



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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America, Six Months after 9/11, While United by Fear of Weapons Of Mass Destruction, Reveals Concern About Loss of Individual Freedom in NTI/Scientific American Survey

Washington, DC & New York, February 26 – According to a just-released survey commissioned by *Scientific American* (www.sciam.com) and the **Nuclear Threat Initiative** (www.nti.org), more than three-fourths of Americans are fearful of a possible attack with weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and less than half have confidence that the government’s current efforts to protect the nation are sufficient. The survey of 1,012 adults earlier this month also found respondents hold significant worry about a loss of individual freedoms.

The survey also revealed that black and Hispanic Americans feel more vulnerable and significantly less confident in our government than do whites.

The survey, which probed opinions regarding threats to safety – including weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical and biological weapons) – and personal liberties, was conducted as part of a national telephone omnibus poll.

“The country at large is much more acutely aware of how vulnerable we are following 9/11,” says John Rennie, Editor in Chief of *Scientific American*. “Our upcoming Summit will tackle some of the concerns highlighted in this survey: the uneasy balance between preserving civil liberties and public safety, as well as the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, including biological and nuclear terrorism.” *Scientific American’s Summit on Privacy, Security and Safety: Preserving an Open Society in an Age of Terrorism*

(www.globalprivacysummit.net) will be held March 5-6 at The Plaza Hotel in New York.

“Finding the right balance between security and liberty depends on realizing that the proponents of security and the proponents of civil liberties are not antagonists, but partners seeking compatible, mutually reinforcing goals,” notes Charles B. Curtis, President and Chief Operating Officer of NTI. “Our best hope is not to find the right answer, but to find the right balance. That balance can never be achieved unless our actions are built on a clear understanding of the threats.”

Curtis is a featured keynote at the Summit. His talk, entitled, “Putting First Things First – the Global Challenge of Reducing the Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction,” is scheduled for 8:15 AM on March 6th.

About NTI

The Nuclear Threat Initiative is a charitable organization dedicated to reducing the global threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. NTI is co-chaired by CNN founder Ted Turner and former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn. NTI’s website, www.nti.org, has in-depth resources on the threats from weapons of mass destruction as well as an exclusive daily news service produced by the National Journal Group with original reporting and a summary of the day’s global news on weapons of mass destruction.

About Scientific American

For more than 156 years, *Scientific American* magazine, one of the world’s most respected publications, has covered major innovations and breaking science.

The Scientific American Magazine Group is operated by Holtzbrinck Publishers, a U.S. subsidiary of Verlagsgruppe Georg von Holtzbrinck GmbH, which is a privately held international media corporation with operations in more than 40 countries. In addition to The Scientific American Magazine Group, Holtzbrinck Publishers includes the book publishing houses Farrar, Straus & Giroux; W. H. Freeman; Henry Holt and Company; St. Martin’s Press and Tor; the academic and scholarly publishing company Palgrave U.S.; the College Publishing Group of Bedford Freeman Worth; the medical publisher Hanley & Belfus; and the distribution company VHPS.

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NTI/Scientific American “Weapons Of Mass Destruction” Survey Key Findings

Washington, DC & New York, February 26 – A just-released survey commissioned by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (www.nti.org) and *Scientific American* (www.sciam.com) shows that 76% of Americans are fearful of a possible attack by weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The survey also found that less than half (47%) feel confident that the government’s efforts to protect the nation are sufficient. Conducted earlier this month, the survey queried 1,012 adults as part of a national telephone omnibus poll. The margin of error for the sample overall is +/- 3%.

The Public Fears Future Attacks Similar To 9/11

Respondents are most likely to fear attacks similar to ones that have already occurred—a plane hijacking and a biological attack.

- Slightly more than a fourth (27%) are at least “very” personally worried about an attack by any weapon of mass destruction.
- Nearly half (49%) are somewhat worried about a biological attack.
- A plurality are somewhat worried about a chemical or nuclear attack (43% and 39%, respectively).
- More than one-third (35%) feel extremely or very worried about a “conventional” terrorist attack (deploying homemade bombs, hijacking, or kidnapping).

Where We are Vulnerable

About a fifth (19%) say “downtowns of large cities” when asked which target is most at risk for a terrorist attack. Nuclear plants are also viewed as vulnerable (14%). At the time the survey was conducted (during the early days of the Olympics), ten percent believe “amusement parks and sporting events” are most vulnerable to attack. A sizeable number (15%) volunteered that “all of the above” are most at risk.

Current Efforts To Protect Americans From These Weapons Are Seen As Barely Sufficient – Concern Grows with Increased Information

Although nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%) agree with President Bush that keeping weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, biological or chemical weapons) away from terrorists should be our top priority, far fewer are confident that the government is “doing the right amount” to protect Americans from weapons of mass destruction.

- Less than half (47%) express confidence that the government is doing enough.
 - When presented with more information, this confidence dropped:
 - Against a quote from bin Laden about acquiring WMD, 42% feel the government is doing the right amount.
 - With knowledge regarding the lax security for nuclear weapons materials in the wake of the collapse of the former Soviet Union (FSU), confidence plummets to only 28%.
- A fifth (19%) believe we are *not* doing enough.
 - This number increases to 25% when respondents learn about bin Laden’s threat.
 - When thinking of vulnerability of nuclear weapons materials in Russia, even more – 29% – believe not enough is being done.
- Few (3%) feel that too much is being done, which is fairly consistent, regardless of any additional information presented.
- A third (32%) feel that they don’t know enough to make a decision.
 - The numbers are about the same (31%) when respondents learn of bin Laden’s stated intention to acquire weapons of mass destruction.
 - Yet, far more are uncertain (41%) when they learn about threats from nuclear weapons materials in Russia.

Minorities More Skeptical

Although nearly half (48%) of whites feel the government is doing enough, fewer minorities have that same degree of confidence (37% of blacks and 31% of Hispanics).

Similarly, blacks and Hispanics are consistently much more likely than whites to feel government efforts are *insufficient*.

- 17% of whites, 30% of blacks and 29% of Hispanics are pessimistic as to our government's ability to protect the nation.

Majority are worried about loss of individual freedoms

In the wake of the “shoe bomber” on the one hand and incidents of overly zealous and intrusive airport screenings, there continues to be much debate on the trade-off of personal freedoms for increased security. Addressing some of the proposed solutions such as identification cards and increased phone tapping reveals a clear majority of Americans (68%) are at least somewhat worried about losing some of these freedoms.

- A plurality (39%) are “somewhat concerned.”
- More than a quarter (28%) are “a great deal concerned.”
- Fewer than a third (31%) are “not at all concerned.”

Blacks and Hispanics are profoundly more concerned about giving up personal freedoms.

- A plurality (40%) of both blacks and Hispanics are a great deal concerned, with over a third (36% of blacks, 34% of Hispanics) somewhat concerned.
- Only a fifth (22%) of blacks and a fourth (25%) of Hispanics are not at all concerned.

By comparison:

- More whites (33%) are not at all concerned about a loss of individual freedoms.
- Twenty-six percent are a great deal concerned, with a plurality (40%) somewhat concerned.

Additional survey details are available upon request.

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