

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

PHILIP D. ZELIKOW
Associate Professor
of Public Policy



79 JOHN F. KENNEDY STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138
(617) 496-6891
FAX (617) 495-8963

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To: Members, Universities Study Group on Grand Terrorism
From: Philip Zelikow *PZ*
Subj: Plan for Meeting on January 28

Introduction

We will meet from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We will be in the Agassiz Room of the Charles Hotel, which is adjacent to the Kennedy School. We will have food in the room for a light lunch, if you find that convenient.

Our last memo, of December 1, explained that we will focus on policy responses, not the threat. Building on our November 25 discussions, the memo then broke the policy challenge into four parts, each of which with seven functional categories. We also listed the concerns that seem especially problematical on this topic.

Adapting current law, we can define "grand terrorism," the scope of our study, as politically motivated violence or destructive assault (including by electronic means) against civilians or unarmed/off duty military personnel carried out by clandestine agents of states or by private groups either using, or contemplating the use, of weapons of mass destruction. Such weapons are defined in federal law (18 U.S.C. §2332A), and we add to that definition electronic techniques and software used for mass destruction of vital computer codes to an extent that threatens provision of vital public services.

At this meeting we will discuss the requisites of an "end-to-end national strategy to achieve specified objectives." We will try to specify those objectives.

To give you a sense of outside debate of policy to counter grand terrorism we include a recent article on the subject by Richard Betts and an exchange between Bruce Hoffman and Caleb Carr. Betts seems to emphasize a political approach, reevaluating American overseas commitments. In contrast Carr discussed a more traditional military approach, which Hoffmann critiqued, with a response from Carr you can read. The pieces are interesting, but perhaps they are most interesting for what they reveal about the sketchy, tentative quality even of the better outside analysis.

As we consider policy objectives, we want to formulate statements that are concrete enough so that we can measure performance. The statements should also be realistic, not necessarily in the context of current policy, but in the context of a policy that a great country would find appropriate to the danger. In 1955, two years before Sputnik, the idea that we would monitor Soviet military deployments from outer space might have seemed far-fetched. Five years later it was a reality.

The objectives are worded in the form of conditions that would be true if we had a successful policy. Though we may wish to add, remove, and change them, the worst thing would be to reduce them to goals so banal or uninformative that they provide no meaningful guidance. These objectives should be a foundation from which officials, analysts, and interested citizens can infer appropriate assignments of responsibility and formulate concepts of operations/conduct operations.

Intelligence/Surveillance/Warning

Since 1945 the United States has given intense attention to any entity and means by which weapons of mass destruction could be delivered against North America, and the territory of allies. The intelligence objectives were straightforward: oriented to governments, weapon development/testing, and deployments. The intelligence problem for grand terrorism is complicated by nonstate actors, difficulties in detecting weapon development, and unconventional deployments. For the cyber threat, deployment and delivery can even be electronic.

We can *consider* at least the following objectives:

1. The US would be aware of and continuously monitor, physically and electronically, any group and their potential state sponsors, that has demonstrated a motive and capacity for use of weapons of mass destruction against the US or its allies. This would include any entity that has ever tested NBC weapons. The entire intelligence community would be able to share in and contribute to this knowledge..
2. The US would be able to detect any test or other use, or deployment, of NBC weapons in the world, realizing the theoretical potential of remote sensing technology and through access and evaluation of relevant evidence in worldwide open sources and supplied to medical, law enforcement, or other regulatory organizations, including at the federal, state, or local level in the US and in friendly countries. Again, the entire intelligence community would be able to share in and contribute to this knowledge.
3. The US would have employed established methods of risk analysis and tools of advanced information management to relate levels of risk with certain activities that have distinctive signatures for possible detection.

Prevention

Prevention can take several forms, from adjusting antagonistic policies of the US to nonproliferation efforts to interdiction. It is hard to see, though, how properly to conceptualize, generically, the broader political suggestions (offered by Betts, for instance) for pulling back from our more antagonistic foreign commitments.

We can *consider* at least the following objectives:

1. Nonproliferation policies would receive at least as much attention as they have commanded during the last decade, with an even greater effort devoted to possible supplies and suppliers of materials that can be used to manufacture biological weapons.
2. The US would have the capacity to remote sense, from close range, any distinctive and measurable physical signatures of NBC weapons and this capacity should be available in the field to relevant agencies. Aided by international agreements among suppliers, materials that can be used in weapons of mass destruction would be marked or tagged, wherever possible, to enhance detection or post hoc identification.
3. The US would have the capacity to ascertain the identity of every person entering the United States or its installations overseas.
4. The US would have the capacity to ascertain or screen the contents of all freight entering the United States or its installations overseas.
5. In addition to existing proscriptions on terrorist activity, the United States would ban all private military organizations (as already defined in federal caselaw and certain state codes) not authorized by the federal or state governments.

Deterrence

The basic concept of deterrence is known. The two great questions, in this setting, are in the validity of our deterrent theories as applied to the particular, strange rationality of the entity we wish to influence, and in the difficulty of making threats sufficiently credible, given clandestine efforts and America's poor track record in making good on its tough declarations. The best example of the problem is the story of Libyan behavior, and US responses, *after* the 1986 raid.

We can *consider* at least the following objectives. The first, in varying words, is already US policy. The second is not.

1. Individuals that engage in terrorist acts would be punished as specified in US law, as amended in 1996. If the actors are states, they would be liable to the penalties specified

in US law and, if they have effectively engaged in an armed attack on the United States, to all other measures the US may deem necessary in self-defense.

2. The United States would obtain sufficient international support to shift the burden of proof for compliance with the NPT, BWC, and CWC (and corollary agreements) from states alleging noncompliance to those states whose compliance is in doubt. States with doubtful compliance would be required to prove that they are not developing illegal weapons of mass destruction. Failure to supply such proof would allow worried nations to take necessary actions for self-defense under the UN Charter.

Protection

There is a quotation, probably apocryphal, that he who defends everything defends nothing. Still, there are some places and people that any successful policy would at least make a special, concerted effort to protect.

We can *consider* at least the following objectives:

1. The United States would devote significant planning and resources to the protection of people and facilities that, beyond their intrinsic importance, are critical to the continuity of government operations and the imminent welfare of thousands or even millions of people. Such points needing special protection have been preliminarily defined in the Report of the President's Commission on Critical Infrastructure Protection.¹
2. The United States would deploy a capacity for wide area surveillance, especially of populated areas or centers of special public attention (e.g., the Olympic Games), for relevant, measurable indicators of potential terrorist activity.
3. The United States would have stockpiled protective garments or inoculations for use, where possible, by targeted populations, including protocols for vaccination of populations that might be targeted for attack by biological weapons.

Crisis Management

We have defined this term more narrowly to cover the problems of identifying and prosecuting terrorists and taking other action against them, forceful and diplomatic, preemptive and punitive.

We can *consider* at least the following objectives:

¹ This list would need to include sites of unique historical and cultural importance, such as all universities that are more than 350 years old.

1. The United States would have the capacity to identify, at least after the fact, those individuals and governments directly responsible for possible use of weapons of mass destruction.
2. The United States would be able to employ the full spectrum of uses of force in any part of the world, with minimum collateral damage, to thwart a possible attack that might be prepared by any group or state that has demonstrated a motive and capacity for use of weapons of mass destruction against the US or its allies.
3. The United States would be able to retaliate in any part of the world, along the full spectrum of uses of force and with minimum collateral damage, against those who are directly responsible for any use of weapons of mass destruction against the US or its allies.

Consequence Management

We can *consider* at least the following objectives:

1. The United States, including federal, state, and local governments, would be ready to respond effectively within hours, if not minutes, to any use of a weapon of mass destruction against American targets with appropriate and specific measures to mitigate the severity of nuclear, biological, or chemical attack. These measures would include emergency medical care, distributions of protective gear or medications, evacuations, and area quarantines, among other measures.
2. The United States would be ready to evaluate the nature of the attack, including directed attacks on computer networks, and coordinate plans for forensic investigation with other, simultaneous plans for emergency response.
3. Where risks are too irreducible, the United States would have prepared emergency plans, including redundant or alternative control systems, for operation of critical infrastructure.

Lessons Learned

A successful policy would include an established capacity to reflect upon simulated, potential, and real episodes of grand terrorism and report on what can be learned.

Attachments:

1. Richard K. Betts, "The New Threat of Mass Destruction," Foreign Affairs 77 (January/February 1998): 26-41

2. Bruce Hoffman & Caleb Carr, "Counterpoint — Terrorism: Who Is Fighting Whom?," World Policy Journal, Spring 1997, pp. 97-104