wish that we had worked harder to develop a risk-based global inventory of vulnerable radioactive sources and better prioritized our efforts to secure them through a partnership effort around the globe.
- We would wish that we had worked harder to secure radioactive sources at each stage of their lifecycle – from their production through their shipment, use, and disposal – a cradle to grave approach to dangerous nuclear materials.
- We would wish that we had accelerated the stockpiling of equipment at key locations and ensured that first responders had plans, protective gear and decontamination equipment in place.

- We would wish that we had greatly accelerated training exercises and mounted a serious public education program to mitigate the consequences of the attack.

The day after – I believe we would wish that we had done each of these things. Why aren't we doing them now?

**Threat 3:** Imagine this scenario, Russian warning systems give a false warning of an American nuclear attack, or the commander of an unidentified submarine launches a nuclear strike against a Russian city, and the Russians mistakenly believe the Americans have done it. Each of these scenarios could result in a mistaken accidental or unauthorized nuclear missile exchange. The day after, what would we wish we had done to prevent it?

- The United States and Russia would wish that we had changed our Cold War force postures and removed our nuclear weapons from hair-trigger alert, so both leaders would have more time to gather data, exchange information, gain perspective, discover an error, and avoid an accidental, mistaken, or unauthorized launch.
- The United States and Russia would wish that we had recognized that our survival depends on each other's nuclear warning systems. We would wish we had followed through on the initiative begun in 1998 to develop a joint early warning center to prevent false warnings and greatly reduce the danger of a catastrophic mistake.
- The U.S. and Russia would wish we had jointly developed the ability to identify in real time the source of any nuclear strike – so that a 3<sup>rd</sup> party nuclear strike could never trigger a mistaken nuclear exchange between the two nuclear superpowers.
- The U.S. and Russia would wish we had planned and trained jointly for these dire scenarios so that we could have greatly decreased the odds of a cataclysmic mistake.

The day after – I believe we would wish we had done each of these things. Why aren't we doing them now?

**Threat 4:** Let's imagine a sharp increase in the number of nuclear weapons states, including North Korea and Iran. Unfortunately, this is getting easier to imagine. As Iran and North Korea become nuclear weapons states, other nations begin reexamining their options and following their example. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty becomes an artifact of history.

After this occurs, what would we wish that we had done to prevent it?

- We would wish that we and our allies had developed a time-urgent, coordinated, and direct diplomatic effort with North Korea and Iran to end their nuclear weapons programs, using both carrots and sticks.
- We would wish that nuclear weapons states – especially the United States and Russia – had visibly and steadily reduced their reliance on nuclear weapons at a time when we were asking others to renounce nuclear weapons. In other words, we would wish that we had set an example of devaluing rather than enhancing the importance of nuclear weapons.
- We would wish we had followed the Treaty of Moscow with other substantive actions – by adding benchmarks for progress, mechanisms for verification, timetables for reductions and an obligation to eliminate warheads.
- We would wish that we had begun a bipartisan process to move forward with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and ultimately worked toward ratification of the Treaty, guided by the conditions former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Shalikashvili outlined in 2001.
- We would wish that we and other nations had insisted on a system of stronger rules and much stronger enforcement – or as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has termed it, “universal compliance” – to prevent nations from acquiring nuclear weapons capability.
- We would wish that we had created a nuclear cartel – made up of states with fuel cycle facilities, guaranteeing nuclear fuel at favorable market rates to other states, but only if they agreed never to develop their own capacity to make nuclear weapons material.

The day after we wake up and discover several new nations with their fingers on the nuclear trigger and with dramatically increased opportunity for terrorists to gain nuclear material – I believe we would wish that we had done all of these things. Why aren't we doing them now?

During the Cold War, we saw what it looks like when world leaders unite, when they listen to each other, when they cooperate against common threats. It is my hope that we will soon employ this model of international teamwork in responding to the threats from North Korea and Iran, in securing nuclear materials around the globe, and in confronting the danger of catastrophic terrorism anywhere in the world.

The United States and its partners must be as focused on fighting the nuclear threat in this century as we were in fighting the communist threat in the last century. Why wait till the day after? We must do it now.