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Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of  
Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism  
First Public Hearing  
New York City, NY  
10 September 2007

Thank you Chairman Graham, Vice-Chair Talent, and Commissioners for the opportunity to address you. Today you will hear from our nation's most prominent elected officials, leading experts, and decorated law enforcement officials about the most dangerous threats facing our country. I thank you for taking on the very important responsibilities that you have, to study and prepare and ensure that our nation prevents a future catastrophic attack on our homeland.

It is an honor and a privilege to be here, though it is an honor I would much rather not be qualified to receive. I am here, not as an expert on terrorism, weapons of mass destruction or biological threats. Instead, I am here as an expert on when our policies on terrorism go wrong. Seven years ago today, I had absolutely no such expertise, and can honestly say I was the gladder for it.

I remember September 10, 2001 vividly. It was another normal day in my life. I went to work, wrote an essay for a business school application I was filling out, and then enjoyed a late summer al fresco dinner on Newbury Street in Boston with my boyfriend. Afterwards, I went home to call my mom and tell her about the discussion he and I had had – it was my normal routine to tell her all about our relationship, perhaps much to his dismay.

It was also a special day. My sister had taught her first class as an adjunct law school professor that evening. Mom was bursting with pride. When she answered the phone to take my call, the first thing she said to me was “Have you called and congratulated your sister?” She was glad to hear that I already had.

These days, I have a new normal in my life. I cannot call my mom anymore, not to ask her advice about men, about work, about anything. I could not ask her to read over this speech, though I am sure it would have been improved with her spot-on editing skills, flawless grammar and ever-present disdain for the passive tense.

I cannot call her because on September 11, 2001, seven years ago tomorrow, Mom had a business trip to California. She boarded American Airlines flight 11 that crystal clear blue morning. We all know that she never made it home.

Now my new normal includes speaking at airports to thank airport screeners for the hard work they do. It involves meeting terrorism victims from around the globe, to see if we can unite and speak out together against the horrendous use of terrorism to address political grievances. And, sadly, it involves receiving multiple calls from the medical examiner's office here in New York City.

It is a sad and scarcely-noted fact that 1,126 families have yet to receive any remains from their loved ones who were killed on 9/11. We received our first identification of Mom last April. They told us that Mom's unburned left foot, complete with ankle, was found in the pile at Ground Zero a few weeks after she was killed. A chip of one of her bones, they don't know which, was found in 2006 on the Deutsche Bank building more than a block away. It took them until spring of 2007 to perfect the cutting-edge technology needed to identify these pieces. Last May, my sister and I came down to New York, and took Mom home. I pushed the button to cremate her foot. It was awful, but at least we were able to take part of her home.

But just last month, we received another notice of identification. Two more pieces of Mom, both smaller than 3 centimeters, were identified. They told us to expect more calls, perhaps for years to come.

This is my new normal, and though it is not something I wish for others to endure, the sad truth is that my sister and I are not alone. Terrorism has affected far too many Americans, all across the country. And, troubling though it is to face, 9/11 Commission Chairman Thomas Kean has repeatedly stated that while we are safer since 9/11, we are not safe enough.

I did not know who Osama bin Laden was before he hatched a plot to kill my mom and nearly 3,000 others. I did not know that he had declared war on the United States, and that he was behind the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993. I did not know he was "determined to strike within the United States", as the August 6, 2001 presidential daily brief so ominously stated. And I definitely did not know that he had plotted before, and had since pledged to use commercial aircraft as missiles.

Now I don't have the luxury of ignorance. After spending 14 months alongside other 9/11 family members pushing to create the 9/11 Commission, and after reading its recommendations and urging Congress to implement them, I have a better understanding of what this man and his followers are capable of. And one thing stands out. Call this man evil, call him blasphemous, call him any four-letter word you can think of. But one thing is clear – you must call him transparent, because he clearly states and then follows through on his threats to the best of his abilities.

With this in mind, we must ask the obvious question. What does bin Laden say he plans to do next? The answer to that question contains both good and bad news.

The bad news is this. He has pledged to kill 4 million Americans, 2 million of which are to be children, with nuclear bombs. He has received a fatwah, or religious edict, granting

him what he believes is religious justification for his actions. And he has been doing his homework. Since the initial invasion of Afghanistan weeks after 9/11, there have circulated credible reports of blueprints for crude, but functional nuclear bombs being found in caves and safe houses.

Thankfully, there is also good news. This time, we *can* stop him. Bin Laden cannot manufacture nuclear weapon materials on his own. He must either steal them or buy them. If we can stop him, if we are not too late, we can prevent him from following through on this pledge.

This can be done, if we have the foresight and political will to do it.

However, it cannot be done on our own. We must work with other nations. There are nuclear weapon materials in more than 40 countries, some protected by only a chain link fence. In our global economy, a nuclear bomb going off anywhere in the world has ramifications far and wide, both in terms of loss of human life, but also in terms of loss of stability and security.

I don't need to tell you this – you already know. I am impressed to hear about all the work you and your hard-working staff have already accomplished. Given the limited time for your work, I will not go into details about the death and destruction the detonation of any weapon of mass destruction would cause. But, needless to say, were one to go off, there exists no auditorium in the world, not even one as grand as this, that could seat the number of family members and survivors that would be affected.

While I want to make clear again, I am not expert (those are the ones speaking later this morning), I do have a personal stake in the recommendations you make to the next Administration. I owe it to my mom to make sure what happened to her nearly seven years ago never happens again. I owe it to the others who were murdered with her and those who love them. And I owe it to Mom's grandsons, Cole and Mason, who she never got a chance to meet. My sister's sons, my baby nephews, are the inspiration that give me the strength to think about these scary issues, because the only way to prevent them is to deal with them head on before they happen, not after.

If the next Administration were to ask me, here is what I would tell them. First off, prevention of WMD terrorism must be a top priority, not just in words, but also in action. In 2004, both presidential candidates agreed on only one thing – that weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists was the gravest threat facing the nation. But from that agreement, little action was born.

I was told by one senior government official that marketing and communication professionals had determined that the best course of action was not to discuss the issue publicly, since it might scare Americans. I disagree. I spent 18 months traveling from Des Moines to Columbia, South Carolina. St. Petersburg to Manchester, New Hampshire. And in all the talks and forums I attended, not one person left in fear.

In fact, it was quite the opposite. Once they knew that the threat could be prevented, there was hope, even optimism. When Americans see a solution to a problem, though it may be difficult to achieve, they are quite capable of reaching their goal. I hope the next Administration is willing to talk candidly with the American public, to engage them, and to trust that they can accept the realities of the world we live in today.

Secondly, I would tell the next Administration that the best way to demonstrate prevention of WMD terrorism is a top priority is to have someone in charge of it. Right now, there are a lot of people throughout the government who oversee parts of preventing WMD terrorism, but there is no \*one\* person at a high level, with direct access to the president, who wakes up every day with WMD terrorism prevention as their only mission. On this issue, even Congress agrees – they passed a bill last summer creating such a position, called a “Coordinator”. That position, to date, has not been filled, though more than thirteen months have passed since its creation. I hope the next Administration finds an appropriate person, appoints them promptly and gives them the resources and power they need to do the job. There is simply too much at stake for us not to coordinate efforts to prevent bin Laden from executing his goal.

Thirdly, the prevention of WMD terrorism must be on the agenda of the next president whenever he speaks to foreign heads of state. We cannot do this alone, and leaders around the globe need to know that in order to partner, trade and otherwise collaborate with the United States, their cooperation in the prevention of WMD terrorism is non-negotiable.

Before I conclude, I want to say one thing about my mom. We are from Boston, which means by default we Red Sox fans. And as any Sox fan knows, that means we are eternal optimists at heart. Mom was an optimist. She taught my sister and me that we could do anything we put our minds to. I think she believed that about her country, too. (Goodness knows she believed it about the Sox, and she was right. They won the World Series for the first time in 86 years on her birthday, October 27, 2004, the day she would have been 54).

Thank you for the honor of speaking before you today. And thank you for the important work which you have taken on. Like my mom, I am optimistic you will deliver to the next Administration a thorough and actionable list of recommendations that will be implemented. I am optimistic that we, as Americans, can face the difficult realities, make the tough decisions and take the right actions to ensure our enemies can no longer realize their terrible goals. And in doing so, we can make sure that Americans will never have to learn a “new normal” in their lives.

Thank you for this opportunity. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.