

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Statement by the President on the National Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism

December 10, 2018

My fellow Americans:

As President, my most sacred responsibility is to keep the American people safe from those who would do us harm.

Over the past two decades, we have witnessed unspeakably savage terrorist attacks on our own soil and around the world. For many years, terrorists have employed assassinations, kidnappings, shootings, and bombings to gain notoriety or advance their causes. Today, they aspire to use increasingly lethal methods to commit mass murder in pursuit of their goals. We must assume that the most fanatical of these groups will gravitate toward weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including chemical, biological, radiological, and even nuclear weapons.

Several terrorist groups have made clear their desire to obtain WMD and use them against innocent people. Already we have seen ISIS use chemical weapons on Middle Eastern battlefields, and there is little doubt they, and others like them, would gladly deploy WMD against the United States if they could. To date, we have been spared such attacks because of the extraordinary efforts of our military personnel, intelligence services, and law enforcement organizations. As the threat of WMD terrorism continues to evolve, however, our defenses against it must evolve as well.

In particular, the spread of technologies that can be used for either peaceful or malicious purposes may give terrorists access to weapons that were once limited to a small handful of countries. While we harness science to generate energy and spread prosperity, terrorists would happily deploy technology to sow death and destruction around the world. One of the great challenges of our age is to place WMD and associated materials and expertise as far beyond the reach of these madmen as possible.

Consequently, my Administration has developed a comprehensive National Strategy for Countering WMD Terrorism to reduce the risk that terrorists are able to attack the United States and its interests with WMD. This strategy contains a number of noteworthy departures from past practices, underscoring the boldness and innovation of my Administration's approach to the WMD terrorism threat.

The new strategy is comprised of three core elements. First, the United States will lead global efforts to close off terrorists' access to WMD and related materials. Second, the United States will apply consistent pressure against terrorist groups that seek to obtain and use these weapons, including by targeting terrorist WMD specialists and facilitators. Third, as an insurance policy, the United States will strengthen its defenses against WMD threats at home and abroad.

From the September 11, 2001 attacks to the atrocities in London, Paris, Madrid, throughout the Middle East, and around the world, terrorists have demonstrated that their barbarity is a threat to all mankind. Accordingly, as part of our new strategy, we will continue to globalize the counter-WMD fight through enhanced partnerships with our allies and partners worldwide.

As we work to defeat the poisonous ideologies that inspire terrorism, we can and will dramatically reduce the likelihood of the most dangerous weapons falling into the hands of the world's most dangerous people. In doing so, we will ensure that we deny these maniacs the outcomes they desire most—to effect wholesale changes to our foreign policy, our national character, and our way of life.

Sincerely,

DONALD J. TRUMP

The White House,
December 2018.

NOTE: The statement, dated December 2018, was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 10 as part of the National Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism.

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