

**SAFE SECURE DISMANTLEMENT OF WEAPONS
OF MASS DESTRUCTION IN RUSSIA**

COMMENTS

OF

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Let me begin by identifying what should be three high priority U.S. national security objectives related to nuclear weapons in Russia:

- * Cooperative reduction and elimination of nuclear weapon delivery systems.
- * Safe, secure dismantlement of nuclear warheads.
- * Providing adequate physical security and material control and accounting of the nuclear warheads and weapons-usable fissile materials.

With regard to the cooperative reduction and elimination of nuclear weapon delivery systems, the Administration has made important progress in insuring that Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus will eliminate their nuclear arsenals and join the NPT as non-nuclear nations.

On the downside, there is a widespread view among Russian experts that the START II Treaty unfairly favors the United States. Consequently, the Russian Duma appears unlikely to ratify the START II Treaty. The Administration has not tried to resolve the Russian concerns over fairness in order to insure ratification of START II. The Administration appears unwilling to engage the Russians in negotiations designed to bypass START II and seek deeper reductions in the arsenals of the two sides that are satisfactory to both sides. The lowest force posture in the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review has more than 3000 operational warheads. The Pentagon may wish to retain an additional few thousand strategic warheads in reserve. This corresponds to U.S. force levels in the 1960s, at the height of the Cold War. The Pentagon is apparently not interested in deeper cuts in the superpower arsenals at this time.

Now let me turn to the issue of warhead and fissile material control in Russia. I will begin by sketching out a few reasons why I believe this issue should be among the very highest U.S. national security concerns.

There are about 30,000 nuclear warheads in the Former Soviet Union, about 1000 tons of weapon-usable highly-enriched uranium (HEU) and 160 tons of separated plutonium in weapons or available for weapons, and about 30 tons of separated civil plutonium stored in Russia. Most, if not all, of these inventories are stored under inadequate conditions of physical security and of material control and accounting.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has said that 40 percent of individual private businessmen and 60 percent of all Russian companies have been corrupted by organized crime. Reports of illegal activities in Russia associated with nuclear materials--offers to sell and successful and unsuccessful attempts to steal nuclear materials--are appearing in the Russian and European press on the order of several per week. Low-enriched uranium fuel has been stolen. A least one case involving the theft of several hundred grams of HEU has been confirmed by the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy

(Minatom). In another case a Russian nuclear scientist was arrested trying to steal 1.5 kilograms of highly enriched uranium.

Corruption is rife in the Russian Army; approximately 3,000 officers have been disciplined for engaging in questionable business practices, and 46 generals and other officers face trial on criminal charges, according to a recent Department of Energy report. Many nuclear warheads are now being stored in facilities constructed for the storage of conventional munitions under less than adequate physical security. Current and former soldiers, either for profit or political reasons, could steal easily transportable tactical nuclear weapons. It would be rather easy to smuggle stolen weapons from a storage depot across the border to anywhere in the Middle East.

These are among the reasons that improving physical security over nuclear warheads and weapons-usable fissile material, and improving fissile material control and accounting in Russia should be among the very highest U.S. national security priorities.

The efforts of this and the previous Administration to insure adequate physical security and fissile material control at existing fixed facilities in Russia have been a failure. With respect to verification of the nuclear warhead dismantlement process, the Clinton Administration has made marginal improvements over the policy of the Bush Administration. However, the U.S. Government has not yet advanced a coherent program for verifying the elimination of tens of thousands of former Soviet warheads and tracking the ultimate disposition of hundreds of tons of surplus bomb-grade materials in the Russian nuclear stockpile. The steps that have been taken are minimal and slow. Moreover, as currently conceived, the Administration's programs for improving the physical security and material accounting of warheads and weapon-usable fissile material in Russia will not have a significant impact on the very dangerous situation at hand.

First, it should be noted the U.S. government does not know within thousands how many nuclear warheads the Russians have. We don't know within hundreds how many warheads are dismantled annually. We don't know within tens of tons how much plutonium the Russians have produced, or within hundreds of tons how much highly enriched uranium the Russians have produced.

The logical first step is to engage the Russians in a reciprocal of exchange of data related to warheads and weapons-usable fissile material. Such a data exchange would:

let us know what the Russians have and where it is;

allow us to independently tell whether weapons and weapons-usable fissile material have been diverted; and

give us a better assessment of what improvements are needed.

But such a program, if it is to be effective, must be comprehensive and must be implemented with full reciprocity.

On 12 February 1992 Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev formerly proposed a reciprocal data exchange among all nuclear nations on inventories of nuclear weapons and fissile materials, and on nuclear weapons production, storage and elimination facilities. For two years the Bush and Clinton Administrations failed to respond positively to this initiative. Recently the Clinton Administration has begun to pursue an exchange of fissile material data with the Russians, but with respect to warheads--operational, active reserve, inactive reserve, retired and awaiting dismantlement--the Pentagon continues to actively block any effort to exchange data bilaterally or multilaterally. Within the Pentagon, the opposition is primarily from the Joint Chiefs. Consequently, there have been no Administration efforts and no successes in this area. The Clinton Administration actively quashed a German initiative to add nuclear weapons to a U.N. registry of conventional arms, and even opposed a registry limited to warheads dismantled. Overall the U.S. transparency effort is a history of missed opportunities.

Since the United States is paying for a major share of the storage facility in Russia that will be used to store fissile material removed from weapons, Russia has indicated it would be appropriate for the U.S. to have some yet to be defined level of transparency over the materials stored therein. But this does not address the immediate problem of the adequacy of the physical security and material accounting at Russian facilities used for storage and processing weapons-usable material today. With respect to what should be the highest priority--safeguarding existing facilities--the Administration's approach is too narrowly circumscribed, is too slow in its implementation, and has been marked by failure.

The Administration has no program whose objective is to improve the physical security of the thousands of Russian nuclear warheads in interim storage prior to their disassembly. As noted earlier, many of these weapons are stored under inadequate physical security at facilities designed for the storage of conventional munitions. We have no program because the Russian Ministry of Defense will not give the U.S. access to Russian nuclear weapons storage sites except on a reciprocal basis, and the Pentagon will not engage in any program that gives Russia oversight over U.S. nuclear weapons. The U.S. program designed to safeguard Russian warheads is limited to two inconsequential programs for providing Kevlar armored blankets and secure rail cars under the DOD-administered Safe Secure Dismantlement (SSD) program.

The U.S. proposals for improving the safeguards over the fissile material presently in storage in Russia do not provide sufficient incentive for the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy (Minatom) to participate, and the Russians have rejected or made meaningless the U.S. proposals to date. For the most part the U.S. proposals provide no means by which the United States can determine independently the adequacy of material

control and accounting and physical security at specific Russian sites. Nor do they provide a capability to measure the success of the proposed U.S initiatives.

The United States stopped production of HEU for weapons in 1964. The United States has agreed to purchase 500 metric tons of HEU from Russia which will be blended down into low-enriched uranium in Russia. By failing to engage the Russians in a data exchange, the U.S. Government does not know what fraction of the total Russian HEU inventory it is purchasing.

The HEU purchase agreement includes a recently negotiated protocol that was meant to detail how the United States would be assured that the HEU was derived from dismantled Russian weapons. The transparency protocol negotiated by the Administration may permit the U.S. to confirm that the uranium was HEU, but it apparently does not permit the U.S to confirm that the HEU actually is from dismantled weapons. Moreover, Russia continues to produce HEU for "nonweapons purposes," in effect replacing the HEU being sold to the United States.

With respect to providing assistance to enable Russia to stop the production of weapon-grade plutonium, the Administration was slow to respond to a Russian request for assistance. The Administration did not get serious until Congress conditioned the Nunn-Lugar money for the plutonium storage facility on a serious commitment to halt plutonium production for weapons through the Markey amendment. The DOE began to take charge. Secretary O'Leary and Minister Mikhailov signed a protocol that looks good enough superficially to satisfy the Markey amendment; but the agreement represented a step backward, rather than forward, in terms of an early shutdown of the remaining Russian plutonium production reactors. The DOE undermined its own initiative by failing to identify a source of western financing before agreeing to condition the reactor conversion on finding such funding.

Two weeks ago, Ambassador Goodby negotiated a follow-on agreement that commits Russia to shut down its three remaining plutonium production reactors by the year 2000 at the latest, and to implement safeguards to ensure that plutonium produced by these reactors would not be used in weapons. While the goal is laudable, this latest agreement does not represent significant progress. Presidents Gorbachev and Yeltsin have already made public commitments to shut down the reactors by the year 2000. The new agreement excludes two other production reactors in Russia that are used for tritium production, and it excludes the chemical separation facilities that process the spent fuel from these reactors.

Half of the plutonium produced in Russia today is chemically separated at a nuclear fuel reprocessing facility that is used to process spent naval and civil reactor fuel. The Russians refuse to include this chemical separation plant in a bilateral safeguards agreement, primarily because the United States refuses to give the Russians reciprocal oversight over U.S. naval reactor fuel. Moreover, in an effort to get the Russian Ministry

of Atomic Energy to consider a broader safeguards agreement, Ambassador Goodby's team assured the Russians that the U.S. Government would not use a future broader agreement as a means to halt civil reprocessing in Russia.

In sum, the Soviet Threat Reduction Act of 1991 ("Nunn-Lugar") had as its fundamental purpose financial assistance to **destroy nuclear weapons, safeguard weapons in connection with their destruction, and establish verifiable safeguards** against the proliferation of such weapons. Now, more than two years later, we see that implementation of Nunn-Lugar by this and the previous Administration has largely failed to accomplish its central purposes, and it is unlikely to do so unless there are fundamental reforms in the Administration's policies and implementation efforts. The Administration's strategy can be characterized as too little, too slow, and most regrettably it may even be too late.

The Administration's current package of initiatives will not succeed. There is no coherent comprehensive objective. There is no effort to achieve a universal, global safeguards regime that covers all nuclear weapons and weapons-usable fissile material. The Pentagon blocks even the more limited data exchange proposed by Foreign Minister Kozyrev. There is no incentive for the key Russian ministries to participate. The Administration does not make constructive use of our nuclear weapons laboratories to attack this problem. The negotiation process is too slow to provide timely results.

Where should we go from here? To give the program any chance of success, it should be restructured to include a more comprehensive and coherent set of objectives. For example, the U.S. national security goals should include the following objectives:

1. Seek deep reductions in the arsenals of all nuclear-weapon states, declared and undeclared.
2. Achieve a universal, global fissile material control regime with the minimum objective of having retired weapons and weapon components subject to some type of monitoring, and other fissile materials stored under international safeguards, such as those of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
3. Achieve a global, verified cutoff in the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes with safeguards over fissile material production facilities.
4. Seek to cap and draw down the world inventories of weapons-usable fissile materials.

President Clinton must include these among his highest national security objectives and treat the desperate situation in Russia with the urgency it deserves. The President should seek agreement from President Yeltsin to have the nuclear weapons laboratories in the two countries establish as their highest priority the cooperative development of the

international control regime outlined above. Initially, this should be a bilateral effort with complete reciprocity. The President should seek to redirect sufficient U.S. defense expenditures in order to pay for the program and provide the Russians with sufficient economic incentives to participate fully and effectively.