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Government Gets ‘C’ Grade on “WMD Terror Report Card”

ATLANTA, GEORGIA (September 10, 2008) A year and half after the 9/11 Commission’s call for “maximum effort” against Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) terrorism, the government’s performance has been graded a ‘C’ by Georgia Tech’s Dr. Margaret E. Kosal. Kosal, a lead author of the “*WMD Terror Report Card*,” joined U.S. Representative Lee Hamilton and former Senator Slade Gorton in debuting the Report Card, an evaluation by the 9/11 Commission + 6 Initiative of the Partnership for a Secure America (PSA), a bipartisan center for national security studies.

There are a number of reasons for the less than stellar rating of the U.S. government’s performance, “Many recommendations of the 9/11 Commission have not been implemented or were implemented very late,” said Kosal, Assistant Professor at the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs within the Ivan Allen College.

“It has been five years since the release of the 9/11 Commission report, yet there is still no single point of coordination within the U.S. government.”

Putting someone in charge was a core recommendations of the 9-11 report and the WMD Terror Prevention Report Card cited it as one of three priority ‘next steps’ the government must take:

- 1) “Put Someone in Charge. There is a critical need for a top-level official with authority to make government-wide decisions on funding and programs. Someone needs to be responsible for turning our resolve into results.
- 2) Build the Blueprint. We need a strategic plan that links all existing programs together, prioritizes funding across the Federal Government, and coordinates implementation. We can no longer afford to hope that our patchwork of programs and initiatives will naturally cohere into an effective whole.
- 3) Strengthen International Cooperation. The U.S. cannot be safe working alone. Terrorism does not respect borders. We must utilize multilateral institutions, regional organizations and bilateral ties. We must be firm in our goals, but flexible in our approach.”

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Kosal offered a simple summary of points two & three, “If we want to strengthen international cooperation, we need to improve strategic communication.”

With government agencies, Congress, and the administration pretty much on hold pending the outcome of the November election, Dr. Kosal doesn't foresee rapid movement on the report's action items: “The thinking isn't about the current administration; the impetus and the goals are to influence the next administration on Day 1 ... regardless of political affiliation.”

The Report Card and supporting papers by Dr. Kosal and two other independent experts provide a straightforward assessment of the government's performance in three areas: Maximum Effort to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism = Grade C; Maximum Effort to Prevent Chemical Terrorism = Grade B-; Maximum Effort to Prevent Biological Terrorism = C-. Overall Grade = C.

The report reflects numerous failures by differing agencies who were charged with WMD Terror Prevention. Kosal cites as a specific example that the “Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007” were not introduced until January 2007. Included in that bill was legislation on screening cargo entering US ports for nuclear devices, rail transportation security, and increased security on industrial chemical facilities – all of which were unfulfilled recommendations from the 9/11 Commission.”

The Report Card on WMD Terrorism and supporting academic papers are intended as a non-partisan evaluation of how well government agencies have done in making America more secure against terrorism using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons.

For further detail: <http://psaonline.org/article.php?id=393>

On September 5, 2008, Kosal also briefed a 9-member commission tasked with evaluating Federal government activities to reduce the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) headed by former Senator Bob Graham. The *Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism* was assembled at the behest of Congress to assess the current state of relevant programs and initiatives and to provide recommendations to increase the effectiveness of these activities. Prof. Kosal's briefing conveyed her assessment of policies intended to reduce the threats posed by chemical weapons proliferation and terrorism. She also addressed issues of threats from emerging technologies, such as nanotechnology and synthetic genomics, for both biological and chemical weapons proliferation and terrorism. This briefing informed the Commission in preparation of its report to Congress in November of 2008.

Biography

Dr. Margaret E. Kosal

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Before joining the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Dr. Margaret E. Kosal was Science and Technology Advisor within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). She also served as the first liaison to the Biological and Chemical Defense Directorate at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Kosal received her doctoral degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) working on biomimetic nano-structured materials and has lectured nationally and internationally on both technical and international security subjects. In 2000, Kosal co-founded a sensor company, where she led research on biological, chemical, and explosive detection and spearheaded efforts toward the real-world applications of the technology. Previously, Kosal has held positions at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, the Monterey Institute of International Studies' (MIIS) Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), and the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS). She has been recognized across the U.S. federal government for her leadership as part of the interagency Nonproliferation and Arms Control Technology Working Group, as DoD representative to the group charged with leading the National Nanotechnology Initiative, and in the NATO Nanotechnology for Defense Working Group. Dr. Kosal is currently completing a book exploring scenarios and strategies regarding the benefits and potential proliferation threats of nanotechnology and other emerging sciences for international security.

The Sam Nunn School of International Affairs within the Ivan Allen College at Georgia Tech was created in 1990 and named in honor of former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn in 1996. The only school of its kind at a major technological university, the Sam Nunn School is committed to a new model of professional education in international affairs that focuses on understanding the global context of advances in science, technology and policy. Nunn School alumni are distinguished leaders in the fields of policy, law, business, education, communications, and the non-profit sector.

The Georgia Institute of Technology is one of the nation's premiere research universities. Ranked among U.S. News & World Report's top 10 public universities, Georgia Tech educates more than 16,000 students every year through its Colleges of Architecture, Computing, Engineering, Liberal Arts, Management and Sciences. Tech maintains a diverse campus and is among the nation's top producers of women and African-American engineers. The Institute offers research opportunities to both undergraduate and graduate students and is home to more than 100 interdisciplinary units plus the Georgia Tech Research Institute. During the 2003-2004 academic year, Georgia Tech reached \$341.9 million in new research award funding.

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