



Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense

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Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense Co-Chairs Lieberman and Ridge Hold First Meeting to Assess Ability to Protect the Nation from Current Threats

Today, former Sen. Joe Lieberman and Gov. Tom Ridge, Co-Chairmen of the newly formed Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense, convened their first meeting to assess the national state of defense against biological and large-scale chemical incidents. The inadequacy of the recent response to the ongoing Ebola crisis, and the Panel's desire to learn from that natural outbreak and apply its lessons to preparedness for intentional attacks, have provided both impetus and urgency for convening this Panel.

Sen. Lieberman stated, "We're really kicking this off today to look at the question of threat awareness in biodefense. We want to get at the problem, 'Can the federal government act before a crisis, or does it have to wait until after a crisis?'"

Governor Ridge stated, "I don't want to wait for a biological 9/11 for the Congress and all levels of government to act. We've invited these experts here today to help us develop concrete recommendations on which policymakers can act right now, to optimize our preparedness."

The Chairmen were joined by co-panelists former Sec. Donna Shalala, former Sen. Tom Daschle, former Rep. Jim Greenwood, and the Honorable Kenneth Wainstein, former Homeland Security Advisor to President George W. Bush. The Panelists convened nearly a dozen experts to provide status updates and perspectives on the biological and chemical threats and gaps in awareness and action that are preventing the U.S. from achieving optimal biodefense.

The panel heard from Senator Richard Burr, former Senator and Chair of the WMD Commission Jim Talent, former Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig, and other esteemed former federal officials and subject matter experts. These witnesses spoke to the nature of the threat, the problem of achieving and maintaining threat awareness, and how our understanding of the threat impacts U.S. ability and desire to address these threats.

Through a series of meetings and workshops across the country, this Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense will thoroughly evaluate the biodefense policies and programs in place to prevent, deter, and detect potential biological threats – and to prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate these threats. Senior thought leaders have joined this effort to identify changes to U.S. policy and law necessary to strengthen resilience, while optimizing resource investments.

Findings from this meeting and its successors will inform recommendations for near and long-term actions for current and future Congresses and Presidential Administrations. The Study Panel will report publish its findings in Spring 2015.

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The Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense will assess the Nation's preparedness against potentially catastrophic biological or large-scale chemical incidents, both natural and manmade. It will identify changes to U.S. policy and law necessary to strengthen national resilience while optimizing resource investments. Four meetings will be convened in Washington, D.C. beginning in December 2014 on biological and chemical threat awareness, prevention and protection, surveillance and detection, and response and recovery, with additional meetings occurring in regions throughout the US. The Panel will identify and recommend changes to U.S. policy and law to strengthen national biodefense while optimizing resource investments. The Report of the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense will be issued in Spring 2015. Hudson Institute and the Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies are sponsoring institutions with additional institutions providing financial support.