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07 April 2005

Expand Nuclear Power, Block Proliferation, Energy Secretary Says

Bodman calls for enforcement of rigorous international standards

The United States supports making nuclear energy available to all countries in a way that does not undermine efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to terror groups or additional states, Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman says.

In April 5 remarks to an international conference in Chantilly, Virginia, near Washington, Bodman said that a U.S. proposal on access to fuel for civilian nuclear reactors strengthens the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty rather than contradicts or reinterprets it as some critics claim.

In 2004, President Bush proposed to guarantee access at reasonable cost to such fuel for countries that renounce pursuing uranium enrichment and reprocessing capabilities.

Such capabilities are intrinsic to the commercial nuclear sector but can also be used to make nuclear weapons.

Bodman said that now those capabilities are "far too accessible."

"All of us in the world community, working together, need to take decisive and concrete actions to make sure we establish and enforce sufficiently rigorous international standards to manage the problems and challenges of nuclear proliferation," he said.

Bodman reaffirmed the U.S. position that restricting access is the most effective way to prevent potential illicit users from acquiring high-risk nuclear materials and technologies.

He said that a U.S. priority is enhancing cooperation with

Russia to secure such materials and technologies.

Only by acting collectively with a renewed commitment can countries make sure that international nonproliferation norms and obligations are fully met and enforced, he said. So it is unacceptable, he added, that many countries have not signed relevant international agreements yet.

"Unless all states accept sovereign responsibility for activities under their jurisdiction and control ... we risk some future catastrophic act of nuclear terror," Bodman said. "This is a future that could set nuclear energy back decades, and it is a future that we have a collective responsibility to avoid."

Bodman also commented on the administration's plans and international efforts to expand safe production of nuclear energy.

Following is the text of his remarks as prepared for delivery:

(begin text)

Department of Energy
[Washington, D.C.]
April 5, 2005

Sandia National Laboratories International Security Conference

Remarks prepared for Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman

Thank you for inviting me today. I appreciate the tremendous effort undertaken by the Sandia National Laboratories to address the important and closely related goals of expanding the use of nuclear power to meet the world's growing energy needs ... and countering nuclear proliferation.

During my discussions with President Bush about becoming Secretary of Energy, two of the top priorities he outlined were securing our energy future ... with nuclear power as a key component ... and nuclear nonproliferation. The successful pursuit of both these objectives requires the unified commitment and cooperation of the technology community and government policy-makers. And so I applaud this conference for bringing these groups together to focus on such important issues.

In a time of rising energy costs and growing demand, nuclear power is integral to a balanced energy portfolio. The United States is committed to policies that will help ensure nuclear power's viability as a significant part of our future energy mix.

Nuclear power is the only method we have under current technology to reliably produce large amounts of electricity without emitting any pollution or greenhouse gases. Today's nuclear power plants are operating more safely, efficiently and economically than at any time in history. But despite nuclear energy's advantages, the United States has not begun construction of a new nuclear power plant since the 1970s. The reasons are high siting and construction costs ... and political opposition – which drives the costs even higher.

A recent study conducted at the University of Chicago concluded that once the additional start-up costs of building new plants are absorbed, nuclear power could become cost-competitive with electricity produced by coal and natural gas. And as prices for fossil fuels rise ... and we seek further progress in reducing emissions... nuclear energy becomes even more attractive.

Under President Bush's leadership, we are encouraging an expansion of U.S. nuclear capacity. Our Nuclear Power 2010 program promotes partnerships between government and industry to license new plants and develop advanced reactor designs. The U.S. government will invest more than \$500 million over the next six years to support licensing the construction of at least two or three new plants.

For the longer term, we are working with 11 member nations in the Generation IV International Forum to develop the next generation of nuclear energy systems. Just over a month ago, at the French Embassy in Washington, I joined with France's Ambassador to the United States and representatives from the United Kingdom, Japan and Canada to sign the Generation IV International Forum Framework agreement. This is the first multilateral agreement in history aimed at the development of next-generation nuclear energy systems, and I was very proud to be a part of that event.

The nations participating in Generation IV recognize that new nuclear power technologies are important for meeting our growing energy needs and sustaining economic growth. The research agreement accelerates an international effort to advance nuclear power technology that will be safer, more reliable, cost effective, proliferation resistant, and environmentally responsible.

These future nuclear technologies will use fuel -- and fuel cycles -- that are significantly different from those of today. In conjunction with the Generation IV effort, the Energy Department's Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative is aimed at developing new fuel treatment and transmutation technologies that will reduce the quantity and toxicity of waste requiring geologic disposal, and limit the build-up of plutonium.

The need for expanding nuclear energy production is clear. The International Energy Agency predicts that global demand for energy will rise by about 60 percent over the next 25 years, and that two-thirds of the increase will come from developing nations. Countries like China already have begun building emission-free nuclear plants to help meet future energy needs.

But with broader use of nuclear power comes greater responsibility. The nuclear energy sector's top priority must always be safety -- avoiding accidents -- and security -- preventing the malicious use of nuclear technology and materials. This is more than a slogan. The concepts approved for Generation IV development are those that optimize safety and proliferation resistance. Proliferation resistance is also a goal of a common Action Plan adopted in 2002 by six U.S. National Laboratories, including our hosts at Sandia.

As we develop tomorrow's nuclear energy systems, we must continue to address the risks of nuclear technology in use today. One major area of concern is uranium enrichment and reprocessing facilities, which are integral to the commercial nuclear sector... but also can enable their users to make weapons. We know that dangerous regimes, including those with ties to terrorism, seek these capabilities. Yet, judging by what is now known about illicit nuclear purchases by Iran and Libya, these capabilities are far too accessible today. I believe we all can agree that this needs to change.

All of us in the world community, working together, need to take decisive and concrete actions to make sure we establish and enforce sufficiently rigorous international standards to manage the problems and challenges of nuclear proliferation.

First among these actions is strengthening international safeguards. The articles of the Nonproliferation Treaty and the original International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement were drawn up years ago, but they remain relevant in today's world. The Additional Protocol -- which further strengthens IAEA safeguards -- also must become the new universal standard for nonproliferation.

Second, we must expand and accelerate our efforts to secure high-risk materials. This is an important area of work for the United States and our G-8 and other partners. Cooperation with Russia is naturally a first-order priority. This was highlighted in February when Presidents Bush and Putin met in Bratislava and agreed to further enhance our cooperation against the threat of nuclear terrorism.

We hope this enhanced cooperation helps advance such important nonproliferation efforts as the U.S. and Russian

program to convert many tons of weapons-usable plutonium into fuel for commercial nuclear power plants. The United States and Russia need to resolve liability issues that have delayed this program... in order for this critical effort to move forward.

Third, we need to enhance the security of nuclear fuel-cycle technology. This objective includes tightening restrictions on exports of the most sensitive nuclear technologies... preventing the proliferation of enrichment and reprocessing technology and facilities to additional countries... minimizing and working to end the commercial use of highly enriched uranium in research reactors ... and working with industry to develop a "code of conduct" governing nuclear supply.

Last year, President Bush called on the Nuclear Suppliers Group to restrict exports of enrichment and reprocessing technology to states not already possessing full-scale, functioning enrichment and reprocessing facilities. Other countries also have proposed restricting the transfer of these technologies. The U.S. position remains that restricting access is the surest way to prevent potential proliferators from acquiring sensitive nuclear technologies ... but any approach must clearly and objectively separate states that honor nonproliferation agreements from countries like Iran whose proliferation intentions are clear.

Most nations that operate nuclear energy and fuel-cycle facilities comply with and support international nonproliferation agreements. But some states, notably Iran and North Korea, have pursued fuel cycle capabilities in secret... and in violation of their nonproliferation agreements. The plans these countries have announced for building one or two nuclear power plants certainly do not justify the high costs of developing enrichment or reprocessing programs ... and we remain deeply suspicious of their intentions.

Last February, President Bush proposed that states have reliable access at reasonable cost to fuel for civilian reactors, so long as those states renounce enrichment and reprocessing. This is the right goal for the future. We should begin now to consider ways in which national governments and the commercial sector can provide assured fuel-services for qualifying states.

Even under the most ambitious forecasts, future nuclear power needs can be met with existing fuel service capacity ... or with new capacity coming on line in countries that already operate fuel-cycle facilities. It would be prudent, therefore, to refrain from building these facilities in any additional countries.

Some may criticize this proposal as contrary to, or a

reinterpretation of, the Nonproliferation Treaty's promise of peaceful nuclear sharing. This criticism is unfounded. We stand for making the benefits of nuclear energy available to all, but not at the cost of eroding the treaty's fundamental purpose – which is preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to additional states or to terror groups. It has long been recognized that fuel-cycle facilities pose proliferation risks that merit special attention and control. The President's proposal strengthens the treaty and continues that tradition.

Supplier controls also must be fully enforced. No state is immune from the abuses of illicit proliferation networks, and all are bound by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540, which requires that U.N. members enact export controls and criminalize proliferation. We stand ready to help any government meet its obligations under this resolution.

In addition, great strides have been made to convert U.S. and Russian-origin research reactors from using high-enriched uranium fuel to low-enriched uranium. But more can be done. We should set a goal of working to end the commercial use of highly enriched uranium in research reactors. The availability today of advanced, high-density low-enriched uranium fuels allows greater progress toward this goal.

The U.S. Department of Energy, through its Global Threat Reduction Initiative, is helping to convert research reactors of U.S. and Russian design ... and to repatriate fresh and spent high-enriched fuel that might be attractive targets to terrorists and proliferators. We enthusiastically invite other nations to join in this important initiative.

In addition to government action, private industry also must be a partner in preventing the proliferation of sensitive nuclear technology. As a first line of defense, governments and industry need common procedures for screening business contracts and end-users ... and for evaluating other governments' rationales for receiving significant nuclear assistance. To help launch the development of such procedures, the Department of Energy will convene a meeting this year of uranium fuel exporters and fuel service providers.

If the steps I have outlined today are taken, I am confident that nuclear power will thrive as a future emission-free energy source. But it will take a collective effort and a renewed commitment to ensure that international nonproliferation norms and obligations are fully met and enforced. It is unacceptable that many countries have yet to sign and implement safeguards agreements with the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency]. Fewer governments have signed or begun to implement the Additional Protocol.

Unless all states accept sovereign responsibility for activities under their jurisdiction and control – whether that is trade and border controls... or regulation of nuclear materials or facilities – we risk some future catastrophic act of nuclear terror. This is a future that could set nuclear energy back decades, and it is a future that we have a collective responsibility to avoid.

President Eisenhower’s “Atoms for Peace” program, established in 1953, boldly promised to make nuclear power more accessible. But it was soon recognized that the same technology needed for peaceful nuclear power purposes -- namely, the complete nuclear fuel cycle -- also provided the basis for nuclear weapons. It was clear at the earliest stages of the nuclear age that tremendous responsibility came with this powerful new technology.

That responsibility is even greater in the 21st century, with the increased threat of international terrorism. President Bush acknowledged this new reality when he recently said, “The world must create a safe, orderly system to field nuclear plants without adding to the danger of weapons proliferation.”

As international partners united by a common goal, we can work together to expand the use of safe, affordable, environmentally sustainable, and proliferation-resistant nuclear power. We can ensure that our citizens have access to the energy they will need in the future. Together, we can usher in a new age of energy and economic security that enhances the quality of life for people around the world.

Chantilly, Virginia

(end text)

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