

TAKING LEGISLATIVE AIM AT WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

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The world is awash with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and material, says U.S. Senator Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He is the author of three laws which initiated and then expanded U.S. efforts to help the former Soviet Union “safeguard and dismantle its enormous stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, as well as its means of delivery and related materials.” But more must be done, he asserts, “to control threats from biological and chemical weapons” around the world and to address numerous remaining nuclear proliferation issues—among them, Russian short-range tactical weapons, stockpiles of spent reactor fuel, the absence of nuclear agreements with India and Pakistan, and the need for U.S. and European companies to provide “sustainable private sector jobs” for scientists who otherwise may be “tempted to find work helping others acquire dangerous weapons.”

Senator Lugar, a Republican, was first elected to the U.S. Senate from the state of Indiana in 1976 and is the longest-serving U.S. senator in the state’s history.

Photo above: An excavator with giant scissors attached cuts off the nose of a Tu-160 strategic bomber at a Ukraine airbase some 200 miles from the capital Kiev, February 2, 2001. Elimination of the last Tu-160 was carried out under terms of the U.S.-Ukrainian Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. (Efrem Lukatsky, AP Wide World Photos)

At their recent summit in Bratislava, President Bush and Russia’s President Vladimir Putin agreed to conclude cooperative security enhancements at Russia’s nuclear warhead- and material-storage facilities by no later than the year 2008. This new, accelerated deadline is a welcome development that underscores the importance of stopping proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the proliferation of WMD has been the top national security challenge facing the United States. Unfortunately, few people have recognized this fact. During the 1990s, the nuclear terrorist threat barely registered in surveys of public opinion and, as recently as the 2000 presidential election, neither political party’s candidate had clearly stated positions on nuclear terrorism or nonproliferation strategies.

In the face of widespread apathy, the Nunn-Lugar Act, which I co-sponsored with then-Senator Sam Nunn in 1991, has required constant vigilance to obtain funding and support for its work in securing Soviet-era nuclear materials.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent revelations about global terrorism changed all that. During the 2004 presidential campaign, President Bush and his main challenger, Senator John Kerry, delivered major speeches on counterproliferation. In their debates, they agreed that our greatest national security threat was weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands

of terrorists. The report of the 9/11 Commission, an independent panel that examined the September 11 attacks, noted that “preventing the proliferation of [weapons of mass destruction] warrants a maximum effort” and that “Nunn-Lugar ... is now in need of expansion, improvement, and resources.”

A FOURTH INSTALLMENT

Earlier this year, to do just that, I introduced the fourth installment of Nunn-Lugar legislation in Congress. The original initiative, officially named the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, took effect in 1993 and provided U.S. funding and expertise to help the former Soviet Union safeguard and dismantle its enormous stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, as well as its means of delivery and related materials. In 1997, Senator Nunn and I, along with Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico, introduced the Defense Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Act, which expanded Nunn-Lugar’s scope in the former Soviet Union and provided WMD expertise to first responders in American cities.

In 2003, President Bush signed the Nunn-Lugar Expansion Act, which authorized Nunn-Lugar to operate outside the former Soviet Union. My new bill will provide more flexibility to pursue Nunn-Lugar projects outside the former Soviet Union, and it will eliminate congressionally imposed conditions on legislation that have impeded time-sensitive projects. We need to cut the red tape and friction within the U.S. government that hinder speedy responses to nonproliferation opportunities.

Despite these achievements and the success at Bratislava, there is much more to do. The world is awash with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and

materials. Fortunately, the Bush administration is moving on several fronts. In the area of cooperative threat reduction, the president’s fiscal year (FY) 2006 budget proposal seeks \$415.5 million for Nunn-Lugar, an increase from FY 2005 and enough to carry out all scheduled activities.

Soon after the budget request was released in February 2005, Presidents Bush and Putin announced important steps to increase cooperative efforts to enhance the security of Russia’s nuclear stockpile against terrorists. This progress further underscores the need for expanding the Nunn-Lugar program and eliminating the congressionally imposed conditions and certifications that have consistently slowed down implementation of its efforts.

SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

Even as recent international attention has been focused on the nuclear programs in North Korea and Iran, we need to seize this opportunity to control threats from biological and chemical weapons and to make major breakthroughs in the following areas of nuclear proliferation:

- Bring Russian short-range tactical nuclear weapons into the Nunn-Lugar program. For all the success we have had in deactivating Russian intercontinental missiles and strategic warheads, Moscow has so far refused to discuss tactical weapons, which may be even more dangerous.

AN IMPRESSIVE RECORD

Despite obstacles, Nunn-Lugar has made a considerable contribution to nonproliferation. To date, the program has deactivated or destroyed

- 6,564 nuclear warheads
- 568 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)
- 477 ICBM silos
- 17 ICBM mobile missile launchers
- 142 bombers
- 761 nuclear surface-to-air missiles
- 420 submarine missile launchers
- 543 submarine-launched missiles
- 28 nuclear submarines
- 194 nuclear test tunnels

In addition

- 260 tons of fissile material have received either comprehensive or rapid security upgrades
- some 60 nuclear warhead sites have received security upgrades
- 208 metric tons of highly enriched uranium have been blended down to low-enriched uranium
- the International Science and Technology Centers in Russia and Ukraine, of which the United States is the leading sponsor, have engaged 58,000 former weapons scientists in peaceful work
- the International Proliferation Prevention Program has funded 750 projects involving 14,000 former weapons scientists and created some 580 new peaceful high-tech jobs
- Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan are nuclear weapons-free as a result of cooperative efforts under Nunn-Lugar

- Control nuclear materials worldwide. Large amounts of weapons-grade material outside the former Soviet Union pose a threat to international security. We should accelerate the current international programs to



Standing in a cornfield near Holden, Missouri, on October 28, 1995, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry, left, and Russian Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev watch a cloud of smoke rise after they pushed a detonation button setting off an implosion that destroyed an underground Minuteman I I missile silo. The event symbolized the ending of the Cold War: (Cliff Schiappa, AP Wide World Photos)



An explosion of 100 tons of TNT seals the final remaining tunnel of a Soviet-era nuclear testing facility in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, July 29, 2002. In the foreground, Kazak and American flags fly from a satellite communications tower. The explosion marked the end of the nuclear era in Kazakhstan. (Michael Rothbart, AP Wide World Photos)

eliminate stockpiles of spent reactor fuel and to convert research reactors to low-enriched uranium.

- Win nuclear agreements with India and Pakistan. The United States should devote sustained efforts to promote confidence-building measures and support the encouraging steps these two nuclear-armed foes have already made, while taking care to adhere to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations.

- Eliminate U.S. and Russian bureaucratic roadblocks to cooperatively securing vulnerable fissile materials and warhead sites. If the two sides are to meet their Bratislava commitments, Russia will have to stop denying access to sites and refusing to provide tax-free status on contributions from participating countries, and it will have to conclude liability protections for G-8 partners.

- Get more U.S. and European companies to hire weapons scientists. The tens of thousands of scientists we have employed are mostly working at government-sponsored or government-subsidized jobs. We must move many more of these men and women into sustainable private sector jobs so they are not tempted to find work helping others acquire dangerous weapons.

- Secure Russian ratification of the Nunn-Lugar umbrella agreement. This agreement, which underpins all U.S. threat reduction work in the former Soviet Union, needs to be formally extended, but President Putin has so far refused to present it to the Duma for a vote. Without its guarantees, which prevent weapons clean-up contributions from being taxed by Russian authorities and protect U.S. contractors from liability while undertaking this risky endeavor, work could come to a halt.

- Finalize a plutonium disposition agreement. At the Bratislava summit, issues of liability continued to stymie efforts to destroy 34 metric tons of Russian plutonium, despite a fresh U.S. push to resolve the matter.

- Increase the pace of activities under the G-8 Global Partnership Against Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction created in 2002. The United States is living up to its agreement to provide \$10 billion over 10 years for weapons clean-up, but our partners in this community of major industrial democracies are still working to meet

their equivalent pledge. More importantly, we need to concentrate on turning pledges into projects.

The window of opportunity to address these threats will not remain open indefinitely. Our political leadership and nonproliferation experts must act now to follow up on the recent summit and work with Russian authorities to unlock the last doors to the dismantlement of its nuclear weapons program. I hope Congress will do its

part by passing the new Nunn-Lugar bill to eliminate potential obstacles to the Bratislava timetables. Further, we should scour the globe to identify and create opportunities to dismantle dangerous programs outside the former Soviet Union. Only by working night and day to find and eliminate weapons of mass destruction can we fulfill our obligations to protect the American people and, indeed, the people of all nations. ■