Statement of Senator Bob Graham, Chairman
of the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction
Proliferation and Terrorism
Before a Hearing of the
Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal
Workforce and the District of Columbia
April 30, 2009

Thank you, Chairman Akaka and Senator Voinovich for the opportunity to address the Subcommittee and share my views on two of the Commission's 13 recommendations, those dealing with the increasing need to hire, develop and retain a national security workforce for the 21st Century (recommendation 11), and the need to improve interagency cooperation (recommendation 10).

The nine-member bipartisan Commission was created by Congress to address the grave threat that the nexus of international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose to the security of the United States and the world. The Congress asked our Commission to assess the U.S. government's current activities, initiatives, and programs aimed at preventing WMD proliferation and terrorism, and to lay out a clear, comprehensive strategy for the next administration and Congress – including a set of practical, implementable recommendations.

The Commission's principle conclusions were that: (1) the United States is increasingly vulnerable to a WMD attack; (2) such an attack is more likely than not to take place somewhere in the world before 2013; and (3) that such an attack is more likely to use a biological weapon rather than a nuclear device due to the increasing availability of the relevant dual-use materials, equipment, and know-how, which are all spreading rapidly throughout the world.

In light of these findings, the Commission released its report in December 2008 containing 13 recommendations to address these threats. Since then, five of the 60

months, or about ten percent of the five-year window prior to the end of 2013 has elapsed. The clock is ticking. The failure to move with expedience and sustained commitment exacerbates our vulnerabilities. If we are to keep America safe, we must move forward with all deliberate speed.

A 21st Century National Security Workforce

Recruiting, developing and retaining a 21st Century national security workforce across all of our professional disciplines is the backbone of our national security community. An observation by General Creighton Abrams, Army Chief of Staff in the early 1970s, that "Soldiers aren't in the Army, they are the Army," holds equally true for both our military and civilian workforces. Trained professionals, not technologies, are the cornerstone of our efforts to keep Americans safe; they are the cornerstone of every successful organization. And as our technical and scientific workforce retires, and we are unable to replace highly skilled personnel, our agencies and departments will be stretched increasingly thin, which will create needless vulnerabilities.

As the Commission worked throughout 2008, we were impressed with the gravity of this situation and the importance of the task before both today's and tomorrow's national security workforce. Today's national security community includes all the traditional organizations such as the Departments of Defense, State, Justice and our intelligence community, but also includes organizations as diverse as the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many of these positions, because of their increasingly important security missions, take on even greater importance than they did in years past. The question is, will we have the qualified people to fill them? Without your action, the answer will be, "no."

One specific example of this fact was brought to the attention of the Commission during our visit to Sandia National Laboratories, but no one has better stated the case than Secretary of Defense Robert Gates: "...half of our scientists at Sandia are over 50 years

old, and many of those under 50 have limited or no involvement in the design and development of a nuclear weapon. By some estimates, within the next several years, three-quarters of the workforce in nuclear engineering and at the national laboratories will reach retirement age." Without that workforce, our long-term national security will be threatened.

We as a country have sufficiently studied the problems facing the federal workforce and how best to develop what I call human capital. As I will point out, we know what needs to be done.

Our Commission Report, *World at Risk*, recommended that:

(1) the United States government should recruit the next generation of national security experts by establishing a program of education, training and joint duty with the goal of creating a culture of interagency collaboration, flexibility and innovation;

(2) the National Security Professional Development Implementation Plan, required as part of Executive Order 13434, signed by President Bush in May 2007, must meet its requirement to recruit, train and retain sufficient national security professionals, including at the U.S. national laboratories;

(3) the Implementation Plan must ensure incentives for distributing personnel with experience in combating terrorism and WMD. The President's top national security officials should consider assignments in more than one department or agency as a prerequisite for advancement to the National Security Council or to department or agency leadership level; and

(4) the intelligence community should expedite efforts to recruit people with critical language capabilities and cultural backgrounds. In conjunction with this effort, the intelligence community should streamline the hiring process, especially for applicants with critical language capabilities.

Senator Akaka, you and your colleagues Senators Voinovich, Durbin and Allen, in your proposed legislation, S. 589, the *Homeland Security Workforce Act of 2003*, recommended significant programs to make federal service more attractive to college students and recent college graduates. One way to do that is through financial incentives. The U. S. Army offers up to $80,000 in student loan repayments. Why not create a similar program to attract young talent into the civilian national security work force who possess key skills or education? Why not offer scholarships to undergraduates and fellowships to graduate students in critical areas of study? The Director of National Intelligence is suggesting an Intelligence Officer Training Corps (IOTC) similar to the military's ROTC. These programs would provide the American taxpayer with an excellent return on their investment.

To make especially clear, when I mention key skills of these new recruits, I emphasize native fluency in the languages of the Middle East and Central Asia. Six years after the 9/11 attacks, the CIA admitted that less than 4 percent of its case officers could speak any of these critical languages with proficiency, and only 8 percent of new hires have the ethnic background and language skills demanded by counterterrorism work. This is not the formula for success in the intelligence community.

Since the findings and recommendations of the U.S. Commission on National Security/ 21st Century (better known as Hart-Rudman) a decade ago, the legislation proposed in 2003, and the various reports and studies of the IBM Center for the Business of Government, there have been many similar recommendations. We all seem to be in general agreement about the problem and what needs to be done. What we need now are more verbs and fewer nouns. It is time to act.

At the same time, there also remain entrenched parochial interests in every federal department that resist necessary changes. Peter Roman, then with the Stimson Center, keenly observed after President Bush signed E.O. 13434 that "...many departments...will be inclined to do the minimum necessary to comply with the Executive and subsequent

implementation directives...." and that professional development might be sacrificed because the departments stone walled. Roman's skepticism is entirely understandable.

As the Joint Congressional Inquiry and the 9/11 Commission both observed, personnel are the primary driver of organizational transformation. But the development of plans to create tomorrow's national security workforce is not the real challenge. Drafting a plan is comparatively easy. What is more important and more difficult, as I wrote in my book, *Intelligence Matters*, is follow-through.

The need for congressional follow-through is something that Senator Talent and I appreciate with clarity, because we have stood in your shoes. The key to our national success in this effort resides primarily with the Congress. Only through thoughtful, thorough and ongoing oversight will you be able to ensure that plans become reality, and only then will we achieve the workforce capabilities needed to keep our country safe.

Congress has the decisive role to play. Much like the monumental reforms, cultural changes and major operational improvements brought about through the *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*, Congress must now take the lead in reforming how we recruit, develop and retain the national security workforce for the 21st Century.

Congress must also step up its oversight function to ensure that federal agencies and departments fully implement these programs rather than approach them in a check-the-box manner. The security mission is too important, our foes too determined, and the consequences of failure too great for us to allow the status quo to prevail.

Improving Interagency Cooperation

More than seven years after the attacks of 9/11, much remains to be done to improve interagency cooperation.

It is insufficient that we employ skilled and motivated personnel; they must also work within an effective national security culture – one that transcends bureaucratic and organizational boundaries. The Project for National Security Reform's recently released report, "Forging a New Shield," states that there is no 'national security culture' outside of our military that motivates individuals in civilian departments to align policies and coordinate programs in support of broader national security interests. For a variety of reasons, the objectives and policies of individual agencies oftentimes supercede larger national objectives. That must change.

In order to improve national security interagency cooperation, the Committee recommended an acceleration of the integration effort among the counter proliferation, counterterrorism, and law enforcement communities. Therefore, the intelligence community should:

(1) improve the sharing of WMD proliferation and terrorism intelligence as a top priority, and accelerate efforts to ensure that analysts and collectors receive consistent training and guidance on handling sensitive and classified information;

(2) expedite efforts to recruit people with critical language capabilities and cultural backgrounds. In conjunction with this effort, the intelligence community should streamline the hiring process, especially for applicants with critical language capabilities;

(3) address its weakening science and technology base in nuclear science and biotechnology and enhance collaboration on WMD issues with specialists outside the intelligence community, including nongovernmental and foreign experts; and

(4) continue to focus and prioritize collection (with the law enforcement community) on WMD state and non-state networks that include smuggling, criminal enterprises, suppliers, and financiers, and they should develop innovative human and technical intelligence capabilities and techniques designed specifically to meet the intelligence requirements of WMD terrorism.

Furthermore, the President, in consultation with the DNI, should provide to Congress within 180 days of taking office an assessment of changes needed in existing legislation to enable the intelligence community to carry out its counter terrorism, counter proliferation, and WMD terrorism missions. In so doing, the intelligence community must keep WMD terrorism a top priority while ensuring that the broader counterterrorism and counter proliferation efforts do not suffer.

The National Security Professional Development Implementation Plan required in the executive order requires an annual report to Congress. The latest report states general progress on the part of most agencies and on most issues. That is to be commended; however, more than half of the departments have failed to establish Senior Executive Service promotion regulations—the means to link professional development and joint assignments to promotion to senior leadership positions. A fundamental tenet of professional development is that if you want to change organizational behavior – if you want to dramatically change culture, which we must -- you must reward such actions. This link between the requirement for joint assignments and promotion to flag officer was a key to the success of Goldwater-Nichols, and it will also be critically important to improving interagency cooperation.

The failure to improve interagency cooperation makes it easier for terrorists to execute another 9/11-type of attack – only this time they could be using biological or nuclear weapons. Where organizational focus and teamwork are concerned, I liken the challenge before us to that of a tug-of-war: Every department, every agency and every individual at the national, state and local level must be pulling on the same length of rope, at the same time, and in the same direction if we are to succeed. Every explanation for why we should not implement needed reforms this year withers away if our failure makes a terrorist's job easier.

Reconciling and aligning competing interests – achieving genuine institutional change -- will require uncommon leadership, from the President and cabinet secretaries

all the way down to frontline supervisors. Congress has a vital role to play in elevating the importance of this issue and in drafting the legislation needed to ensure the necessary level of cooperation. Improving interagency cooperation, whether we are discussing weapons of mass destruction or improving DoD-State cooperation in Iraq and Afghanistan, is of no less importance today than was enactment of the *National Security Act of 1947*, which created the Department of Defense or the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The more complex nature of today's threats requires similarly momentous reforms.

The Need to Act

I can think of no more succinct an observation on the need for us to dramatically improve interagency cooperation, not only with respect to weapons of mass destruction, but across our entire national security community, than by sharing a conversation that Senator Talent had with an Israeli general within their intelligence community in 2004. When Jim asked how the Israeli military and its intelligence and law enforcement communities overcame the hurdles that impeded effective interagency cooperation, the general responded, and I quote, "We learned to work effectively together because our survival depends on it."

In addition, all of you know that the Taliban, having secured control of the once peaceful Swat valley in northwest Pakistan, is now carrying its battle to impose Sharia law across all of Pakistan. I would like to remind the Committee that Osama bin Laden stated that obtaining weapons of mass destruction is a "religious duty," and is reported to have sought to perpetrate another "Hiroshima." Taliban forces are reported now to be within 60 miles of Pakistan's capital.

If there remains any skepticism on the need to rapidly implement the Commission's recommendations, a recent incident in Ukraine should dispel any doubts. Last month, the Ukrainian Security Service (USS) arrested three people, including an elected official, who were attempting to sell nuclear material. They were "advertising" their product as plutonium—the critical component in an improvised nuclear device.

After the three were arrested, the USS discovered this was, in fact, not plutonium, but it was material that could have been used to produce several radioactive dispersal devices (dirty bombs). This was just the most recent of many such incidents. Let there be no question in your mind, today there is an international market for WMD materials and expertise. We must close that market.

The experts with whom we spoke all agree that terrorists are determined to attack us again – with weapons of mass destruction if possible. While government officials and experts outside of government believe that no terrorist group currently has the operational capability to carry out a mass casualty attack, they could quickly acquire that capability. For a sufficient amount of cash, all technical expertise and materials can be obtained. This is particularly the case with bioweapons because they do not require the massive investment and infrastructure needed to build a nuclear weapon. The Commission is not so concerned with terrorists becoming biologists, but with biologists becoming terrorists.

If our greatest failure leading up to 9/11 was, as many have said, our failure to imagine that people would attack civilians in such a barbaric and unconventional manner, no member of this committee or of the U.S. Congress should harbor any doubt, nearly eight years later, that fanaticism is more commonplace, not less so, in troubled regions of the world, or that nuclear and biological weapons, related technologies, materials and the sophisticated technical expertise required to make these weapons is increasingly available for hire. As we stated at the outset of our report, every trend is moving in the wrong direction; America's margin of safety is shrinking, not growing.

What is lacking today is a sufficient sense of urgency and importance across both the executive and legislative branches to get the job done. I ask for your support in providing the authorizations where needed to put programs in place. I ask that you perform your oversight function this year and in future years in a rigorous manner so that reforms are implemented fully and in a timely manner. And I ask on behalf of the Commission for the support of every member of this committee to obtain the appropriations needed to fund these programs.

I think that the most poignant question raised over the past few years regarding a potential attack using weapons of mass destruction was posed in an op-ed written by former Senator Sam Nunn in which he asked, 'If the United States were to be attacked, we would regretfully ask ourselves the next day, 'What could we have done to prevent such a thing?' Ladies and gentlemen, we fervently believe that we have the opportunity to reduce the probability of such a day – but only if we take these entirely reasonable and feasible steps now.

We provided 13 recommendations in our Commission report. The two that I have discussed today are of fundamental importance to our nation's security. There can be few higher national security priorities than recruiting, developing and retaining tomorrow's national security workforce and placing that workforce in an organization and culture fully and effectively committed to reducing the risk to American and the world of the worst weapons falling into the hands of the worst people.