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SPEECHES AND TESTIMONY

**Statement by Special Assistant to the DCI for Nonproliferation John A. Lauder
on the Worldwide Biological Warfare Threat
to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
As Prepared for Delivery on**

3 March 1999

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a pleasure to appear before this Committee again to discuss what intelligence is doing to anticipate, assess, and counter the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles. DCI George Tenet has emphasized in his appearances before Congress that no issue better illustrates the new challenges, complexities, and uncertainties that we in the Intelligence Community face than the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Among these, Biological Weapons (BW) pose, arguably, the most daunting challenge for intelligence collectors and analysts. Conveying to you an understanding of the work we do to combat this threat is best dealt with in closed session, and I welcome the opportunity to return to answer all of the Committee's questions in detail in such a setting.

There are some observations and trends, however, that I can highlight in this unclassified setting. I have provided a statement for the record, but with your permission I will note some key points:

- First, the preparation and effective use of BW by both potentially hostile states and by non-state actors, including terrorists, is harder than some popular literature seems to suggest. That said, potential adversaries are pursuing such programs, and the threat that the United States and our allies face is growing in breadth and sophistication.
- Second, we in intelligence are trying to get ahead of those challenges by increasing the resources devoted to the BW problem, by recruiting and training the next generation of BW intelligence analysts and collectors, and by developing a sound Community-wide strategy designed to encourage sophisticated approaches to penetrating and understanding the threat.
- Third, we recognize that much of the relevant wisdom in this field is outside the traditional national security community. We are forging new partnerships not only within that traditional community, but also beyond. This is to ensure that we can tap into the best minds and techniques available to us in this country in order to understand the cutting edge of biotechnology and the assistance it can render in comprehending and ameliorating potential threats.
- Fourth, many of these efforts will not begin to have a full impact on our intelligence capabilities for months or even years. There are, and there will remain, significant gaps in our knowledge. As Director Tenet

pointed out in his worldwide threat testimony, there is a continued and growing risk of surprise.

Sources of the BW Threat: State Actors

The development, possession, and use of BW weapons are banned by domestic law and international treaty. The United States and other concerned governments are working hard to combat proliferation. Nonetheless, the number of players possessing or seeking to clandestinely acquire biological weapons is substantial.

About a dozen states, including several that are hostile to Western democracies-Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, and Syria-now either possess or are actively pursuing offensive BW capabilities for use against their perceived enemies, whether internal or external.

- Some countries are pursuing an asymmetric warfare capability and see biological weapons as a viable means to counter overwhelming US conventional military superiority.
- Several states are also pursuing BW programs for counterinsurgency use and tactical applications in regional conflicts, increasing the probability that such conflicts will be deadly and destabilizing.

As an example, let us look briefly at Iraq's BW program.

- Initiated in 1985, the program rapidly escalated from research and development to production and weaponization, constituting a potential threat to allied forces during the Gulf War.
- After four-and-one-half years of claiming that it had conducted only "defensive research" on biological weapons, Iraq finally admitted in 1995 that it had produced a half million liters of BW agents, such as anthrax, botulinum toxin, and aflatoxin.
- The United Nations' Special Commission (UNSCOM) believes that Iraq produced substantially greater amounts - three to four times greater.
- We are concerned that Baghdad retains a small BW weapons capability and may resurrect a robust offensive BW program within weeks if there is no viable inspection regime in place.

Sources of the BW Threat: Non-State Actors

Beyond state actors, there are a number of terrorist groups seeking to develop or acquire BW capabilities. This biological threat, to include some poisons, is growing. Some such groups-like Usama bin Ladin's-have international networks, adding to uncertainty and the danger of a surprise attack.

There are fewer constraints on non-state actors than on state actors. Adding to the unpredictability are the "lone militants," or the ad hoc groups here at home and abroad who may try to conduct a BW attack.

An Expanding Threat

One disturbing trend that numbers alone do not reveal is that BW programs are becoming more dangerous in a number of ways.

First: As deadly as they now are, BW agents could become even more sophisticated. Rapid advances in biotechnology present the prospect of a wholly new array of toxins or live agents that will require new detection methods and preventative measures, including vaccines and therapies.

Researchers are exploring different ways to use BW, including mixtures of slow- and fast- acting agents, and

"cocktails" with chemical agents.

Gains in genetic engineering are making it increasingly difficult for us to recognize all the agents threatening us. Also, BW attacks need not be directed only at humans. Plant and animal pathogens may be used against agricultural targets, creating potential economic devastation.

Second: BW programs are becoming more self-sufficient, challenging our detection and deterrence efforts, and limiting our interdiction opportunities. Iran is a case in-point. Tehran-driven in part by stringent international export controls-has set about acquiring the ability to produce domestically the raw materials and equipment needed to support indigenous biological agent production.

Third: Countries are taking advantage of denial and deception techniques, concealing and protecting BW programs. Concealment is relatively simple with BW because of its overlap with legitimate research and commercial biotechnology.

Even supposedly "legitimate" facilities can readily conduct clandestine BW research and can convert rapidly to agent production, providing a mobilization or "breakout" capability. As a result, large stockpiles of BW munitions simply may not be required in today's BW arena.

Fourth: Advances are occurring in dissemination techniques, delivery options, and strategies for BW use. We are concerned that BW-capable countries are acquiring advanced technologies to design, test, and produce highly effective BW munitions and sophisticated delivery systems, such as cruise missiles and short-range ballistic missiles.

- I should add that, while popular culture can explore the potential BW threat, actually developing and using an effective biological weapon poses certain technological challenges-a detailed discussion of which is probably not appropriate in today's open forum. However, let me provide one example that I believe illustrates my point. The Aum Shinrikyo-before its relatively successful 1995 sarin attack on Tokyo's subway-failed in at least three apparent attempts to carry out biological attacks probably because of poor dissemination.

Two other phenomena complicate the problem. First, scientists with transferable know-how continue to leave the former Soviet Union, some potentially for destinations of proliferation concern. And, second, the struggle to control dual-use technologies only gets harder. A few individuals are ready to take advantage of this and are ready to transform opportunities for human betterment into threats of human destruction.

We are concerned that Russia's current economic woes could exacerbate the "brain drain" problem. By importing talent and buying technology, state and non-state actors can make dramatic leaps forward in all the areas I just mentioned, including the development of new agents and delivery systems, a much earlier achievement of indigenous capabilities, and more sophisticated denial and deception techniques. In short, bad actors can purchase the invaluable advantage of "technological surprise." As you know, plugging this brain drain and helping to provide alternative courses for the former Soviet Union's WMD infrastructure are key goals of US nonproliferation policy, as well as a variety of US and international cooperation programs with Russia and other former Soviet states. We should also note in this context the importance of international norms against the pursuit of biological weapons, such as those embodied in the Biological Weapons Convention.

Regarding the dual-use problem: The same technology that is used for good today, can, if it falls into the wrong hands, be used for evil tomorrow. The overlap between BW agents and vaccines, and between nerve agents and pesticides is, as you know, considerable. The technologies used to prolong our lives and improve our standard of living can quite easily be used to cause mass casualties. BW technology is, in part, widely available because all societies have a legitimate need for the biotechnology on which it is based.

I would offer one footnote on the difficulty of assessing the threat from biological weapons today: Intelligence is all about ascertaining not only the capabilities, but also the intentions of one's adversaries. Because of the dual utility of the technology and expertise involved, the actual BW threat is in fact tied directly to intentions. Getting at this

intent is the hardest thing for intelligence to do, but it is essential if we are to determine with certainty the scope and nature of the global biological warfare threat.

The Intelligence Community Response

Let me now get to what the DCI likes to refer to as "the meat in the sandwich" and say a few words about what the Intelligence Community is doing to address the global BW proliferation problem and to use our available resources in the best way possible.

An important step in boosting the Intelligence Community's WMD nonproliferation efforts across the board occurred a little more than a year ago, when the DCI reorganized the nonproliferation intelligence community and increased the size of the Nonproliferation Center:

- He appointed me to be his Special Assistant for Nonproliferation and Director of his Nonproliferation Center (NPC) to oversee the US Intelligence Community's efforts. Specifically, he charged me with improving coordination and communication, empowering me with the means to lash up the nonproliferation community to better meet the growing need for intelligence on weapons of mass destruction programs.
- The DCI significantly increased the size of the Center. Nearly all of the analysts in CIA's Directorate of Intelligence who were covering biological and chemical weapons, all of the proliferation specialists dealing with missiles and nuclear technology, and all of the analysts investigating the proliferation supplier networks were brought into NPC. A major reason for increasing the size of the Center was to provide a critical mass of experts to grow and nurture the next generation of BW and CW analysts and collectors.

Speaking of the "next generation," a top strategic priority for NPC, and all of us in the nonproliferation intelligence community, is analysis--especially the steps needed to promote analytical depth and expertise. We have a strong front line, but we need a deeper bench. To that end, we are adding significant numbers of analysts and taking innovative measures to help these analysts cope with the fire hose of information that is out there. Our future effectiveness will rest heavily on taking new directions in information technology and information management.

I would note, also, that it would be impossible and inadvisable to try to put all of the IC's resources on this issue within a single center, given the sheer breadth of the nonproliferation issue. The strength of the Community's nonproliferation effort depends not just on the success of the DCI Nonproliferation Center, but on our ability to forge effective partnerships with a variety of organizations. This is particularly true for the analysis of biological weapons, where the steps we have taken include:

- Our enticement last fall of one of the leading virologists in the United States to start work as the DCI's Senior Science and Technology Advisor for Nonproliferation.
- Through the efforts of this individual, we have assembled an outside Panel of outside top scientists, technical administrators, and senior individuals from academia, private industry, the national labs, the military, and the public health services to give strategic advice to the DCI.
- We are increasing representation from DIA, FBI, NSA, NIMA, the Air Force, Navy, and other agencies throughout the Center's operations and management, while also increasing the rotation of NPC analysts out into the Community.
- We are developing new tools and new approaches for analysts that are beginning to bear fruit. We are employing new funds and seeking new opportunities to combat proliferation across the board, including seeking the help of outside experts to attack the issue of proliferation surprise.
- And, we are enhancing cooperation within the Intelligence, Policy, Defense, Law Enforcement, and Public Health Communities to counter nuclear, biological, chemical, and even radiological terrorism.

Under the auspices of the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence and working through the Nonproliferation Center, the Intelligence Community began last year to revise and strengthen our goals to combat worldwide BW programs. Currently, we are refining and implementing this strategic plan. The effort is built on the following key objectives:

- To increase coordination, cooperation, communication, and partnerships;
- To improve collection and analysis capabilities and effectiveness;
- To expand and focus Community R&D;
- To enhance interactive computer models, databases, and tools, and
- To increase opportunities for biotechnology training to enhance expertise against BW proliferation.

Even as recently as yesterday (Tuesday, 2 March 1999), I co-chaired with the FBI a joint meeting of the Intelligence Community's Nonproliferation Committee and the Intelligence Subgroup of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Preparedness Working Group for PDD- 62. We brought together agencies responsible for law enforcement, intelligence, policy, defense, and consequence management to ensure that we were effectively working together.

As the strategy and implementation plan is finalized, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence General Gordon will review the recommended actions with the Community's Program Managers and also with the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Conclusion

In closing, let me reiterate our concern regarding the proliferation of biological weapons worldwide. This concern should, and does, motivate us all to do everything we can to counter the threat and to defend against it. Our efforts have received a tremendous boost from the support we have received here on the Hill to provide funding for a number of measures that will strengthen our intelligence capabilities. The DCI has launched a Strategic Direction initiative that will strengthen our clandestine collection and analytical work by putting more operations officers on foreign streets and more analysts on accounts, and then support them to the hilt with the best tools available.

I believe that the changes we have made or are implementing will enhance the overall effectiveness of the Intelligence Community in managing and expanding our efforts to support US national nonproliferation goals. Although many steps have been taken to improve our understanding of the threat, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to anticipate or collect against every military action or terrorist act involving BW. There is more that needs to be done, and we will work with this Committee on the next steps. Although the growing BW threat cannot be met by US Intelligence alone, our work will be crucial to defending American interests and protecting American lives.

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