

# CONTROLLING THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS WEAPON

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*Members of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty “cannot stand by and allow North Korea and Iran to... arm themselves with nuclear weapons,” says Stephen Rademaker, Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control and Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Nonproliferation, in this lead-off article. NPT signatories, Rademaker asserts, must insist that the two regimes “abandon their nuclear weapons ambitions and return to compliance with the NPT.” Prior to joining the State Department, he was Chief Counsel to the Select Committee on Homeland Security of the U.S. House of Representatives.*

A new world emerged on September 11, 2001—a world more uncertain and dangerous than the one we knew before. In countries around the world, innocents are the target of a new type of war. Terrorists, including al-Qaida, are trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Terrorists demonstrated their willingness to use these devastating weapons even before September 11th with the use of poison gas in Tokyo’s subway. These weapons have become the terrorists’ weapons of choice precisely because they seek to destroy innocent life on an indiscriminate, mass scale. The greatest threat before humanity today is the nexus of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction proliferation.

Rogue states, with close ties to terrorist organizations, also seek to acquire these destructive weapons. North Korea has defied the world, expelled international inspectors, announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and recently claimed to possess nuclear weapons. Iran hid its NPT violations from the world for nearly two decades in an effort to master the technology necessary to build nuclear weapons. It refuses to abandon this effort despite strong international opprobrium.

We cannot stand by and allow North Korea and Iran to flout their obligations, arm themselves with nuclear weap-

ons, and threaten the peace and stability of their regions and the world. Equally troubling is the prospect that they may transfer sensitive nuclear technology or weapons to other rogue states or terrorist organizations.

We know that unscrupulous black marketeers seek to supply the lucrative demand for weapons of mass destruction. They are at work in more countries than we previously suspected. The A.Q. Khan supply network is now known to have manufactured and moved dangerous materials through unsuspecting countries that never would have knowingly allowed this. A sophisticated, clandestine operation such as this increases the probability that terrorists might obtain the weapons they desire most. While we are learning more every day, there is still much to be done to unravel the Khan network and prevent other clandestine proliferation networks from forming or continuing to operate.

Threats of global proportion require a global response. President Bush made this core principle clear in the National Security Strategy of the United States, indicating that we are “guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone. Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations.”

These challenges demand our full attention and action now. We must support and uphold the system of international rules and treaties that keep us safe and secure. This requires a commitment to enforce those rules—to show that there are serious consequences for violations. It also requires that all responsible nations must strengthen their laws and controls to prevent proliferation, including securing and controlling their ports and borders. This is our shared responsibility, for none of us wants inadvertently to help terrorists obtain the terrible weapons they seek.

We must remain united in insisting that Iran and North Korea abandon their nuclear weapons ambitions and return to compliance with the NPT. Libya provided a positive model. In December 2003, Libya admitted to



**Signing ceremony.** Negotiations on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty were completed in 1968. In this photo from July 1 of that year, U.S. Ambassador Llewellyn E. Thompson, left, signs the treaty in Moscow with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko. Among U.S. embassy and Soviet government officials witnessing the ceremony is Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin, standing third from right. (AP Wide World Photos)

having sought nuclear weapons and violating the NPT, but made the strategic choice to renounce weapons of mass destruction. This demonstrates that it is possible for states to abandon the pursuit of illegal weapons, enhance their national security and rejoin the international community.

New and serious proliferation threats require new tools and a willingness to improve and creatively adapt the nonproliferation regime that helps protect us all. The Proliferation Security Initiative is one such new arrangement. It promotes cooperation among states to interdict illicit weapons and materials before they reach their intended destinations. This is one of the major successes in the global effort to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

NPT parties have an important opportunity to strengthen the treaty at a month-long Review Conference in May 2005. This is the seventh such conference since the NPT entered into force in 1970. Never before have the members of the treaty faced the scope of violations that occurred in recent years. In a separate article, Amba-

sador Jackie Sanders, Special Representative of the President for the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, will highlight U.S. goals for the Review Conference. Much work is already under way in many fora to address the new threats to nuclear nonproliferation, and the Review Conference can provide important political affirmation and momentum to this work. We must cooperate closely to preserve the role of the NPT in promoting international peace and security in the decades ahead.

Throughout the 20th century, the international community was repeatedly called upon to meet and overcome fundamental threats to peace and security. We prevailed. In this new century, let us rise to the challenge of our time: preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and thwarting terrorists' deadly aims. If we work together, I have no doubt that we, in our time, shall also prevail. Through constructive collaboration and determination we can keep our citizens safe and build a more secure future for our children. ■