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“Russia’s Role in Combating Catastrophic Terrorism”

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My assignment today is to speak about Russia’s role in combating catastrophic terrorism. I would like to begin with a personal note.

Last October, I was in Moscow delivering remarks at the Russian Academy of Sciences on the urgent importance of keeping weapons of mass destruction out of terrorist hands. I spoke at the meeting on Wednesday evening. When I returned that night to my hotel, I turned on CNN – in part to find out if there was any news on the sniper that had been terrorizing the Washington area. Instead I found CNN reporters on the street in Moscow with news that 40 to 50 Chechen terrorists, some strapped with explosives, had taken an audience of 700 at a Moscow theatre hostage and had demanded that Russia withdraw its troops from the Republic of Chechnya – immediately, unconditionally or they would kill themselves and [quote] “all the infidels.”

The next day at the Academy I found that this terrorist event, which went on for the duration of the conference, completely changed the tone of the discourse. We had assembled a group of US and Russian scientists who were experts in weapons of mass destruction and in nonproliferation. Everyone in the room could imagine a far more catastrophic scenario playing out in the Moscow theatre with only one change – more powerful weapons.

The danger to our security posed by asymmetrical threats is not a new or unanalyzed danger. What is new is the emergence of a particular virulent form of “sacred terrorism” operating on a global scale with substantial resources and with a demonstrated willingness to kill on a grand scale. President Bush has quite rightly labeled these terrorists the world’s most dangerous people, and he has stated it is our number one security priority to keep weapons of mass destruction out of their hands. This security imperative has been echoed in our President and President Putin’s words in two US-Russian summits, in the communiqués of the G8 meeting in Kananaskis, Canada this last summer, and in the U.S. National Security Strategy released last September.

Let me quote President Bush's strong words in introducing the 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."

To counter the threat from catastrophic terrorism, we will need an unprecedented level of international security cooperation. In fact, preventing the spread and use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons should be the central organizing principle of global security in the 21st century – not just for the United States, but for every nation. The greatest dangers we now face are threats all nations face together and no nation can solve on its own. And no effective strategy addressing weapons of mass destruction is possible without Russia's active and enthusiastic cooperation. Indeed, Russia's leadership in these matters is required.

As NTI Board Member Senator Richard Lugar wrote in the *Washington Post*: "We have to make sure that every nation with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons capacity accounts for what it has, secures what it has, and pledges that no other nation or group will be allowed access." This straightforward objective must be our number one diplomatic priority. And this "security first" principle must be at the core of the new security relationship between the United States and the Russian Federation.

Among the family of nations, the Russian Federation as heir to the Soviet Union's vast stores of weapons of mass destruction clearly has the biggest job to account for and secure what it has and to ensure these weapons, weapons materials and weapons know-how do not get into the hands of the world's most dangerous people or states. I do not need to describe for this audience the dimensions of Russia's proliferation vulnerabilities or to tell you about the decade-long cooperative effort to address these vulnerabilities by our Departments of State, Energy and Defense under what is generically referred to as the Nunn-Lugar program. In fact, we have made great progress. With the United States and Russia working together:

- Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus have given up their nuclear arms.
- Over 8,000 missiles, over 800 launchers, and over 100 bombers have been destroyed – eliminating more than half of the Soviet's strategic nuclear arsenal.
- Security upgrades have been completed or at least begun at sites housing more than 50% of Russia's nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons materials.
- Large numbers of former Soviet weapons scientists have received help in finding "peaceful" work.

Many, in the US laboratories and Russian Scientific Institutes, in both governments and in the contractor and academic communities, have worked hard to bring about these results. But is important for my purposes here today to point out how much more remains to be done – and urgently so.

Perhaps all that need be said has already been said. In reporting on our collective progress, I pointed out that security upgrades have been completed, or at least begun, at sites housing more than 50% of Russia's nuclear weapons and weapons materials. What about the other half? This is more than the usual semantic question about the glass being half full or half empty. By the Department of Energy's own account, security upgrades work has not even begun on almost 120 metric tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium. And, as the physicists among you know, it would take only pounds of this material to make the 10-kiloton device mentioned in the intelligence report in October 2001 as destined for New York City. Moreover – and perhaps even more importantly – we have no reliable sense of how many non-strategic or tactical nuclear weapons the Russians have or how secure they are. These weapons, many of which are man-portable and some of which have the explosive power of the Hiroshima bomb, would be the likely weapons of choice for an aspiring terrorist. Yet, arms controls born of a strategic age have never taken these weapons into account.

The United States and Russia have now developed a coincident view of the security dangers they face. Prior to 9/11, in April 2001, NTI Board Member Andrei Kokoshin wrote: “the problem of global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile launch capabilities as well as the emergence of new nuclear powers is [a] central challenge not only to Russia's national security but to international security today.” Almost one year after 9/11, the US National Security Strategy used almost the same words to define the paramount security imperative of the United States. And, as noted earlier, Presidents Putin and Bush have spoken at two summits of this perception of common danger and common mission. So what is now required to translate this common view into concrete action that will make the world safer from these dangers?

Here, I offer Eight Steps to a More effective US/Russian Security Relationship

Step One – Speed the Work of Nunn-Lugar.

This will take specific Presidential leadership on both sides of the ocean. On the US side, there is still a dangerous lag between the President's words and our expenditures. Programs at the Departments of State and Energy which focus on securing weapons and materials in Russia are proceeding, at best, on a “status quo plus basis.” And for reasons having to do more with political science than political foresight, we stalled out the Defense Department's Cooperative Threat Reduction program for almost a full fiscal year. Our President must make crystal clear that what he has called his number one priority – keeping the world's most destructive weapons out of the hands of terrorists – is, in fact and practice, the number one priority of his Administration. If this is done, programmatic priorities will become Presidential priorities, and the money will follow.

President Putin, for his part, must give his personal approval to allowing limited access to key facilities to help speed the work. Only a Presidential permission

slip is likely to counter security force cautions and allow the work to proceed at the pace required.

And both Presidents should name a senior official, empowered and accountable, to see that the work gets done on a timeframe commensurate with the “urgent attention” both Presidents say is needed.

The years of “living dangerously” are this year, next year, and the next. We simply can’t wait for action in 2006 and beyond to attend to the most urgent risks.

Step Two – Build Trust

The two Presidents should follow the Treaty of Moscow with substantive steps to build trust between our two nations and serve the larger goal of giving the world community greater assurance that we are actually reducing our forces. Three “trust building” steps would go a long way toward that objective:

- Both sides can and should set out their plans for meeting the 2012 numbers and then by mutual act should start removing from alert status the weapons scheduled for withdrawal from the operational force.
- Both sides can and should set out schedules for the dismantlement of excess weapons. In the near term, the symbolism of the act is probably even more important than the actual numbers of warheads destroyed.
- Both sides should work to develop more launch decision time for their Presidents. It is hard to accept the implicit judgment of the Treaty of Moscow that two nations at peace, “two friends” to use President Bush and Putin’s words, are condemned to maintain thousands of weapons on high alert status – two decades after the end of the Cold War. Surely, we can do better than that.

Our two Presidents should direct their military experts to meet and come back with a plan to give them more decision time and to stand down the forces to the maximum extent possible consistent with the security interests of each nation. Expanding nuclear decision time may require still unidentified force structure changes, deployment changes, and other approaches. It is sure to be a complicated undertaking, but if we were smart enough at the height of the Cold War to be able to begin reducing nuclear weapons in a verifiable way, “friends” ought to be able to find a way to expand decision time with no loss of security.

Step Three – Provide an Accounting of Tactical Nuclear Weapons

Russia has long resisted efforts to require an accounting for their tactical nuclear weapons, quickly linking any demands to do so with demands of their own concerning

US basing of tactical weapons in Europe. Moreover, as Russia's conventional war fighting capability has degraded, tactical nuclear weapons have grown in importance to Russia's security forces. Nevertheless, to allow these weapons to go "unaccounted for" in the modern age of terrorism is a danger to the United States and, probably, to Russia itself. If the United States and Russia are to define a truly new security relationship, as partners, facing a mutual danger, they simply must overcome this blind spot. The Nunn-Lugar program provides the means, if the parties are willing, to close the gap substantially by indirect means while more formal arrangements are worked out.

Step Four – Share Best Practices with Others

Over more than 50 years, the US and Russia learned a great deal about the safe and secure handling of weapons and weapons material. The great bulk of this experiential record is unclassified. Similarly, experts tell me most of the best practice information is in the unclassified realm. As such, Russia and the United States are in a position to lead by example to help other nations secure and protect their inventories to the highest standards. This is more than a simplistic assertion that we ought not to count on other states learning from their own mistakes when they could learn from ours. It is more than that. Some would say that we were lucky during the Cold War to have avoided a catastrophic accident or miscalculation. Perhaps. But we were also smart and the dedicated scientists, engineers and military officers on both sides put a great deal of effort into being safe and secure. We should marshal this resource in the service of Senator Lugar's "security first" admonition that we ensure "every nation with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons capacity accounts for what it has, secures what it has and pledges that no other nation or group will be allowed access."

Step Five – Jointly Manage a Clean Out of Unsecured Materials at Soviet and US Supplied Research Reactors and Related Facilities

Our near-term security focus should look beyond Russia's borders. Twenty metric tons of highly enriched uranium were distributed around the world in the last 50 years by the US and the Soviets into research reactors and other facilities. Some of this material is protected only by unarmed guards behind chain link fences. We simply have to get our hands around this problem and clean out the material at risk. The current pace of activity does not match the danger. 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. Our State Department, the Department of Energy and Russia's Minatom deserve high marks for this operation. Yet we have only begun to begin what needs to be done. Russia and the United States must energize this nascent cooperation.

Step Six – Expand Cooperation on Bio Threat Reduction and Intelligence

Russia's scientists who were engaged in research and testing of biological agents should be enlisted in a cooperative effort with US scientists to help develop new

vaccines, antidotes and means of detecting biological attacks. It is our fate in the 21st century that, to use Robert Wright's words, increasingly technology will place in the hands of smaller and smaller numbers of people the capacity to harm larger and larger numbers of people. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of advances in bioscience. We simply and urgently require better defenses to this threat than we have yet devised and we are going to require the synergistic values of US and Russian scientists working together to get ahead of the "bad guys'" learning curve.

Two weeks ago, the Bush Administration began deploying a national system of environmental monitors designed to detect anthrax, smallpox, and other deadly germs¹. A tissue-like paper from each monitor will be sent to laboratories on a regular basis for analysis. Obviously, early detection could speed a bio-response and save thousands of lives. We are still working on technology that is more reliable, detects a wider array of pathogens, and does so instantly, without lab analysis. Undoubtedly, the ability to involve Russian scientists in this and other biodefense efforts would dramatically improve the pace and success of our work.

In fact, President Bush and President Putin announced in their summit of November 2001 a mutual pledge to expand joint work on biodefense. It has not been easy. A USA Today article that ran in August 2002 catalogued a depressing array of obstacles to cooperation, including a lack of US access to Soviet-made bioweapons². As an example, the United States had been trying for years to acquire a sample of anthrax the Russians said was vaccine-resistant. Yet, in 2001, Russia – at the urging of the United States, adopted strict export rules that prevent proliferation of bioweapons technology. Paradoxically, Russians now cite that law as a reason the anthrax sample could not be exchanged. Not to be outdone, the US has also refused to share some of its samples of dangerous pathogens. Some have attributed this stalemate to [quote] "midlevel bureaucrats with a Cold War mindset."

President Putin said on his November 2001 visit to the United States: "People expect US and Russian politicians to leave behind double standards, empty suspicions and hidden goals and engage in an open, direct, and fruitful dialogue ... The Cold War must no longer hold us by the sleeve."

This applies obviously to biological weapons. But that is not the only or perhaps even the most important area where Cold War suspicion inhibits cooperation essential to our mutual security. We simply must engage a more effective cooperation with Russia on intelligence. Accurate and timely intelligence will be increasingly important in the fight against global terror. Russian intelligence services proved themselves to be capable adversaries throughout the Cold War. Their knowledge and understanding of many parts of the world exceed our own, yet we have capabilities in other parts of the world which they lack. To have as complete a picture as possible of the threats we face in common

¹ New York Times, Judith Miller, "US deploying monitor system for germ peril"

² USA Today, August 19, 2002, Eisler, Peter, "U.S., Russia tussle over deadly anthrax sample"

will require a two way sharing of intelligence information and a greater candor than I expect either side has yet been able to achieve.

My father always advised: “Trust everybody but cut the cards.” Perhaps his advice was an early form of Ronald Reagan’s famous advice, “Trust but verify.” Ever my father’s son, I would not counsel our intelligence services – or the Russian services for that matter – to suspend all suspicion. On the other hand, we must find more effective ways to “cut the cards” and still get the intelligence sharing that both sides need to understand and counter their mutual dangers – especially in addressing the bio threat where we are so dependent for our defense on prevention and interdiction.

Step Seven – Make the G8 Global Partnership Real and Truly Global

The G8 leaders when they met in Canada last year declared (and I quote): “we commit ourselves to prevent terrorists, or those that harbour 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,” and committed \$20 billion to this work over the next ten years.

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 across three continents to build the intellectual and political support required to strengthen the Partnership. Last month, as part of this project, at a conference in London, experts from 15 security organizations released a detailed action agenda for the G8 Partnership and committed themselves to building the necessary political and public support to ensure international action on these urgent issues.

This is the first time that experts from so many nations have reached consensus on specific steps to secure, account for, and safely dispose of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, agents, materials, and infrastructure in Russia and the former Soviet states.

The coalition of security organizations underscored the importance of pressing the G8 to establish a timeline to guide their work, and make sure they devote resources to the work commensurate with the relative risk that catastrophic terrorism presents to the health, welfare, economy and security of every nation.

Today, this G8 agreement is all but invisible – to the media, to Congress and to nations around the world. To form a truly global partnership that includes all nations with something to protect or something to contribute, the President of the United States is going to have to promote it with the full authority of his office. President Putin and

Russia also have an enormous capacity to participate as well as lead in this effort – and they must.

In truth, the threat of terrorists with weapons of mass destruction is – for the United States and Russia – the broadest conception of our common peril. Al Qaeda and September 11, the Chechen terrorists and the Moscow theater both chill the imaginations of Americans and Russians with the worry: ‘what if they had had nuclear, biological or chemical weapons?’ Our cooperation against the threats from these weapons provides the most obvious basis for our security cooperation. We can build the relationship on this foundation, and then build it up and build it out into a partnership of substance and into a new security relationship worthy of the name.

Step Eight – (And the Last Step to a Highly Effective Security Relationship) Engage a More Cooperative Diplomacy to Reduce Dangers in the World’s Hot Spots

Russia can play a constructive role in reducing regional tensions on the Korean Peninsula, in South Asia and in the Middle East. While the US sees Iraq as the number one state proliferation danger, Russia worries most about Pakistan. Neither wants to see North Korea develop nuclear arms. Nor would the development of an Iranian nuclear weapons capability be tolerable to either the US or Russia. Both countries, as permanent members of the Security Council, want to see the UN be truly effective. Neither country wants to be downwind of a nuclear exchange on the Indian subcontinent – or anywhere else in the world for that matter. These should be the seeds for a more cooperative diplomacy than we have yet been able to muster in addressing regional security dangers.

We can explore in the discussion period, which is to follow these remarks, exactly what can or should be done to engage more effectively this cooperative diplomacy. But suffice to say at this point, if it is to develop, Russia must be given more of a role in developing and implementing the strategies for reducing the dangers in the world’s hot spots. And for the role to be played, Russia must take more responsibility for its actions – past and present – in India, North Korea, Iraq, Iran and make itself part of the solution. Both the US and Russia are taking steps in the right direction to engage this cooperative diplomacy, but we need giant strides.

So, let me sum up these remarks. The relations between our two heads of state are warm. Our perception of our common interest is closer than it has ever been. Yet, if this new relationship is going to improve our security, then it must be able to melt the suspicion that has kept us for so many years from working together for our common security. There is ground for optimism, but we are not yet approaching this mission with the urgency it requires. We are not moving as fast as we can or as fast as we must. The costs of failure in this regard are staggering and simply unacceptable.

In August of 1949, at the Semipalatinsk test site in Kazakhstan, Yuli Khariton, Igor Kurchatov and others watched the successful test of the first Soviet bomb RDS-1. Recalling the moment years later, Dr. Khariton said (and I quote): “We felt relief, even happiness, for in possessing such a weapon, we have removed the possibility of it being used against [us] with impunity.”

What Yuli Khariton thought was true for his time is no longer true for our time. Possessing nuclear weapons no longer removes the possibility of these weapons being used against us with impunity – and that is the defining change in the 21st century. The rise of terrorist groups with nuclear ambitions and without return addresses changes the equation completely. It is no longer a battle of one country against another country. It is a battle of all countries to continue to advance human progress against a foe who would retard all progress. To win this fight will require cooperation on a scale we've never seen before, with an urgency we've never known before.

As in some areas near the arctic, where the ice melts briefly once a year – in the realm of geopolitics, once a generation, certain attitudes long frozen become fluid and can take new shape. If we grasp this passing chance, we can reshape the nature of the US-Russia relationship – from suspicious competitors to committed partners. It is in the keenest interest of the United States to pursue this new partnership with Russia – for to use an old phrase in a new context – in the search to make the world safe from terrorists wielding weapons of mass destruction, Russia is the indispensable nation.