



Nuclear Proliferation: Today's Challenges and the U.S. Response

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Introduction

Thank you. It is a pleasure to be here today on a campus with so rich a history and tradition and so strong a commitment to public service and the development of its students.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to university audiences, because the diversity of ages, experience, and perspectives enriches the dialogue and the learning. Many of you are acutely aware of the challenge posed by nuclear proliferation and the dangers inherent in the spread of nuclear weapons to states that did not previously have them. Some of you learned this at the dawn of the atomic age with news of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki or grew up with the ever-present reality of a Cold War arms race between two nuclear superpowers. For others, the Cold War is something that ended when you were three years old, and nuclear weapons may seem like another generation's concern.

Since the beginning of the nuclear age, mankind has faced a stark dilemma: how to exploit nuclear energy's peaceful and productive potential, while preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. Rather than fading with the Cold War, that dilemma is even more acute and multifaceted today, making the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly but not exclusively nuclear weapons, today's preeminent threat to international peace and security. I'd like to take this opportunity to discuss the nature of that threat and how the Bush Administration is responding to it.

The Nature of the Threat

The international community faces the threat posed by states attempting to develop nuclear weapons, despite solemn international obligations under the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or NPT, to refrain from proliferation. In recent years, we resolved such threats posed by both Iraq and Libya. In the recent past, we worked to ensure that only one state with nuclear weapons, Russia, emerged from the break-up of the Soviet Union, rather than four. We brought South Africa, Argentina and Brazil into the nonproliferation regime as non-nuclear-weapon States, which meant South Africa relinquished its nuclear weapons and Argentina and Brazil gave up serious nuclear weapons ambitions.

Today, the international community faces the challenge posed by North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons and, most prominently in today's headlines, from Iran's drive to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. Despite Iran's claims that its nuclear program serves purely peaceful purposes and its solemn obligation to develop nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes, it is clear that Iran seeks a nuclear weapons capability. I will return to the Iran issue in a moment.

The new threat posed by nuclear proliferation is the rapid rise in non-state actors' involvement in the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. As the world learned with the discovery of the secret A.Q. Khan supply network, that involvement includes illicit trafficking in nuclear- and nuclear weapons-related technology, weapons design, and equipment. It also includes non-state actors', particularly terrorists', efforts to acquire and use nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It is made more dangerous by potential cooperation between these groups and states that have violated their NPT nonproliferation obligations.

Also greatly magnified in recent years, is the challenge stemming from the spread of nuclear technology, particularly from those technologies that have direct relevance to the development of nuclear weapons. We must balance the right to peaceful development of nuclear energy with the need to prevent nuclear proliferation.

The U.S. Response: Effective Multilateralism

The Bush Administration has constructed a comprehensive strategy against proliferation. The three pillars of that strategy are: preventing proliferation; countering proliferation; and managing the consequences of proliferation. To prevent proliferation, the Administration has launched expanded efforts to prevent rogue states and terrorists from acquiring WMD, their related materials, and delivery systems. Counterproliferation recognizes that prevention does not always succeed and that we must have the capabilities to deter, detect, defend against, and defeat WMD and those who would use them for malevolent purposes. Consequence management aims to reduce the consequences or tragic effects of a WMD attack at home or abroad.

A central element of all three pillars of the Administration's strategy against proliferation is a commitment to "effective multilateralism," to confronting the problems that we face with realism and determination in league with our international partners. Effective multilateralism is integral to our approach to proliferation prevention, counterproliferation and consequence management. In the prevention of nuclear proliferation, effective multilateralism has meant strengthening existing tools and developing new ones. Let me outline for you some of those tools.

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime

I have already mentioned one essential tool, the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or NPT. The NPT, the cornerstone of the nuclear nonproliferation regime, has created an international norm against nuclear proliferation and established the legal basis for actions against those that violate this norm. I would argue that the NPT and the associated system of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, involving international inspections and verification procedures designed to protect against the diversion of nuclear material from peaceful to non-peaceful weapons programs, have had more success than setbacks in 35 years of attempting to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Setbacks over the years have brought innovations. Based on the lessons learned about gaps in the then existing safeguards system that was learned from the discovery of Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons program in the 1990s, committed members of the nonproliferation regime negotiated the Additional Protocol, which aims to strengthen international safeguards to better detect such clandestine nuclear weapons programs. It does so via expanded access to more facilities and to more information. The Additional Protocol allows international inspectors to inspect and verify so-called "undeclared activities" not just those activities a state has declared open for inspections.

Another international tool includes multilateral export control regimes: principally the forty-five member Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee. To make a nuclear weapon, a country must possess fissile material in the form of separated plutonium or high enriched uranium. These export control regimes seek to establish guidelines to prevent a country from acquiring the technology needed to obtain either of these materials. These international voluntary bodies promote awareness among suppliers of nuclear technologies and materials that could promote proliferation; they also establish a set of common export standards to which all nuclear supplier countries agree to abide.

However, continued proliferation by rogue states and secret supplier networks has made clear that strong supplier commitments and solid national control lists do not automatically translate into prevention of illicit exports associated with WMD. We require multilateral action to enforce those standards. The disruption of the A.Q.Khan supply network and the subsequent decision by Libya to abandon its WMD and longer-range missile programs would not have been possible without effective multilateral action, based on strong intelligence, close cooperation, and active interdiction. Central to those successes was the Proliferation Security Initiative, or PSI, proposed by President Bush.

The PSI has transformed how nations act together against proliferation, harnessing their diplomatic, military, law enforcement and intelligence assets in a multinational, yet flexible, fashion. Over 70 states now support PSI and its Statement of Interdiction Principles, and the number is steadily increasing. Participants are applying laws already on the books in innovative ways and cooperating as never before to interdict shipments, to disrupt proliferation networks, and to hold accountable the front companies that support them.

The PSI-type approach involving like-minded countries is now expanding to cut off financial funding that fuels proliferation. In July, the G-8 Leaders called for enhanced efforts to combat proliferation through cooperation to identify, track and freeze relevant financial transactions and assets. For our part, President Bush issued in June a new Executive Order that authorizes the U.S. Government to freeze assets and block transactions of entities (e.g. NGOs and businesses) and persons engaged in proliferation activities and support.

Another tool in our nonproliferation arsenal includes programs to secure and eliminate nuclear weapon-related facilities and materials and to redirect scientists and scientific communities involved in these projects into civilian sectors. The United States has been engaged in such programs since the launch of the Cooperative Threat Reduction program by Senator Lugar -- my former boss in the U.S. Senate -- and Senator Nunn in December 1991, just after the collapse of the Soviet Union. We have worked cooperatively with the Russian Federation and other former Soviet states since then on nuclear, as well as chemical and biological threats. International engagement on cooperative threat reduction activities has greatly increased since the inauguration of the Global Partnership Against the Threat of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction by the G8 in 2002. The United States provides about \$1 billion annually for these programs for Russia and the FSU alone, and looks to our G-8 partners to fulfill their commitment to match that level.

Strengthening the Regime

President Bush has articulated an ambitious agenda in the prevention of nuclear proliferation to strengthen these existing tools and develop new ones. He has put a strong emphasis on compliance with NPT nonproliferation obligations. He has called for strengthening the IAEA safeguards system by universalizing the more demanding Additional Protocol, making implementation of the Protocol one of the conditions countries must meet to be eligible for nuclear supply, and by creating a Committee on Safeguards and Verification at the IAEA. The Board of Governors created such a Committee in June of 2005, and it met for the first time last November. The President proposed a United Nations Security Council Resolution to criminalize WMD proliferation, and in April 2004, the Council adopted Resolution 1540, which established for the first time binding, i.e., mandatory, obligations on all UN member states to criminalize WMD proliferation, enforce effective export controls, and secure nuclear materials.

President Bush also proposed that there be a complete ban on the export of sensitive uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing technology to all countries not now having full-scale plants and that those countries that forego these fuel cycle programs have access to reliable nuclear fuel at prevailing market prices. He has proposed and we have seen increased international engagement on Cooperative Threat Reduction activities beyond Russia and the FSU.

There has been progress on many of these fronts but much more needs to be done. We are working with the G-8 and the Nuclear Suppliers Group to establish effective controls on enrichment and reprocessing, and thus to prevent states from pursuing nuclear weapons in the guise of supposedly peaceful nuclear energy -- as Iran has done. We are also working with the other nuclear fuel suppliers and the IAEA to develop a mechanism for alternative nuclear supply arrangements in the event of problems with the commercial market. To enhance those efforts, Energy Secretary Bodman announced that the United States will convert more than 17 metric tons of high-enriched uranium to low-enriched uranium, and hold it in reserve to support fuel supply assurances. The results of this action will be doubly positive: it will mean more assured fuel supply which will make it unnecessary for states to develop their own fuel making capacity; and a significant reduction in the amount of weapons-related material -- enough for almost 700 nuclear warheads. We encourage other nuclear supplier states to create such reserves as well.

I would be remiss if I did not draw attention to our reduced reliance on nuclear weapons and the number of U.S. nuclear weapons in our weapons stockpile. Under the bilateral Moscow Treaty, we have agreed to reduce our operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to between 1,700 to 2,200, about a third of the 2002 levels, and less than a quarter of the level at the end of the Cold War. When this Treaty is fully implemented by the end of 2012, the United States will have reduced the number of strategic nuclear warheads it had deployed in 1990 by about 80%. We have reduced our non-strategic nuclear weapons by 90% since the end of the Cold War, dismantling over 3,000 such weapons pursuant to the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991 and 1992. I am hopeful we can begin serious negotiations on an FMCT this year to end the production of weapons usable fissile material at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. You may ask whether further or faster progress should be made now or in the future and that is a legitimate question, but no one can or should, in good faith, question the significant advances that the U.S. has made in this area over the last fifteen years.

I mentioned earlier that I would return to a discussion of the challenge posed by Iran. For nearly two decades Iran has claimed that its nuclear program served purely peaceful purposes, while at the same time, it concealed sensitive nuclear fuel cycle activities and failed to report these activities to the IAEA as required by its NPT commitments. Since late 2002, the IAEA has been investigating evidence of these undeclared activities, and over the past three years, the IAEA has issued nine written reports (and several oral reports) on the results of its investigation. These reports document that since the mid-1980s, Iran has systematically carried out secret nuclear activities, including undeclared uranium enrichment and undeclared plutonium separation activity. They expressly accuse Iran of "Failure on many occasions to cooperate to facilitate implementation of safeguards, as evidenced by extensive concealment activities." When confronted with evidence of its activities, including evidence provided in nine IAEA Board of Governors resolutions, Iran continues its pattern of deception and denial, fails to cooperate fully with the IAEA, and continues to pursue nuclear fuel cycle capabilities in defiance of the international community.

There is no realistic economic justification for Iran's nuclear activities. It is impossible to conclude anything other than that Iran is making its huge investments in its nuclear program to develop a nuclear weapons capability -- especially given its large oil and gas reserves, its lack of any functioning nuclear reactors, and Russia's commitment to supply nuclear fuel for its one reactor currently under construction. One particularly damning piece of evidence recently revealed by the IAEA is a document uncovered by inspectors that indicates Iran received information from a clandestine source on casting and machining hemispheres of uranium metal. There are no known applications for such hemispheres other than for nuclear weapons. As with a number of other questions posed by the IAEA, Iran has yet to fully explain its dealings with this clandestine proliferation network.

As a result of this and much more, the IAEA Board of Governors found Iran in formal noncompliance with its obligations last September. And on February 4th, the Board of Governors, meeting in extraordinary session, reported Iran to the United Nations Security Council. We expect the Security Council to act on Iran's behavior after the IAEA's next Board meeting in early March. The international community is exploring and exhausting every diplomatic effort to persuade Iran to comply with its international treaty obligations. Iran's continued failure to comply will necessitate a long, hard look at the nonproliferation regime and what needs to be done to strengthen it. It could also unleash efforts of other regional states to emulate Iran by secretly developing their own nuclear weapons program. The stakes involved are extremely high.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to draw your attention to a speech Senator Lugar made to the UN Security Council earlier this month. I do so because he paints clearly the gravity of the threat posed by proliferation. Senator Lugar termed WMD proliferation "not just the security problem of the moment," but "a universal economic and moral threat that will loom over all human activity for generations." He noted that the economic impact of terrorist use of a nuclear weapon would be catastrophic and global, impacting investor confidence, commerce and trade, and economic productivity. He asked "Does anyone believe that proposals for advancing standards of living, such as

expansions in education for our children, stronger protections for the environment, or broader health care coverage, would be unaffected by the nuclear obliteration of a major city somewhere in the world?" He warned that such an attack "would change the expectations of people throughout the world and would ultimately result in greater restrictions on personal freedom, stricter controls on travel and international study, more barriers to international commerce, and a massive increase in psychological disturbances and suffering. The constricting effect on international interaction would be felt in every country of the world."

I hope that you will take to heart Senator Lugar's point that "The nonproliferation precedents we set in the coming decade are likely to determine whether the world lives in anxious uncertainty from crisis to crisis or whether we are able to construct a global coalition dedicated to preventing catastrophes and to giving people the confidence and security to pursue fulfilling lives." These are wise words to remember.

Thank you very much.

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