STRENGTHENING NONPROLIFERATION: ESSENTIAL TO GLOBAL SECURITY

By Samuel R. Berger

As the risk increases that terrorists may seek to acquire or use weapons of mass destruction (WMD), Berger says the Clinton administration is pursuing three key priorities: strengthening the nonproliferation regime, addressing pressing regional WMD threats, and bolstering defenses against the use of WMD.

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Slowing the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has been a key priority for President Clinton. The reason why is clear: allowing more and more countries, including bitter regional rivals and even terrorist groups, to develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and allowing the development of more and more destructive weapons, would make the world a much more dangerous place. So the United States will continue to work hard to strengthen global nonproliferation agreements and efforts.

Recent troubling developments have underscored the urgency of this task.

In May 1998, India, and then Pakistan, conducted nuclear tests that blew the lid off South Asia's long-simmering nuclear rivalry. These explosions have threatened to trigger a full-fledged nuclear and missile race in the region. And this year's confrontation over the Kargil border area, in Kashmir, reaffirmed the continuing danger of violent conflict between these two rivals.

In July 1998, Iran's test of the Shahab-3 missile extended Tehran's capability to strike at targets in the Middle East. Combined with Iran's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons, this missile development poses a threat to stability in the region.

In August 1998, North Korea tested its Taepo-Dong missile over Japan. This test, and signs that North Korea is preparing for a second test of a long-range missile, threaten to undermine efforts to build peace and security in that region.

Meanwhile, Russia's continuing economic difficulties have heightened the challenge for Moscow to control the leakage of sensitive weapons-related materials and technology beyond its borders. Scientists and institutes involved in weapons development have faced increased financial pressures to sell their wares to whoever is in the market, including rogue states.
Finally, in December 1998, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein once again broke his commitments to cooperate with UN inspectors, ignoring the warnings of the international community. The United States, together with Great Britain, responded with force, attacking Iraq’s program to develop and deliver WMD and its capacity to threaten its neighbors. But we have not eliminated the danger, and our resolve to curb the threat Saddam poses will not diminish.

In addition to these specific developments, two broad and dangerous trends have emerged.

First, as the President has repeatedly warned, the risk is increasing that terrorists will acquire and seek to use chemical or biological weapons as weapons of terror.

Second, ballistic missile proliferation has intensified, as demonstrated by the Iranian and North Korean missile tests and advances in the missile programs of India and Pakistan. While the technology to develop intercontinental-range missiles remains out of reach for a large number of countries, shorter-range missile capabilities -- based on liquid-fueled SCUD technology -- are widely available. The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) helps to limit the spread of missile technology, but several key suppliers, such as North Korea, are outside the MTCR. Unfortunately, in regions like the Middle East and South Asia, political dynamics still weigh against agreements to limit these missiles.

Not all recent news on nonproliferation has been bad. There have been several encouraging developments. The multilateral Conference on Disarmament has agreed to arrangements for negotiations on a global Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, which would halt the production of additional material for nuclear weapons. Brazil has ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty, completing a remarkable process that has almost eliminated the threat of nuclear proliferation in Latin America. Russia has taken steps to halt the spread of weapons technologies from its borders. And the U.S. Congress passed critical legislation to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Also encouraging has been the global reaction to the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan: They were condemned in nearly every corner of the world. Here was an issue where the United States, China, and Russia found a common voice; where major powers agreed with many nations of the developing world. Far from demonstrating the death of international norms against proliferation, the international reaction to the tests showed the resilience of these norms.

But these positive signs have been overshadowed by the mounting challenges. More than ever, the nations of the world need to come together to build a safer future. Let me outline U.S. policy initiatives for preventing and addressing proliferation as we reach a new century.

First, we are moving aggressively to strengthen the nonproliferation regime, by which I mean the international consensus and the international agreements and structures aimed at curbing WMD and ballistic missiles.

Bolstering this regime is critical if we are to give nations greater confidence that they can forego or limit WMD and ballistic missiles without finding themselves at a disadvantage against rivals brandishing such weapons. The regime is also essential for isolating nations outside the regime and pressuring them to restrain their programs and eventually to join.
With respect to strengthening the regime, President Clinton continues to stress that obtaining the U.S. Senate's advice and consent to ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of his top foreign policy goals. The President has called the CTBT the "longest-sought, hardest-fought prize in the history of arms control." The people of the United States overwhelmingly support the treaty, as they have consistently since President Dwight Eisenhower proposed it more than 40 years ago.

The treaty bans all nuclear explosive tests. We should pause and contemplate this development: 152 nations -- including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China -- have signed an accord to never, or never again, test a nuclear device. Forty-one countries, including many of our allies, have already ratified it. We must not let this extraordinary opportunity slip away.

By its terms, the CTBT cannot enter into force until the United States and other key designated nations ratify it. As the President has argued, if we fail to ratify, we will undercut our own efforts to curb further nuclear arms development, including in South Asia, where India and Pakistan each have announced an intention to adhere to the CTBT.

The President has stressed to U.S. audiences that the treaty is in the U.S. national interest. Four former chairmen of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff -- John Shalikashvili, Colin Powell, William Crowe, and David Jones -- as well as the current chairman, Henry Shelton, are among the many U.S. leaders who agree on that. The United States already has stopped testing nuclear weapons. Nuclear experts affirm that we can maintain a safe and reliable deterrent without testing. The question now is whether we will adopt -- or whether we will lose -- a verifiable treaty that will bar other nations from testing nuclear weapons.

The treaty will constrain the development of more advanced nuclear weapons by nations that already have them -- and limit the possibilities for other states to acquire them. It will also enhance the ability of nations to detect and deter suspicious activities by other nations. With or without a CTBT, we must monitor such activities. The treaty gives us new tools to pursue this vital mission: a global network of sensors to supplement national intelligence capabilities and the right to request short-notice, on-site inspections in other countries.

In addition to the CTBT, the United States wants to make rapid progress on a treaty to ban further production of fissile materials. In the fall of 1998, we called on all countries that have tested nuclear devices to adhere to a voluntary production moratorium. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China have stopped producing fissile material. We hope that all of these countries, along with India and Pakistan, will formally join this moratorium while we seek a treaty through the Conference on Disarmament.

We also will work to strengthen other components of the nuclear nonproliferation regime, including the safeguards applied by the International Atomic Energy Agency. And we will implement the initiative Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin announced in Russia in 1998 under which the United States and Russia each would dispose safely of 50 tons of plutonium that is no longer needed by their military programs. One hundred tons of plutonium would be enough to make literally thousands of nuclear weapons.

Another strong catalyst for persuading nations to forego nuclear weapons would be continued
progress in the START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) process -- the effort by the United States and Russia to reduce their nuclear arsenals. Meeting in June 1999 in Cologne, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin reaffirmed their joint commitment to securing START II's entry into force. We hope the Russian Duma will promptly ratify START II this fall, which will clearly benefit Russia's security, as well as the United States'. And during their follow-up meeting in July in Washington, then-Prime Minister Stepashin and Vice President Gore agreed that discussions on START III and the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty would begin in August. We seek to conclude a START III Treaty for even deeper cuts based on the agreement reached by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin at Helsinki in 1997.

Our commitment to strengthening the global nonproliferation regime extends, of course, beyond nuclear weapons. The United States ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997. We continue to pursue aggressively another key priority announced by President Clinton in his 1998 State of the Union address: strengthening our ability to determine whether nations are complying with the Biological Weapons Convention. We are committed to securing over the next year international agreement on declaration and inspection measures that will make it much more difficult for nations to violate their obligations under the convention.

The chemical and biological conventions are vital not only to preventing states from acquiring WMD but also, in combination with law enforcement and intelligence, to keeping these weapons away from terrorists. Though the conventions are focused on the obligations of states, not sub-state actors, virtually every state on our State Department's list of terrorism sponsors has WMD programs. As potential suppliers of such weapons to terrorists, there is no more worrisome source than these state sponsors. Under a strong nonproliferation regime, states that fail to join or comply with the conventions will be isolated, constrained from obtaining weapons materials, and thus hindered from assisting terrorists with WMD activities.

Our second set of priorities focuses on the most pressing regional proliferation challenges.

With respect to South Asia, we have pressed for a strong international response to deter India and Pakistan from additional testing. President Clinton, Secretary of State Albright, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and other officials have engaged in intense diplomatic efforts to move India and Pakistan away from nuclear confrontation and further escalation of tensions. We will continue to encourage the Indo-Pakistani dialogue that began so encouragingly in Lahore in February 1999. We will also encourage these South Asian nations to pursue concrete results on nonproliferation goals: adherence to the CTBT, establishment of strong export controls, and restraint on fissile materials production and ballistic missile development and deployment.

Dealing with North Korea is a delicate balancing act that requires a judicious mix of deterrence, diplomacy, and aggressive nonproliferation efforts. The Agreed Framework, reached in 1994, halted North Korean production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. The successful inspection of the Kumchang-ni nuclear site in North Korea in the spring of 1999 has resolved our concerns about underground nuclear activity at this location. However, we remain very concerned about the possibility of another long-range missile test by Pyongyang. As Secretary of Defense Cohen and South Korean Defense Minister Cho stated in Seoul on July 29, 1999, North Korea will have more to lose than to gain by firing a new missile.
We have a full and important agenda of arms control and nonproliferation issues to address with China. We will continue to seek China's entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime, a step that in June 1998 China agreed to study seriously. Our dialogue with China on nuclear nonproliferation has produced concrete progress: China has ceased all cooperation with unsafeguarded nuclear facilities; pledged to engage in no new nuclear cooperation with Iran, including for peaceful purposes; promulgated national nuclear export laws controlling export of dual-use items with nuclear applications; and joined the Zangger Committee (the multilateral group which coordinates efforts to control nuclear exports).

We are working with China to conclude new verification provisions to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. And we would like to see Beijing expand its export control coverage to all of the chemical precursors listed by the Australia Group (the multilateral body which coordinates exports to prevent the spread of chemical and biological weapons).

On Iraq, we will maintain sanctions until Iraq fully complies with its commitments under the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, especially its obligation to eliminate its WMD programs entirely. We remain steadfast in our determination that disarmament under these resolutions is the only pathway to sanctions relief. It is up to Saddam Hussein to decide whether he wants sanctions relief by giving up his WMD. In the meantime, we will be ready to act decisively -- including with force -- if we see Iraq rebuilding a WMD capability.

As to Russia, we will continue to work with the Russian leadership to halt dangerous proliferation activity on the part of Russian entities -- particularly those that might cooperate with Iran's missile and nuclear weapons programs. This issue remains at the top of our agenda with the Russian government and has been addressed by President Clinton and Vice President Gore in recent discussions with President Yeltsin and former Prime Minister Stepashin.

We will continue to work with Russia to strengthen its export control system and to take effective actions against companies and individuals who are violating Russian laws and putting personal gain over Russia's own national interests. We have developed incentives to encourage responsible behavior. We have established and, where appropriate, imposed tough penalties against Russian entities that violate international nonproliferation standards.

In the end, though, the most effective shield against proliferation from Russia is not U.S. penalties, but a Russian export control system that is designed to work and does so. Only Russia can police its own borders, factories, and technology institutes.

Recent positive developments suggest our strategy is beginning to show results. Over the past two months, Moscow has strengthened the foundations of Russia's nonproliferation policy and strengthened Russia's export control system. Russian agencies have been directed to implement a work plan designed in cooperation with the United States and aimed at a number of our most pressing concerns on the proliferation front. In July, President Yeltsin signed a robust export control law that introduces criminal and civil liability for companies and individuals who engage in activities of proliferation concern. Finally, the Russians are working with U.S. experts to install effective export control systems at Russian aerospace companies. These internal compliance units, which are common in other industrialized countries, will form the first line of defense and carry out important oversight functions to help keep sensitive technologies from falling into the wrong hands.
Now that these tools are in place, we are encouraging the Russian government to take visible steps to enforce Russia's export controls and to deter potential violators. Progress in this area in coming months is essential, and we will be watching Russian actions closely.

Our effort in this area also includes programs designed to address the very real need for seeing to it that scientists with expertise related to WMD are gainfully employed. That is why we are funding the International Science and Technology Center in Moscow and other initiatives to help thousands of these scientists apply their skills to civilian endeavors. It is why we are seeking funding for the Nuclear Cities Initiative to help Russia convert its nuclear weapons production facilities to peaceful uses.

It is also why President Clinton announced the Expanded Threat Reduction Initiative (ETRI) in January 1999. Under this effort, we seek to expand existing threat reduction programs, which have proven successful in eliminating hundreds of missiles, silos, launchers, and bombers, and in securing dangerous weapons-grade nuclear materials. The ETRI would allow us to continue to work together with Russia to secure and dispose of dangerous materials, convert WMD resources to peaceful use, tighten export controls, and help ensure that Russian scientists are engaged in work that in no way involves proliferation activities. We have asked our Congress to give the ETRI its full support.

Our third set of priorities recognizes that, despite our efforts to strengthen the international regime and resolve regional issues, we cannot prevent all forms of proliferation in all cases. Weapons of mass destruction already are out there in the hands of dangerous actors. So we must devote sufficient resources to develop defensive capabilities to protect people in the event these weapons are used.

To deal with the spread of ballistic missile technology in key regions, we have stepped up our Theater Missile Defense programs, including with Israel and Japan. And in 2000, we will determine whether to move from research to deployment of a limited National Missile Defense (NMD) to counter the emerging ballistic missile threat from rogue nations. We will make our decision after reviewing the results of developmental efforts, considering cost estimates, and evaluating the threat. We will also review progress in achieving our arms control objectives, including negotiating any amendments to the ABM Treaty that may be required to accommodate a possible NMD deployment.

We also are strengthening efforts to protect people from the threat of terrorist use of WMD. We have launched a robust program under our National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counterterrorism. We have created a National Domestic Preparedness Office to train and equip fire, police, and medical personnel across the United States to deal with chemical, biological, or nuclear emergencies. We are working to improve our public health surveillance system -- so that if a biological weapon is released, we can detect it and save lives. As President Clinton has said, if we prepare to defend against these emerging threats, we will show terrorists that assaults on innocent people "will accomplish nothing but their own downfall."

All of these efforts -- strengthening the nonproliferation regime, addressing regional threats, and bolstering defenses -- are essential. And the United States will continue to work hard on each front.
As President Clinton's continuing focus on these matters -- in talks with world leaders, meetings with experts, policy-making with his national security team, and speeches to the public -- makes plain, the United States will continue to be vigilant and determined against the spread of weapons of mass destruction. It is essential to global security -- now and for future generations -- that we do so.