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Kazakhstan: Reducing Nuclear Dangers, Increasing Global Security
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I want to thank our guests for joining us today in the United States Senate, where so much deliberation has taken place on how to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and where the example of Kazakhstan has been welcomed and celebrated as a model of what we must see in the 21st century.

President Nazarbayev is one of the greatest champions of nuclear nonproliferation in the world – not merely by his words, but – most importantly -- by his actions and his nation’s example.

President Nazarbayev tells a very striking personal story in the prologue of his book Epicenter of Peace. As a child, he remembered having in his home an army rifle that had been taken by one of his relatives – a Kazak militiaman – in a rebellion against a regular Russian army unit in 1916. One day his grandmother said that the rifle had brought suffering – that it should be cast out of the house. So President Nazarbayev’s father took the rifle to the authorities, but not before removing the bayonet, which the grandmother ordered be made into a sickle. She supplied the handle that she made herself from her old spindle. As a young boy, the President used that sickle to cut hay. This childhood event – dismantling a weapon and building from it a tool of peace and commerce – foreshadowed the work of his adult life. It is the heart of the Biblical passage “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.”

President Nazarbayev dismantled his nation’s nuclear weapons and out of that action built a friendship with the United States, an example for the world, and an opportunity for his people to move toward a more promising future. Iran and other nations could learn from Kazakhstan that a nation can grow, modernize, make progress, and gain stature not in spite of renouncing nuclear weapons, but because of it.

Increasing global security also has a critical economic dimension. In making the decision to disarm, President Nazarbayev also chose to use his nation’s resources to build an economic base that would benefit all the citizens of Kazakhstan. The world’s economy and stability depends on diversifying our energy base – so the Kazakhstan role in energy development is very important. The pressure is appropriately increasing on both governments and industry to embed "transparent" processes and good governance practices into their management systems. The government of Kazakhstan clearly understands this issue, given the heightened attention to increased oil production in the Caspian region. The transparency demonstrated by the government of Kazakhstan recently in announcing at a press conference the royalties received for a recent large petroleum project is a very positive step, and one that should be recognized, showcased, and supported widely. Revenue transparency is an issue on which industry and governments will likely continue to face pressure. I applaud the inclusive and constructive

approach that has been taken to date, and I encourage all parties involved to continue the dialogue and working together to advance this important topic. Without economic stability – every step in the security arena becomes more difficult.

Let me acknowledge and thank Minister Vladimir Shkolnik for his role both in Kazakhstan’s economic development and in its nuclear disarmament example. President Nazarbayev had the personal vision to renounce nuclear weapons, but he also had something just as important. He had in Minister Shkolnik, a man with the determination and the skill to get it done. The world owes you a great debt, Mr. Minister.

I also want to thank Ambassador Saudabayev, who this past August in Athens, Georgia so graciously presented to me Kazakhstan’s highest award to non-citizens. The Ambassador is a vigorous and talented advocate for Kazakhstan’s interests in the United States. He has a keen understanding of where our nations’ interests intersect, and how we can advance them together. Kazakhstan is fortunate to have a man of his talent in Washington.

It is fitting that we meet here in the halls of the United States Senate, because it was here that the first legislative debate took place on the question of reducing the nuclear threat in the post-Cold War world.

Let us recall what was at stake back in 1991. In December of that year, Vice President Dick Cheney was then Defense Secretary, and he offered this analysis:

“If the Soviets do an excellent job retaining control over their stockpile of nuclear weapons – let’s assume they’ve got 25,000 - 30,000; that’s a ballpark figure – and they are 99 percent successful, that would mean you could still have as many as 250 that they were not able to control.”

So far -- strong, visionary actions by many people have kept that dire but plausible scenario from becoming reality. Dick Lugar was an indispensable partner in creating the Nunn-Lugar program and a central crucial force in the Senate for spending US dollars to help secure nuclear weapons and materials in the former Soviet Union. Graham Allison was a brilliant voice from the outside urging action. At the start, many members of Congress criticized this effort as aid to the Soviet military. Six weeks or so later, the Senate voted 86-8 to spend \$400 million to help secure the Soviet nuclear stockpile and limit the spread of nuclear weapons as one country split into fifteen countries, and one nuclear power was replaced by four.

This first vote was not a blank check; it was a challenge. We had to prove to the Congress that Cooperative Threat Reduction made a clear contribution to our national security. The courageous actions of President Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan and Ukraine made a world of difference in proving the effectiveness of our efforts.

I understand the term “Kazakh” is a version of a Turkic word meaning “free or independent”. The moment Kazakhstan became free, it set an independent course among the nations of the world. Its President declared the nation would renounce nuclear weapons. Its parliament voted in 1993 to confirm that – and set in motion the plans to destroy more than one hundred SS-18

ICBMs, each with 10 high-yield warheads, along with other smaller nuclear weapons – a larger nuclear arsenal than held by China, France or the United Kingdom.

President Nazarbayev's view was like his grandmother's: these weapons have caused only suffering; they should be cast out of the country.

The world should understand, more than it does, the Kazakhstani suffering that led to that decision. As everyone here knows, the Soviet Union's premier nuclear test site was located in Kazakhstan at Semipalatinsk, where it was the site of the first Soviet nuclear explosion, and nearly 500 more over the next forty years, more than one hundred of them above ground. Because of the environmental devastation caused by the Soviet nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk, President Nazarbayev ordered the test site closed on August 29, 1991 – four months before the collapse of the Soviet Union and 42 years to the day after the first nuclear test there.

The release of radiation at the test site was far more severe than Chernobyl – yet the world hears much of Chernobyl and little of Semipalatinsk. Seventy percent of all Soviet nuclear testing took place there. More than a million people suffered dangerous doses of radiation from exposure to fallout from the test site. Those exposed have suffered high rates of cancer, infant mortality, birth defects, immune deficiencies and nervous system disorders. Many of these health defects don't end with the first generation; they are passed on to children.

It was in large part an understanding of their suffering and a respect for their sacrifice that caused Kazakhstan to become a world leader in renouncing nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan was not only willing to dismantle its nuclear arsenal, but also eager to destroy the test sites.

Kazakhstan and the United States became strong security partners from that decision forward, and money appropriated here in the Congress helped pay for the dismantling of the nuclear weapons, the destruction of the silos and the sealing of the nuclear test tunnels.

That is an impressive record of security cooperation. Yet there is another accomplishment of US-Kazakhstan relations that is a model for nuclear nonproliferation, and that is Project Sapphire. In 1993, Kazakhstani officials approached the US Ambassador in secret, alerting him to the existence, at the lightly-secured Ulba Metallurgical Plant, of 1,300 pounds of weapons-grade uranium – enough to make dozens of nuclear weapons. Both Iraq and Iran were known to be seeking this kind of high-grade material. It was dangerous, plentiful and vulnerable.

After a year of planning, a 31-person team from the United States flew to the region and worked with Kazakhstani experts for six weeks to take the material out of its containers, take precautions to make it safe during transport, repackage it, and then ship it back to the United States on two Air Force transporters. Once securely stored in Tennessee, this uranium was blended down and used to generate civilian power, in a continuation of the “swords to plowshares” tradition.

This example shows how indispensable cooperation is in keeping weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of dangerous people. The US team arrived back in the United States in late November. Elections three weeks before had turned leadership of several legislative committees in Congress over to new chairmen, some of whom were opposed to Cooperative Threat

Reduction. Project Sapphire offered dramatic and visible proof of the security value of this program and helped strengthen the arguments of those of us who fought to continue funding.

Project Sapphire also provided a model for future operations of this kind – such as an operation four years later in the Republic of Georgia; a recent operation in Serbia called Project Vinca, where NTI working with the US, Russian and Serbian officials, removed 100 pounds of highly enriched uranium from the nuclear research reactor near Belgrade; and another successful operation in Romania a few months ago.

The United States and Kazakhstan must intensify our ties across the board – economic, educational, cultural, and especially on matters of security.

We have to continue to work together to shut down Kazakhstan's fast breeder reactor that generated weapons-usable plutonium. We have to make sure the weapons scientists who used to work at the Stepnogorsk anthrax factory can find peaceful work. NTI is working with Kazakhstan now on how to convert an active research reactor from using 90% enriched uranium to low-enriched uranium, and on blending down tons of fresh HEU power reactor fuel for sale as LEU.

Kazakhstan has an important role in global security. Much remains to be done and each crucial step is important to Kazakhstan security, US security and world security.

We must recognize and our priorities and resources must reflect that:

1. The gravest danger in the world today is the threat from nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.
2. The likeliest use of these weapons are in terrorist hands.
3. Preventing the spread and use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons should be the central organizing security principle for the 21st century.

Terrorists are racing to get weapons of mass destruction, and we are not yet racing to stop them. The citizens of all nations need to understand that no one – no matter where in the world they live – is safe from the consequences of a terrorist nuclear attack. The economic impact of the September 11 attacks was felt in all parts of the globe. Tourism dollars plunged. Airlines went bankrupt. Corporations announced layoffs.

But a nuclear 9/11 would make World Trade Center attacks look like a warning shot. It would be impossible to calculate the economic costs, because there is no way to calculate how long it would take for citizens to recover the confidence they need to spend and invest. The public would assume that if the terrorists had one nuclear weapon, they could get another. If they would use it in one city, they would use it in another. If even one goes off, it's hard to see how we could fully recover. We have to prevent it from happening – ever.

How difficult is it for terrorists to attack us with a nuclear weapon? That depends on how difficult we make it. No terrorist can launch an attack without weapons-grade material – plutonium or highly enriched uranium. Most terrorists lack the sophisticated infrastructure necessary to produce these materials; they would have to steal or buy them.

So the most effective, least expensive way to prevent nuclear terrorism is to lock down and secure weapons and fissile materials in every country and every facility that has them. The world is in a race between cooperation and catastrophe. To win this race, we have to achieve cooperation on a scale we've never seen or attempted before – not because cooperation will give us a warm feeling of community, but because every other method will fail.

On the nuclear front: the mission is difficult – but it is not complicated. We know where the dangerous and vulnerable materials are; we know what has to be done; we know how to do it; we have made some progress – but not enough.

There remains a dangerous gap between the pace of our progress and the scope and urgency of the threat. The threat extends well beyond the former Soviet Union. There are 100 nuclear research reactors and other facilities in 40 countries using highly enriched uranium -- the raw material of nuclear terrorism. Some of it is secured by nothing more than an underpaid guard sitting inside a chain-link fence. In August 2002, when nuclear weapons material was removed from the research reactor near Belgrade, the US and Russia said they were going to move quickly on 24 similar sites. But it's now been over a year and only one additional site has been addressed. Two out of 25 shows the lack of urgency of this work. We can argue as to who is to blame – Russia or the United States or other countries – but the bottom line is that our security is at stake no matter who is to blame.

Most governments and most leaders have still not acknowledged by their actions, by their resource priorities, and by their cooperation that the threat of catastrophic terrorism is the most immediate, most likely, most potentially devastating threat we face; that it threatens all of us equally; that it demands urgent action; that it requires a new level of cooperation. This is the kind of danger that ought to focus our attention – because if we don't prevent this threat, nothing else will matter.

What must we do? NTI has funded a project that brings together a consortium of 21 research institutions across Europe, Russia, the US and Asia to work together on threat reduction. Let me summarize their conclusions:

1. Nuclear weapons and materials – wherever they are in the world – represent a grave danger. We must secure all of it, everywhere, quickly to reduce the terrorist threat.
2. Tactical nuclear weapons must be accounted for and secured.
3. All excess weapons-grade nuclear materials should be secured and then destroyed.
4. Chemical weapons – every one of them – should be secured and destroyed.
5. Biological weapons facilities of the former Soviet Union must be open and transparent. We must help convert these facilities and the labors of the scientists who used to work in them, to peaceful commercial purposes.

The most positive recent development in Cooperative Threat Reduction came in the summer of last year when the G8 nations pledged \$20 billion over ten years to launch the Global Partnership and to secure and prevent the spread of weapons and mass destruction. Since this announcement, many other nations have joined the partnership. Kazakhstan has a great deal to

contribute to the partnership, and I hope that you will join. The partnership should include everyone who has something to safeguard and who has something to contribute to safeguarding it. Kazakhstan is unique as an example of leadership.

A great opportunity to accelerate the work of the global partnership comes next summer in Sea Island, Georgia, where the leaders of the G8 will meet again. Either the G8 will dramatically expand its threat reduction efforts, or the Global Partnership will remain a second-tier response to a first-tier threat -- and leave grave dangers to our children.

In the race between cooperation and catastrophe, we have taken steps in the right direction, but we're long past the time when we can take satisfaction with steps in the right direction. A gazelle running from a cheetah is taking steps in the right direction. It's not just a question of direction; it's a matter of speed.

If a terrorist nuclear device exploded tonight in Washington, New York, Astana, Moscow or London, what would we wish we had done to stop it? Why aren't we doing that now?

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