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Presented at the Center for Strategic and International Studies - "Reducing The Global Nuclear Threat: Nuclear Nonproliferation And The Role Of The International Community"

Presented by Thomas D'Agostino, Administrator, NNSA

Introduction

Reducing The Global Nuclear Threat: Nuclear

I am pleased to be here today, participating in the Center for Strategic and International Studies Smart Power series. CSIS remains a recognized leader on international relations and national security issues, and I am honored to have been invited by Bob Einhorn.

As Administrator of the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration, I am charged with leading NNSA's dual missions to maintain the safety, reliability, and performance of the United States nuclear weapons stockpile and to reduce the global danger from weapons of mass destruction. We are uniquely positioned for this second mission because of our expertise from the first. At the core of these two distinct missions lies one shared objective: upholding the United States national security by promoting responsible nuclear stewardship, both at home and abroad. It is this nexus, if you will, of national security interests that I wish to speak to today.

As a nuclear weapons state, reducing the global nuclear threat starts first at home but must include international engagement and cooperation. So today I will briefly discuss: 1) the domestic nonproliferation role of the United States; 2) the international role of the United States in addressing the global nuclear threat; and 3) last but not least, the role of the international community in promoting nuclear nonproliferation.

The U.S. Role as a Responsible Nuclear Power

Clearly the international environment has evolved greatly in the last fifty years, and the threats to U.S. and global security remain very complicated. Despite this fact, the United States has made dramatic progress in drawing down our nuclear stockpile since the end of the Cold War. Rather than an arms race with Russia, today's more complex threat hinges upon the fear of regional arms races and the use of a WMD by non-state actors. This reality underscores the importance of a national security strategy that relies upon both disarmament efforts and nonproliferation efforts, to help build trust internationally and prevent the spread and use of WMD.

A principal national security goal of the United States is to deter aggression against ourselves, our allies, and friends. In this regard, the United States policy is to achieve an effective strategic deterrent at the lowest level of nuclear weapons consistent with our national security needs and our commitments and obligations to our allies. It is another reality of today's security environment and the highly uncertain future security threat environment that credible U.S. nuclear capabilities and this security commitment to allies remain an indispensable part of deterrence. Given this environment, deterrence is also an important element of our effort to limit proliferation, and prevent nuclear arms races and the nightmare scenario of WMD use by a terror group.

As a Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty signatory, the United States also has an obligation towards nuclear disarmament. Balancing both obligations, in 2002 President Bush directed that the United States reduce the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons to 1,700-2,200 by 2012, consistent with the Moscow Treaty. Beyond that, President Bush declared that the entire U.S. stockpile, should be reduced by half from the time he came into office. We achieved that 5 years early in 2007, and therefore, he has ordered a further reduction of close to 15% by 2012. I should emphasize that once this is achieved, the U.S. nuclear stockpile will be at its lowest level since the Eisenhower Administration.

Leading up to this 2012 target, we are making historic and accelerated disarmament progress. As I

said, the retirements originally slated for 2012 were in fact completed early, by 2007. I am proud to say that the NNSA contributed to this accelerated pace by increasing our dismantlement rates for retired weapons by 146% over the prior year.

Meeting the Challenge: International Efforts

That's what we are doing in our own backyard on nonproliferation to meet our international commitments. However, a global threat requires a global response. In keeping with the second NNSA mission I noted earlier, we are working in over 100 countries globally to advance nonproliferation objectives by detecting, securing, and eliminating dangerous nuclear and radiological materials. In fact, we have recently re-inventoried and prioritized the known nuclear and radiological material and sites around the world. A presidential report that will be issued to Congress this fall outlines steps NNSA is taking to collaborate internationally to secure and account for, reduce and eliminate, and detect and deter trafficking in nuclear weapons, materials and related equipment.

To most effectively implement this mission and maximize resources, we focus our efforts on the following principles: 1) securing fissile material at its source as a "first line of defense" to most directly prevent access; 2) detecting and deterring illicit trafficking as a "second line of defense"; and 3) increasingly focus on the security of civilian nuclear and radiological materials. We recognize the urgency of this mission and, just as we have in our disarmament work, we have accelerated these nonproliferation efforts in response.

Under the Bratislava Nuclear Security Initiative, we accelerated our nuclear security cooperation with Russia and have completed security upgrades at 85% of Russian nuclear sites of concern. We are on target to complete the balance of sites by the end of this year. This year, we reached an historic nonproliferation milestone by ceasing operation of two reactors located in the city of Seversk, Russia, ending 43 years of weapons-grade plutonium production there. We anticipate shutting down the one remaining plutonium producing reactor in Russia no later than 2010. Also, we have verifiably downblended more than 337 metric tons of Russian former-weapons HEU--material which now provides 10% of all U.S. electricity--and have reached agreement with Russia on a technical and financial plan to eliminate 34 metric tons of their weapons-grade plutonium.

We recognize, however, that not all material of concern is in Russia or residing at defense facilities. In response, we have expanded the scope of our international work to new countries and, increasingly, civilian materials. To support the minimization of the civilian use of HEU globally, we are converting research reactors domestically and abroad to low enriched uranium and repatriating the HEU back to Russia and the United States. To date, we have converted 52 reactors--12 of which in just the past 3 years alone--and removed over 1,900 kilograms of HEU. We are developing innovative new safeguards technologies and approaches through our Next Generation Safeguards Initiative to ensure that the anticipated growth of nuclear energy worldwide does not contribute to proliferation or outpace international safeguards capabilities.

We are also taking aggressive steps to interdict illicit transfers of weapons-usable nuclear materials and equipment, and to prevent dissemination of related sensitive nuclear technology via strengthened export controls and cooperation. NNSA is on the front line of efforts to help countries meet their safeguards, security, and export control obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540. In just the last year, NNSA trained approximately 300 nuclear facility operators in foreign countries on material accounting and control procedures and trained approximately 1,000 licensing, industry, and customs officers to assess export license applications and identify strategic commodities. We have been active participants in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, which provides the practical means to achieve the legal mandates of Security Resolution 1540.

As an important complement to physical security improvements, the Second Line of Defense Program enhances our foreign partners' ability to interdict illicit trafficking in nuclear materials through the deployment of radiation detection systems at high-risk land-border crossings, airports and seaports. To date, NNSA has installed radiation detection equipment at high-volume, strategic "Megaports" in 12 countries, with work underway in a total of 25 countries.

And we work to reduce the likelihood of terrorist acquisition of material for a radiological dispersal device by detecting, securing, and eliminating vulnerable radiological materials. Our Global Threat Reduction Initiative has secured over 655 radiological sites overseas to date, thus protecting over 9 million curies of radioactive materials from theft.

The U.S. and the NNSA specifically undertake efforts to strengthen the nonproliferation regime and expand international nonproliferation efforts. We continue to provide technical and policy support to U.S. efforts within the nonproliferation regime, including support to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the International Atomic Energy Agency and a wide range of U.S. diplomatic initiatives, including the efforts in North Korea.

We believe that there are three pillars to effective international nonproliferation engagement and cooperation:

- Maximizing geographical coverage and engagement;
- Utilizing cost-sharing mechanisms to accelerate existing efforts, pool resources, and help build multi-national consensus on nonproliferation goals; and
- Implementing sustainability efforts to ensure that these investments are maintained in the long-term.

In keeping with these principles, we are working to strengthen international collaboration and dialogue on nonproliferation efforts, including developing an international mechanism through which seven countries have pledged over \$49 million in contributions to NNSA's nonproliferation programs.

NNSA is employing these strategies to guide our international work and maximize results. We do this work not only because it is in the U.S. national interest, but because it is absolutely vital to international security. Which brings me to the most important point; an effective defense against the spread and use of WMD cannot be unilateral in nature.

The Role of the International Community

Let me be clear when I say that I believe the U.S. has a special responsibility in advancing nonproliferation and nuclear security globally. But we should not, and cannot, do it alone. Events such as 9/11 and the revelations of the A.Q. Khan network illustrated a bleak fact: those wishing to do harm will take every possible, even unforeseen, route to do so. And as the A.Q. Khan case proved with respect to WMD, proliferators require only one weak link in the fence to proliferate. In today's global economy and shared security environment, no one country can safeguard against proliferation; preventing proliferation requires shared strategies, goals, and efforts and, most of all, partnership. Hence some of the capacity-building and cooperative efforts I noted previously.

Beyond those efforts, foremost among the urgent nonproliferation goals for the international community is the establishment and implementation of international nuclear security standards and practices. The anticipated growth of nuclear energy worldwide and the continued pursuit of nuclear weapons by terrorists and states of concern underscore the need for urgent action. Recognizing the bar set by the amended Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and U.N Security Council Resolution 1540, these international standards must be both comprehensive and universal enough to serve as an international baseline and guidebook for adequate and effective nuclear security.

Just last week, NNSA convened a meeting of nuclear experts from 14 countries, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and other federal agencies to examine the challenges to the safeguards systems and begin to outline an agenda for cooperation to meet anticipated safeguards needs and prevent proliferation.

The United States remains committed to working with our partners and expanding cooperation to establish and implement a set of international nuclear security standards consistent with today's nuclear security realities. Together, we must build a system to exclude the possibility that proliferators would need just one weak link in the system of export controls, safeguards, and physical protection to acquire proliferation-sensitive materials.

And we applaud the anticipated launch next month of a World Institute for Nuclear Security effort to promote the sharing and implementation of nuclear security best practices.

Conclusion

The success of our efforts to deny access to nuclear weapons and material is very much dependent on our foreign partners recognizing the threat and joining international efforts to help us all combat it. A country's nuclear security responsibility does not stop at the boundaries of its nuclear facilities or its borders, but rather it requires the sharing of best practices and nonproliferation tools, it requires partnership to facilitate these practices in countries worldwide, and it requires vigilant efforts to ensure that international institutions and standards keep pace with technological and international developments.

Never before has the global nuclear security challenge been so daunting, but never before has the potential benefit from international partnership been so great. Since I know we want to get to the question and answer session, I will just note that in about a month or so the President will be issuing a new Global Nuclear Security Report to Congress. This report was developed in large measure by NNSA, and outlines in much greater detail the U.S. government efforts to respond to the global nuclear threat and the enormous contributions of the international community as a whole in this regard.

I would like to thank you for your attention. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

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