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“Proliferation Threats Facing the United States”
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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and concerns about the gravest danger facing our world today. I appear before you as the President and Chief Operating Officer of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI)—a charitable organization committed to helping make the world safer from the threats of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Former Senator Sam Nunn and Ted Turner co-chair NTI and we are proud to say that our foundation benefits regularly from your guidance, Mr. Chairman, in your capacity as a member of our Board of Directors. We are also thankful for Senator Domenici’s leadership on these issues as another member of our Board. I should make clear, however, that my testimony is my own and has not been reviewed or approved by NTI’s Board of Directors.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin my testimony by recalling the words President Bush used to introduce the latest version of the U.S. National Security Strategy:

“The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed ... We will cooperate with other nations to deny, contain, and curtail our enemies’ efforts to acquire dangerous technologies.”

I have been encouraged to hear these and other Presidential statements confirm this correct assessment of the dangers we face and the need for international cooperation to mount an effective defense. The U.S. government has now enshrined those words in a six-page document entitled, “National Security Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction.” But our actions, as yet, are falling far short of our words. If keeping weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of our enemies is our number one security threat – who is in charge of this important mission? Who’s accountable? What is our plan? What, in fact, “new” is being done to deny those who intend us harm access to these weapons, weapons materials and know-how? Information is scant, but, I regret to say, I am increasingly concerned that the President’s “bureaucratic troops” do not yet display the planning, coordination, and degree of urgency this mission requires.

This is not to say that we do not have competent individuals who approach their jobs in this field with enormous determination and creativity. I know and respect many of them. They deserve your praise and the praise of the American people. But they also deserve our objectivity. Every day these individuals make a positive difference in reducing the

threats that face all nations. But we must do much more. We must quicken the pace and expand the scope of what we seek to accomplish. For, in spite of the President's words, keeping the world's most dangerous weapons out of the hands of the world's most dangerous people is not yet a budget priority. There is still a dangerous lag between the President's words and our expenditures. Programs at the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy and the Department of State focused on securing vulnerable weapons and materials in Russia and states of the former Soviet Union where much of the risk resides are proceeding, at best, on a "status quo plus" basis.¹

Russia's nuclear weapons and weapons materials are still dangerously insecure. By the Energy Department's own account, security upgrades work has not even begun on more than 120 metric tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium. As is widely known, it takes mere pounds to make a nuclear device with the devastating effect of the bomb exploded over Hiroshima. Moreover, we have no accounting for Russia's non-strategic weapons and still have factors of uncertainty over how many they have, and how secure they are. And for reasons having to do more with political science than political foresight, we stalled out the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program for almost a full fiscal year, while Congress considered different versions of a waiver authority for the executive branch.

Mr. Chairman, I want to congratulate the efforts you have made to grant the executive branch permanent waiver authority so that this vital work can continue without interruption. If the President concludes our national security interest is served by such a waiver, he must be able to exercise that judgment in a manner that ensures the programmatic integrity of Nunn-Lugar. A gap in program administration opens an opportunity for terrorists and creates a gap in our own security. To again recall the President's words, "Our enemies have openly declared they are seeking weapons of mass destruction and evidence indicates they are doing so with determination." I encourage this Congress to speak and act decisively on this issue – this session. Should we ever suffer attack by terrorists with weapons obtained from unsecured stores of weapons and materials from the former Soviet Union, the American people will be unforgiving to learn that programs designed to prevent this occurrence were interrupted or weakened because the President was constrained in this ability to act in the best security interest of the United States.

At a fundamental level, we must ask ourselves whether conditions on security assistance to Russia and other former Soviet states – some of which were put in place almost a decade ago – remain relevant in light of the changed nature of the threats we face after September 11th. I don't believe so. But at the very least, I believe the President must have unqualified authority to waive those conditions in the interest of national security as circumstances demand. The Nunn-Lugar program and its counterparts at the Departments of Energy and State served the security interest of this country well in the post-Cold War period. In the post 9-11 era, Nunn-Lugar and its counterparts are needed "now more than ever."

¹ Running at \$1 billion per year or roughly 1/3 of one percent of the 2003 Department of Defense appropriation.

At the same time, we do well to remember that unsecured nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and materials reside outside the territory of the former Soviet Union. Our near-term security focus should look beyond these borders. Twenty metric tons of highly enriched uranium were distributed to over 130 civilian reactors and other facilities in 40 countries around the world in the last 50 years, under the “Atoms for Peace” program. Much of the material remains broadly distributed throughout the globe at inadequately guarded sites. We have to get our hands around this problem and clean out the material at risk. We know of at least two dozen circumstances requiring our immediate attention. We at NTI are pleased to have had a role in addressing the most serious of these circumstances in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, last year. The U.S. State Department, the Department of Energy and Russia’s Minatom deserve high marks for this operation, which removed two and a half bombs worth of highly enriched uranium from a research reactor near Belgrade to a secure location where it will be blended down so it cannot be used in nuclear weapons. Yet we have only just begun to do what needs to be done.

Unsecured nuclear bomb material anywhere is a threat to everyone, everywhere and the approach and pace of these programs is inadequate to the threat. This point comes across clearly in a report published last week by a team at Harvard University entitled “Controlling Nuclear Warheads and Materials.”² This report, which was commissioned by NTI, focuses attention on the requirements for sustained Presidential leadership on these issues and on the need for an integrated, prioritized plan for blocking the terrorist pathway to the bomb. While the focus of this report is on nuclear weapons and materials, the same can be said about biological and chemical weapons.

We must fix our priorities so the greatest dangers draw our greatest investments. Admittedly, designing an effective defense against the full range of risks is a formidable challenge. To succeed, we must begin with an objective, comprehensive national security estimate that assesses each risk, ranks each threat, computes every cost, and confronts the full range of dangers. From this analysis can be constructed a broad-based, common ground strategy and measured defense – one that would allow us to direct the most resources to prevent threats that are the most immediate, the most likely, and the most potentially devastating. In the absence of an infinite budget, relative risk analysis must be the beginning point in shaping our strategy and allocating our resources – to defend our citizens at home and abroad. If such an assessment exists, we have not seen it. Without it, I suggest it will be extremely difficult for the President or the Congress to get our spending and program priorities right.

President Bush has an historic opportunity to dramatically reduce the threat from weapons of mass destruction within the next two years of his Administration. The good news is that he is served by a number of highly dedicated and competent appointed and career officials. They are taking important steps in reducing the dangers from weapons of mass destruction. But we need giant strides and, as I noted earlier, a much greater

² Matthew Bunn, Anthony Wier, John P. Holdren, “Controlling Nuclear Warheads and Materials – A Report Card and Action Plan,” March 2003, Harvard University. [Available at www.nti.org/cnwm]

high-level focus and coordination of this urgent mission. The President's strategy to combat weapons of mass destruction must be translated into a concrete plan with clearly differentiated elements for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, with clearly defined milestones and clearly defined accountability. For this to happen, the President must make crystal clear that what he has called his number one security priority – “keeping the world's most destructive weapons out of the hands of the world's most dangerous people” – is, in words and practice, the number one priority of his Administration. If this is done, programmatic priorities will become Presidential priorities, and the money will follow.

And getting our programmatic and spending priorities right is but one piece of a larger mosaic. To counter the threat from catastrophic terrorism, we will need an unprecedented level of international security cooperation. This will require getting our diplomatic priorities right. And here, too, I am concerned that we are trying to do too many things simultaneously without sufficient focus on the closest snakes.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to associate myself with the words you wrote not long ago in *The Washington Post*: We have to make sure that every nation with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons, materials or know-how accounts for what it has, secures what it has, and pledges that no other nation or group will be allowed access. That straightforwardly stated objective must be our number one diplomatic priority. As such, it is imperative that we expand the scope of successful programs such as Nunn-Lugar, the Department of Energy's Material Protection, Control and Accounting Program, and the Department of State's science center, export control and border security activities. I am confident that the lessons we have learned during the last decade in working with the Russians and other states in a cooperative effort to reduce threats can be applied in other regions of the world that face instability and the prospect of open conflict. Making the Nunn-Lugar concept global and extending its programmatic reach to other nations and to the world's regional “hot spots” is the most singularly important step the Congress can take to deny terrorists access to weapons of mass destruction and to reduce the potential that these weapons may ever be used by states or non-state actors. I strongly endorse the efforts to extend Nunn-Lugar globally beyond the Russian Federation and other states of the former Soviet Union.

As we talk with our allies and with all nations – we must underscore the importance of working closely together to meet the threat posed by catastrophic terrorism – the kind of terrorism that has the capacity to stagger societies and destroy lives oceans away from ground zero. It is the brand of terrorism that truly threatens everyone, and so it is the brand of terrorism with the best chance to arouse a cohesive global opposition. And here again, we are taking important steps, but not yet the giant strides required.

Last summer, G8 leaders met in Canada and took a particularly important step. At that meeting, the leaders declared (and I quote): “we commit ourselves to prevent terrorists, or those that harbor them, from acquiring or developing nuclear, chemical, radiological and biological weapons; missiles; and related materials, equipment and technology.” To implement these principles, they established the “G8 Global Partnership Against the

Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction,” committed \$20 billion over ten years, and established a six-element program to guide their work.

The establishment of the G8 Global Partnership and the leadership pledges achieved in Kananaskis are welcome and important developments. One should recognize, however, that the G8 makes many commitments at its annual meetings. We now have to invest the diplomatic energy to make the Global Partnership real. NTI is working with the Center for Strategic and International Studies and 15 non-governmental organizations in North America, Russia, Europe and Japan to build the intellectual and political support required to strengthen the Partnership.

We need to press the G8 governments to turn those principles into a clear set of priorities, to establish a timeline to guide their work, and make sure they devote adequate resources to the work.

And we need to press the G8 governments to make the Global Partnership truly global -- to include every nation with something to safeguard or that can make a contribution to safeguarding it. Today, this G8 agreement is all but invisible – to the press, to Congress and to nations around the world. For this coalition to extend itself from eight nations to all nations, the President of the United States is going to have to promote it with the full authority of his office.

To achieve a global coalition, we will have to make this a diplomatic priority – something that leads the set of talking points whenever the President or an American diplomat of any rank up to the Secretary of State sits down to talk with officials of other nations. And why should it not be? The final section of the National Security Strategy released by the White House in September says: “The United States must and will maintain the capability to defeat any attempt by an enemy—whether a state or non-state actor—to impose its will on the United States, our allies, or our friends.” That promise cannot be fulfilled without denying terrorists weapons of mass destruction, and that cannot be achieved without the very kind of international cooperation envisioned in a full scope global partnership.

Mr. Chairman, in these remarks I have tried to outline briefly a set of domestic and international initiatives for how we should go about dealing with the threats from weapons of mass destruction. There are, of course, other issues of weapons of mass destruction policy that involve the vital security interests of our country and the world – particularly the related matters of North Korea, Iran and Iraq. I would be happy to address these matters in the question and answer period which follows these formal remarks. Thank you.

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