New York City Likely Target For Nuclear Terrorism, Author Says

Al-Qaeda is likely to acquire and use nuclear weapons against American cities, unless the U.S. government takes the risk of nuclear terrorism far more seriously, claims the author of a controversial new book, in several radio interviews.

New York, NY (PRWEB) September 19, 2005 -- For those responsible for America's security in a post-9/11 world, it is the ultimate nightmare: Al-Qaeda detonating a nuclear device in a major American city. When asked by Cincinnati radio talk show host Bill Cunningham how many people would die if terrorists set off a nuclear bomb in a major American city, author Sheldon Filger estimated a million people would likely be killed if New York City were the target. "A nuclear detonation in mid-town Manhattan would kill 500,000 people immediately, with another half million dying from the affects of radioactive contamination," Filger told Cunningham. Mr. Filger is the author of "King of Bombs" (www.kingofbombs.com), a novel based on a future scenario for nuclear terrorism.

Sheldon Filger was interviewed by several radio talk shows, coinciding with the fourth anniversary of Al-Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC. Himself a witness to the 9/11 attacks in New York, Mr. Filger indicated in a series of interviews that New York was highly vulnerable to devastation from nuclear terrorism, despite the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security in the wake of 9/11. Referring to the then highly criticised response of the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration) to Hurricane Katrina, Filger told Oklahoma City radio talk show host Mark Shannon, "The American people should reflect on how utterly helpless any government attempt to alleviate the infinitely worse devastation and loss of life resulting from an act of nuclear terrorism would be. One urgent conclusion we should all draw is that America should do everything in its power to eliminate the threat of nuclear terrorism. The alternative is to face consequences that would defy our most horrific nightmares."

Commenting on the Bush administration's response to the threat of nuclear terrorism, Mr. Filger told Washington radio talk show host Bernie McCain that the war in Iraq was distracting the government from focussing on the most dire threats to the American homeland. Al-Qaeda has made clear its intention to acquire and use nuclear weapons on several occasions, Filger told McCain. Most recently, Osama bin Laden's deputy in Al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, warned that America would suffer blows that will make it forget the losses it suffered on 9/11 and during the Vietnam war. Mr. Filger believes that the Al-Qaeda leader was alluding to a future attack on an American city, possibly New York, using a nuclear device with the destructive power of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

New York City remains an appealing target for Al-Qaeda's next attack on the United States, according to the author of the controversial book about nuclear terrorism. His novel involves an Al-Qaeda plan to destroy New York City and Los Angeles with nuclear weapons. Based on the research he conducted for his novel, Filger is convinced that the threat of nuclear terrorism is imminent. "No one who has studied the issue in-depth doubts that Al-Qaeda could easily fabricate a crude nuclear weapon that would probably kill one million in New York City," Filger said. "The only thing possibly stopping them is the difficulty in acquiring fissile materials required for a nuclear bomb, either highly enriched uranium or plutonium. The terrorists cannot make fissile materials on their own. Unfortunately, there is plenty of this material scattered throughout the world, in many instances at poorly secured locations, vulnerable to theft, either from Al-Qaeda or through the nuclear black market. Regrettably, the Bush administration is moving far too slowly to address this vulnerability, without any
sense of urgency."

Regarding the black market as a source of fissile materials for Osama bin Laden's organization, Mr. Filger told Bernie McCain that the head of Pakistan's atomic weapons program, Dr. A.Q. Khan, ran a vast black market in illicit nuclear weapons technology and components. "The customers of the A.Q. Khan network included North Korea, Iran, Libya and Iraq," Filger told McCain. He also referred to a meeting that two scientists affiliated with Pakistan's nuclear weapons program had with Osama bin Laden one month before the 9/11 attacks.

"The 9/11 Commission that investigated the intelligence failures leading to the attacks of September 11, 2001 concluded that nuclear terrorism perpetrated by radical Islamist terrorists was the number one national security threat to the United States. Why then is the government ignoring the threat, as though ignorance will make it go away? Once Al-Qaeda has assembled a nuclear device, there is virtually zero possibility of preventing it being inserted into the country through America's porous borders, and brought into midtown Manhattan for detonation. The Bush administration's passivity on a threat that is clearly imminent may have truly apocalyptic consequences," Filger warned.

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Contact Information
Sheldon Filger
www.kingofbombs.com
http://www.kingofbombs.com
204-786-5845

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