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I want to thank the Department of Homeland Security for inviting me to speak here today. I also want to recognize your important work on bio-terrorism.

Last week's apparent suicide of the main suspect in the anthrax attacks of 2001 has put bio-terrorism back in the spotlight. Unfortunately the attention span of politicians and the press isn't very long. Undoubtedly, the next "breaking news item" will divert everyone's attention and people will soon move on to other stories.

As you know, DHS recently announced that we are in a Period of Heightened Alert. This status will continue through the political conventions, the elections in November and six months into the transition to the new administration.

I'd like you to think about three important questions:

- Is this country really ready to respond to and recover from a wide-area biological attack?
- How can we use the lessons we have learned from recent events to improve future performance?
- How can we prioritize our limited resources to maximize our effectiveness in this fight?

Fifteen years ago, this country was attacked. The bombing of the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993 was a warning. It should have been a big wake-up call. Apparently, it wasn't enough. The same building was hit again on September 11, 2001, with devastating results. This time, the Nation reacted with very definite improvements, such as better cooperation within the intelligence community, better transportation and border security, enhanced infrastructure protection, and stronger first responder capabilities.

But have you noticed – as time goes on – we are again becoming complacent. America seems to be falling asleep again. Exit polling during the 2004 elections showed that 19% of the voters said terrorism was their top concern. Today that number is around 4%. A CNN poll last summer showed 41% thought a terrorist attack on the homeland was forthcoming. That number continues to decline and is now 35%. Whether it is because the public doesn't understand the threat or chooses to ignore it, the result is the same.

But think about this: With the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, soaring energy prices the sagging economy, and the devastated housing market dominating the headlines how many people are really focused on homeland security? It is easy to see how it gets lost when so many other factors that are affecting our daily life.

During the last 18 months as the Presidential candidates discussed their priorities, homeland security was rarely mentioned. That is unfortunate. Because of the way the media reports news, homeland

security doesn't fit neatly into a 30 second sound bite, but that doesn't mean politicians should be able to ignore it.

This group gathered here is well aware of the threat posed by terrorists. Obviously the rest of the country is not. 9/11 and major events since then, like the anthrax and ricin attacks, have taught us to expect the unexpected.

For the first responder and public health communities represented in this room, the unexpected is part of our job. It's important for all of us to acknowledge that we are key actors in a much larger homeland security drama. Each of our roles is important. We must think of prevention, response and recovery as a continuum of interrelated activities and responsibilities. Our success ultimately will be measured by how well we prepare for, respond to and recover from: the unknowable, the unprecedented, and maybe the unthinkable.

I spend a lot of time thinking about this....because like all of you, that's my job. And I have to tell you: I'm concerned and I'm sure you are too. I don't believe that this country is as prepared for another terrorist attack as it should be. Improved BioWatch technology is important and necessary. Faster notification provides for a more rapid response, both health and environmental. Enhanced efforts related to research of medical countermeasures are also imperative.

As you know, DHS, HHS and DoD are leading the charge in the bio-terrorism field. EPA thinks these are wise investments and will prove very beneficial. DHS and DoD's Interagency Biological Restoration Demonstration (IBRD) project is working on the continuum of prevention, response and recovery activities and responsibilities for a wide-area anthrax attack. Local, State and Federal Departments and Agencies (DHS, DoD, DOJ and EPA) are working together on IBRD to identify critical operations and gaps in our preparedness. However, we can't detect or prevent everything.

If we can't stop an attack, we need to be able to respond to it sooner and find technologies to help us recover from it better. Congress has not dealt with the issue as a serious national security concern and they should. Bioterrorism must be taken seriously and funded accordingly. Response to and recovery from a biological attack is not something we can treat solely as a budget drill. Response and recovery capacity are critical areas that need to be developed. We really need to start thinking about the long term recovery phase. It is a very challenging area that has not received its proper share of attention.

EPA has significant responsibilities in the event of a bioterrorism attack. In the National Response Framework, EPA was given the lead for Emergency Support Function 10, which includes biological agents. In Homeland Security Presidential Directive 10, EPA was tasked to develop decontamination strategies and guidelines.

In my position at EPA, I've used the lessons learned from these incidents to move the Agency towards the next level of preparedness. EPA is preparing for five simultaneous, weapons of mass destruction events. I am particularly concerned with improving our Nation's ability to decontaminate following chemical, biological, and radiological events. Of course, EPA is preparing for all hazards, but we're focusing on anthrax and a radiological dispersal device (dirty bomb). Some people question why we think this way. It is not hard to imagine terrorists releasing chemical, radiological, or biological agents in multiple cities across the US.

Recent events around the world have shown that terrorists like to use multiple, simultaneous attacks as a way to maximize physical damage and economic loss, and increase their psychological impact.

Consider these facts:

U.S., September 2001: 4 planes, plus one more aircraft may not have gotten off the ground.

U.S., September and October 2001: At least 4 anthrax letters mailed and 4 contaminated sites in Florida, New York, Washington, DC and Connecticut.

Madrid, Spain, March 2004: 10 explosive devices on trains. This incident occurred a few days before their Presidential election and affected the outcome.

London, England, July 2005: 4 explosive devices on subway cars and a bus.

London, England, July 2005: 5 explosive devices, 4 activated, all malfunctioned.

Mumbai, India, July 2006: 8 explosive devices on trains.

London, England to U.S., August 2006: British Intelligence disrupted a planned attack targeting 10 planes bound for the U.S.

Jaipur, India, May 2008: 7 bombs throughout the city.

See the pattern?

The likelihood of multiple, simultaneous events is a very reasonable planning assumption. At EPA, we may be ready to respond to certain types of small scale events, but we are not ready to respond to multiple events like the ones I have just described or wide-area bio-terrorism events. However, we are working on the issue through more emphasis on planning, additional personnel, better training, and more equipment.

I wish that I could say that EPA's heightened preparedness stance will be enough to deal with whatever catastrophes tomorrow brings. I wish that I could say that the progress made in homeland security by the Nation as a whole will be enough. But I don't believe that. Instead, if we face multiple, large-scale events, I fear that we will fail. And fail miserably.

Just a few short years ago, what happened in New Orleans shook many people's faith in our system of governance. Almost three years later, New Orleans is still facing many challenges. Imagine the long-term recovery challenges related to a biological attack. How can we, as a country, feel better prepared when the new National Response Framework – the successor to the plan used during Hurricane Katrina – doesn't really address long-term recovery? Talk about short-sightedness. Or maybe I should call it failure of hindsight. We and our legislators need to address this glaring gap in recovery.

Now, some of you may be tempted to dismiss me as a professional cynic, but first hear me out. We can't afford to forget that we have very determined adversaries committed to destroying our people, our freedom, and our way of life.

So what can we do? How can this Country achieve the next level of preparedness?

We need to make appropriate investments along the continuum of interrelated activities and responsibilities in the areas of prevention, protection, response, and recovery. The Government has spent billions of dollars on homeland security, most of it towards detection, prevention and intelligence efforts. EPA fully supports continued funding in these key areas. But we must also equally prepare for response and recovery. And not just the immediate response, but the long haul of restoring the impacted community, the environment, and the economy.

We have improved our ability to respond to and recover from a small attack thru the collective experience we gained during the anthrax events in 2001 at the Senate Hart Building and the Post Office buildings, important workshops like this one and the workshops DHS sponsored related to a biological attack at an airport. That said we have NO experience or comprehension of the challenges we would face after a wide-area biological terrorist attack.

Few people inside the government have really thought about how complex the clean-up from a wide-area anthrax release would be. The challenges for personnel and technology are mind boggling. Organisms like anthrax are very persistent. If they are released in an outdoor environment, the contamination would be widespread. An outdoor release of anthrax spores in a major metropolitan area could cause tens of thousands of deaths. Preventing cross-contamination would be an enormous challenge. Characterization and clean-up of the area would be unprecedented. There could easily be hundreds of thousands of samples that need to be gathered and analyzed. The current laboratory capacity for environmental samples is grossly insufficient. An airborne anthrax release is predicted to highly contaminate numerous city blocks and hundreds of buildings. With our current capability, just the interior building decontamination efforts would take 10 to 20 years.

While the federal government has some limited decontamination capabilities, we would rely on private companies to do the majority of the actual clean-up like we did in 2001. We know that terrorists have the ability to weaponize certain biological agents. Just how likely is this?

Some of you may listen to Randall Larsen's "Homeland Security: Inside and Out" on public radio. Larsen is a retired Air Force Colonel, Director of the Institute for Homeland Security, and author of a compelling book, *Our Own Worst Enemy: Asking the Right Questions about Security to Protect You, Your Family, and America*. According to Larsen, a biological weapon can be made using open source information with equipment bought off the internet for less than what people pay for a luxury car.

As we learned the hard way during the anthrax attack in 2001, exposure can be deadly if not caught early enough and clean-up will be costly. A biological terrorist attack would not only potentially sicken or kill a large number of people, but it would also create significant environmental, psychological, social and economic damage.

As you in this room know, there may be a gap of 12 to 36 hours before there is a confirmation of a biological release. As you also understand, there could be a delay of days or weeks before people started showing symptoms after a biological attack. My assessment of the greatest and the most likely risks is consistent with Larsen's and many of the other national experts' analyses.

Why? We have already seen anthrax used as a weapon in this country. I truly believe that it's not a matter of "if it can happen", but a matter of "when".

I spoke earlier of prioritizing and fixing the most critical response and recovery gaps. If this happened, let me set the scene for how events would unfold. Following a biological attack, the public and

political pressures will be overwhelming: A biological terrorist attack evokes a special fear. Everyone from the President to the person on the street will want accurate information as fast as possible. The immediate concern will be the health of the citizens and figuring out how to get antibiotic medicines to millions of potentially affected people. In the meantime, the finger-pointing and blame game antics will become acute and will dominate the headlines.

The responding organizations, particularly the EPA, will not have the luxury of only focusing on the short-term response. They will be asked right away: What is your decontamination and recovery plan? Where are you going to start? How fast will you get it accomplished? When can you reopen the impacted areas?

If an attack happened in a major metropolitan area, the social and psychological effects would be enormous. The people of the city that has been attacked, indeed the entire area around it, would expect a speedy recovery to such an incident. If it happened tomorrow, we won't be able to meet their expectations. The current gaps in the country's response and recovery capabilities are just too big to overcome without significant resource investments.

If there were multiple, large-scale attacks, the national system we currently have in place would be seriously strained. Today's science, technology and number of trained personnel are simply not sufficient to meet the needs of such a response. There is also a lack of equipment that would hamper our response and recovery efforts. Extensive sample collection and laboratory analyses will be critical to decision making.

The only way the public will be able to return to their homes, schools, and businesses is after decontamination has been completed. The country's capability and capacity to process a huge volume of samples is lacking. The same is true for capacity and capability related to decontamination activities, which will also be critical.

Decontamination is part of response, but receives little effort in planning and exercises. To my knowledge, decontamination and recovery have never been emphasized or seriously addressed in any of the national level exercises and that must change. Early on after an attack, the obvious priority would be the health and safety of the public. People will be severely affected psychologically when they realize others are dying.

Next, the government would focus on getting critical infrastructure and other key resources functioning again. However, as the days and weeks go by, you can count on conflict erupting on what the next monitoring and cleanup priorities should be. Resources will be scarce. You can count on one hand the number of companies that can handle anthrax remediation.

That is unacceptable and must change and change in the very near future. Priorities will have to be set at a very high level. From a technological standpoint, this country has no precedent for a large-scale decontamination of an urban area. Determining which decontamination technique works best where will involve a lot of trial-and-error and time. There will also be large-scale waste management issues related to contaminated waste water and debris. These will pose technical and political challenges.

So you can see why clean-up activities would likely continue for a long time in the aftermath of a wide-area biological attack. And a community can't recover until you've cleaned up. I'm not talking weeks, or even months. At our current level of decontamination capability, EPA estimates that it could

take 10 to 20 years just to decontaminate the interior of buildings affected by an urban release of anthrax.

Creating a prepared Nation will be an enduring challenge. Through your hard work, you can enable us to successfully carry out our respective duties on the continuum of detection, response and recovery. To be successful, we must guard against complacency. We must plan for the possibility of multiple, simultaneous catastrophes. We must fix the critical gaps in our ability to respond to and recover from the greatest risks. We must educate the public, the press and the political leaders and get them to understand the complexity of the problem.

I'll leave you with some final thoughts: Right now, at this very moment, terrorists are planning to attack our country. We need to continue to work together to emphasize and expedite our efforts. Detection, prevention, response and recovery are interrelated and we should increase our capacity and capabilities as rapidly as possible.

Remember, IT'S NOT A MATTER OF "IF", BUT A MATTER OF "WHEN."

Thank you.