

The Nunn-Lugar Vision



In August of 1991, as General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was on a working vacation in the Crimea, hard-line Soviet leaders penetrated his security, cut his communications, detained him in his compound and launched a coup.

Three days later, after the coup failed and Secretary Gorbachev returned to Moscow, Senator Sam Nunn, then at a conference in Budapest, received an urgent phone call from a long-time Russian friend, pressing him to come to Moscow immediately. Nunn arrived the next day, heard raucous debates in Parliament, saw angry demonstrations on the street and with the sense that a new country was being born, visited Mikhail Gorbachev in the Kremlin.

The Soviet leader tried to assure the Senator that things were under control, but as Nunn left the meeting, he asked: “Did you retain command and control of nuclear weapons during the coup?”

Gorbachev did not answer. In Nunn’s mind, that was answer enough.



PASSING NUNN-LUGAR

The Soviet Union was coming apart. Empires had disintegrated before, but never one with 30,000 nuclear warheads, bomb material for 60,000 more, 40,000 metric tons of chemical weapons, missile-ready smallpox, and tens of thousands of scientists who knew how to make weapons and missiles but didn’t know how to feed their families.

As Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar saw it, the United States was facing a catastrophic threat with only one defense: a joint U.S.-Russian effort to help Moscow keep control of its weapons, materials and know-how.

20
YEARS OF
REDUCING
GLOBAL
DANGERS

“The Nunn-Lugar program has demonstrated that the threat of weapons of mass destruction can lead to extraordinary outcomes based on mutual interest. No one would have predicted in the 1980s that Americans and Russians would be working together to destroy weapons in the former Soviet Union... The Nunn-Lugar program is an engine of non-proliferation cooperation and expertise that can be applied around the world.”

—SENATOR RICHARD LUGAR

After a first attempt to carve out defense dollars to secure Soviet nuclear weapons hit a firestorm of opposition, Nunn and Lugar gathered Senate colleagues to hear from visiting Russians about the imminent Soviet collapse. They heard from experts who had studied the dangers of nuclear weapons in a disintegrating Soviet Union. Senators who disliked the politics were won over on the substance—and in what *Congressional Quarterly* called “a remarkable last-minute turnaround,” the Senate approved the Nunn-Lugar Amendment 86–8. Two weeks later, President George H.W. Bush signed the bill into law. Two weeks after that, the Soviet Union collapsed.

HIGHLIGHTS AND MILESTONES

In the spring of 1992, Senators Nunn and Lugar traveled to Russia and Ukraine, accompanied by Bill Perry, Ash Carter and David Hamburg, all of whom were instrumental in getting the Nunn-Lugar legislation passed. Over the next two years, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan all agreed to implement the Nunn-Lugar program, officially called the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.

Russia began work on programs to improve security at nuclear weapons facilities—to keep weapons and bomb-making materials out of the hands of rogue nations or terrorist groups.

Russia and Ukraine opened science and technology centers to help employ former Soviet weapons scientists.

Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan agreed to remove all nuclear warheads from their territories, and within three years, it was

done—eliminating more nuclear weapons than the arsenals of France, China, and the United Kingdom combined.

In 1994, Nunn and Lugar traveled to the Arctic Circle and witnessed Russian shipyard workers cutting up Typhoon submarines. These subs had carried 20 nuclear missiles, each with 10 warheads.

Meanwhile, during President Bill Clinton’s first term, several key architects of Nunn-Lugar joined the Administration: Bill Perry became Deputy Secretary of Defense, then Secretary, and Ash Carter, the Harvard physicist and author of the study that persuaded the Senate of the nuclear danger, became Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy.

Under Nunn-Lugar, the United States launched “Project Sapphire”—a secret operation done in concert with the Government of Kazakhstan to package 600 kilograms of highly enriched uranium from the Ulba Metallurgical Plant in the city of Ust-Kamenogorsk, where it was vulnerable to theft. The material was moved to the United States—safeguarding dozens of bomb’s worth of highly enriched uranium, when the neighboring Iranians might have paid a billion dollars for one bomb’s worth.

Over the years, the Program met more milestones as outlined in the timeline below.

In *The Dead Hand*, Pulitzer Prize winner David Hoffman wrote: “Senators Nunn and Lugar took a gamble with history. Back then, skeptics suggested it would be best to let the former Soviet Union drown in its own sorrows... Nunn and Lugar did not agree. They helped Russia and the other

THE NUNN-LUGAR PROGRAM KEY MILESTONES

1991

December 12
Nunn-Lugar signed into law

1994

Project Sapphire removes 600 kilograms of weapons-usable uranium from Kazakhstan

1996

Belarus becomes the third former Soviet state to denuclearize, joining Kazakhstan and Ukraine

1996

Nunn-Lugar-Domenici passes Congress to help U.S. cities prepare for WMD threats

1998

U.S. and Russia begin Nuclear Cities Program to convert work at 10 formerly secret cities into peaceful research

former Soviet republics cope with an inheritance from hell. The investment paid huge dividends.”

LOOKING AHEAD

The Nunn-Lugar program arose from the ability to see new dangers emerging in a changing world and to create new partnerships to fight the threats. As the world continues to change, threats will take new forms, and partnerships will have to be even more creative and more agile.

Nunn-Lugar is not merely a program or a funding source or a set of agreements. It is an engine of expertise and cooperation that can be applied around the world—and must be. To meet the threats of the 21st century, the United States must send the clear message that we are willing to go anywhere to reduce threats of weapons

NUCLEAR SECURITY SUMMIT

In 2010, inspired in considerable part by the long-running emphasis of the Nunn-Lugar program on securing nuclear weapons—usable materials, the United States hosted a Nuclear Security Summit, where leaders pledged to reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism by securing all vulnerable nuclear material within four years.

of mass destruction—the most remote places, using the most unusual means, with the most unlikely partners.

This is the heritage of Nunn-Lugar; it should be its future as well.



2001

Following the 9/11 attacks, Congress expands Nunn-Lugar funding at the request of President George W. Bush

2003

Congress adopts the Nunn-Lugar Expansion Act authorizing the program to operate outside the former Soviet Union

2004

Nunn-Lugar funds are committed to destroy chemical weapons in Albania

2007

Nunn and Lugar visit Russia to mark the 15th anniversary of program's implementation

2009

Shchuchye Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility, which will destroy nearly two million chemical weapons shells and nerve agents, opens in Russia

2010

Senator Lugar leads Pentagon arms control experts to Africa to help secure deadly biological diseases and destroy lethal armaments, in efforts to further expand program



THE NUNN-LUGAR SCORECARD

Destroying Weapons & Materials of Mass Destruction through Cooperation

Soviet Declared Amounts		Reductions to date	Percentage of 2017 Targets	2017 Targets
13300	Warheads Deactivated	7610	82%	9265
1473	Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) Destroyed	902	87%	1041
831	ICBM Silos Eliminated	498	76%	652
442	ICBM Mobile Launchers Destroyed	191	53%	359
48	Nuclear Weapons Carrying Submarines Destroyed	33	85%	39
936	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM) Eliminated	684	94%	729
728	SLBM Launchers Eliminated	492	80%	612
906	Nuclear Air-to-Surface Missiles Destroyed	906	100%	906
233	Bombers Eliminated	155	100%	155
194	Nuclear Test Tunnels/Holes Sealed	194	100%	194
	Nuclear Weapons Transport Train Shipments	590	71%	829
	Nuclear Weapons Storage Site Security Upgrades	24	100%	24
	Biological Monitoring Stations Built & Equipped	39	63%	62

Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus are Nuclear Weapons Free

UPDATED OCTOBER 2012

TEN YEARS OF
NTI
BUILDING A SAFER WORLD

Nuclear Threat Initiative
1747 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Seventh Floor,
Washington, DC 20006
www.nti.org



PRAISE FOR THE NUNN-LUGAR PROGRAM

"In an act of foresight and statesmanship, [Nunn and Lugar] realized that existing Russian nuclear facilities were in danger of being compromised."

— PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

"The Nunn-Lugar program set the standard for forward-looking bipartisan action to promote nuclear security."

— SECRETARY OF
STATE MADELEINE K.
ALBRIGHT

"The Nunn-Lugar effort... is a great program to help neutralize some of these materials..."

— SENATOR JOHN
McCAIN

"I salute Senator Richard Lugar, my colleague from Indiana, and former Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, for their groundbreaking work in forging these programs, and I am proud I have been able to work with them in these critical efforts."

— SENATOR PETE
DOMENICI

"As a former student of the Soviet Union and of the Soviet military, I can think of nothing more important than proceeding with the safe dismantlement of the Soviet arsenal, securing nuclear weapons facilities, and destroying their chemical weapons."

— SECRETARY OF STATE
CONDOLIEZZA RICE

"Most important, we need to join forces to keep weapons of mass destruction out of terrorist hands. One of the best examples of such collaboration was pioneered in the nineties by Republican Senator Dick Lugar of Indiana and former Democratic Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, two men who understood the need to nurture coalitions before crises strike, and who applied this knowledge to the critical problem of nuclear proliferation. ... [The Nunn-Lugar program] has proven to be one of the most important investments we could have made to protect ourselves from catastrophe."

— PRESIDENT BARACK
OBAMA IN *THE
AUDACITY OF HOPE*

The Nunn-Lugar program is "one of the most prescient pieces of legislation ever enacted."

— *THE WALL STREET
JOURNAL*

Nunn and Lugar are "two of the nation's most farsighted national security experts... between them, they know almost everything worth knowing about America's national security."

— *WASHINGTON POST*
COLUMNIST DAVID
BRODER

"Nunn-Lugar ranks with the Marshall Plan in its historic significance."

— DR. DAVID HAMBURG,
FORMER PRESIDENT
OF THE CARNEGIE
CORPORATION OF
NEW YORK

"The program is crucial not only because it secured a breakthrough as far as the solution of issues that have been acute since the early 1990s are concerned, but because it allowed us to accumulate political capital that has now turned into a mechanism of cooperation and partnership."

— RUSSIAN FOREIGN
MINISTER SERGEI
LAVROV

"You can't have nuclear security and a sense of protection of nuclear facilities and material and know-how without the Nunn-Lugar Program."

— UNDER SECRETARY
OF STATE FOR ARMS
CONTROL AND
INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY ELLEN
TAUSCHER

TEN YEARS OF
NTI 
BUILDING A SAFER WORLD