

VIEWPOINTS

REVVING UP THE COOPERATIVE NONPROLIFERATION ENGINE

Senator Richard G. Lugar

In its sixteen years of existence, the Nunn-Lugar program has successfully dismantled nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons in the former Soviet Union. Washington's periodic disagreements with Russia should not halt this critical work. Moreover, the United States must expand the Nunn-Lugar principles to new regions of world and to new types of threats. It is particularly vital to give Nunn-Lugar the authority to work with countries under conditions where U.S. legal obstacles might otherwise bar such cooperation, and to eliminate red tape and bureaucratic burdens on the Defense Threat Reduction Agency so it can respond to unforeseen contingencies. For example, Nunn-Lugar already has destroyed a chemical weapons stockpile in Albania, and it should be given the flexibility to work in North Korea if a future agreement makes that possible. Nunn-Lugar should be expanded so the United States can work cooperatively to control stockpiles of conventional weapons, train foreign governments in the interdiction of dangerous weapons and materials, and assist in responding to attacks involving weapons of mass destruction.

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During the sixteen years that the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) process has been in operation, I have never considered "Nunn-Lugar" to be merely a program, or a source of funding, or a set of agreements. Rather, it is a concept through which we attempt to address a persistent global threat. It is an engine of nonproliferation cooperation and expertise that can be applied to many situations around the world. For a cooperative endeavor like Nunn-Lugar to work, new opportunities for partnership must be pursued creatively and relentlessly. The United States should be sending the clear message that we are willing to go anywhere in pursuit of preventing the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

That starts with Russia. Both the United States and Russia must accept the fact that we need each other. We must be as energetic in searching for common ground as we have been lately in voicing our dissatisfaction. Kremlin rhetoric will swing from one end of the strategic spectrum to the other. Commitments will be made and then put on hold. Projects will be on and then off. Our frustration level will be high. But we must not lose patience or miss the opportunities for cooperative threat reduction.

Critics argue that Russia's recent energy income windfall renders U.S. dismantlement and nonproliferation assistance unnecessary. Others attempt to resuscitate the fungibility

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argument, which asserts that every dollar we spend in Russia frees up dollars that Moscow can apply elsewhere. But we should recall that the Nunn-Lugar program was created to safeguard U.S. national security interests, and these interests exist regardless of the current state of Russia's financial fortunes.

Russia may well assume greater dismantlement and nonproliferation responsibilities in the years ahead, or it may refuse assistance even when it is needed. Washington cannot impose the Nunn-Lugar program on Russia. Moscow must make its own decisions and threat calculations. What we can do is effectively complete the work to which we are already committed and remain prepared to move quickly should new requests for cooperation occur.

The United States must seek new ways to remain active in Russia. The 2002 Moscow Treaty (also called the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty) did not contain any verification procedures, and the verification regime of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) could expire next year. Discarding START's verification regime would be a mistake and would carry with it the seeds of greater distrust between the two sides. Under such a scenario, we have only one mechanism for verification and transparency—Nunn-Lugar. National technical means such as reconnaissance satellites cannot replace on-site verification.

We also must expand beyond Russia. In 2003, Congress authorized \$50 million in Nunn-Lugar funding to be used outside the former Soviet Union. This authority has already been put to good use in Albania to destroy chemical weapons, an experience that taught us some important lessons. The Nunn-Lugar program must have the flexibility to adjust to unforeseen contingencies. The \$50 million limit on work outside the former Soviet Union should be removed. The secretary of defense must have the authority to operate in difficult political and strategic environments without the risk that critical operations could be suspended because of the unintended consequences of executive or legislative action.

Today, the Nonproliferation and Disarmament Fund (NDF) at the State Department is the only U.S. nonproliferation program that operates with "notwithstanding authority." This authority allows the administration to do nonproliferation work in any nation or environment irrespective of U.S. legal obstacles—such as sanctions—that might otherwise block action. While useful, the NDF is not a substitute for a Nunn-Lugar program. The NDF's annual budget is only about \$30 million, as opposed to a Nunn-Lugar budget of almost \$500 million. The NDF operates with resource, management, and expertise limitations, some of which have been cited by the State Department Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office. It concerns me that if we experience a breakthrough in talks with North Korea that allowed us to begin helping that nation to fully secure and dismantle its nuclear program, NDF is the only option available to the administration under current law to carry out such operations.

Granting notwithstanding authority to Nunn-Lugar would not mean that Congress could not adjust or restrict the program. But it would mean that Nunn-Lugar would have the ability to respond rapidly to new nonproliferation opportunities that could be vital to our national security. We should not allow bureaucratic inertia to impede potentially historic transformations in North Korea or elsewhere.

Likewise, we must expand beyond Nunn-Lugar's traditional focus on strategic weapons. Two years ago, I introduced legislation with Senator Barack Obama (Democrat of

Illinois) to jump-start the U.S. government's response to threats from conventional weapons stockpiles. We were concerned that leadership was lacking and that the budgetary commitment was not equal to the threat. Our bill called for a global effort to seek out and destroy surplus and unguarded stocks of conventional armaments.

The State Department has significantly increased funding for these efforts, but it is clear that the State Department budget does not have the capacity to focus the necessary funding and attention needed to address this threat. In my opinion, this means that the Department of Defense and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) must make a greater investment in conventional weapons elimination. I would recommend linking conventional weapons dismantlement with traditional Nunn-Lugar program activities.

We must also make the CTR process more streamlined. Over the last several years, I have worked to reduce the red tape associated with implementing Nunn-Lugar projects. The thirteen-step, nearly yearlong certification process for each Nunn-Lugar recipient must be eliminated. In some years, Nunn-Lugar funds for dismantlement projects have not been available for more than half of the fiscal year due to the cumbersome bureaucratic process. Hundreds of working hours by the intelligence community, the State Department, the Department of Defense, and other departments and agencies are routinely wasted complying with these requirements. Instead of interdicting weapons shipments, identifying the next A.Q. Khan, or locating hidden stocks of chemical and biological weapons, our nonproliferation experts spend their time compiling reports and assembling certification or waiver determinations.

I am pleased to report that this year, Congress will eliminate the certification requirements. This is good news, but it is just the tip of the iceberg of what must be done to streamline the process. I will keep looking for other opportunities to reduce bureaucratic burdens, and I urge DTRA to review its project implementation process in hopes of speeding dismantlement contracting and implementation.

While Nunn-Lugar is our country's first line of defense against weapons and materials of mass destruction, we need to bolster the second line of defense: our ability to stop weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that have been stolen from existing stockpiles but have not yet reached the United States.

To strengthen the second line of defense, we must improve the capabilities of other nations. We need the cooperation of like-minded nations to detect and interdict such threats. In 2003, the United States launched the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which enlisted the participation of other nations in the interdiction of illicit nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, and their components. PSI is an excellent step forward, but what is lacking is a coordinated effort to improve the capabilities of our foreign partners so that they can play a larger detection and interdiction role.

Nunn-Lugar has made important progress in this area. I have seen firsthand the effectiveness of the patrol ships, equipment, and training we have provided to Azerbaijan. In Ukraine, I witnessed WMD detection technology at border crossings and ground and sea surveillance in open areas. A number of countries including Afghanistan and Indonesia have asked to discuss possible Nunn-Lugar programs with their governments.

I recommend that Nunn-Lugar and DTRA make the provision of counterproliferation assistance a priority in the years ahead. In my view, this will make President George

W. Bush's PSI more effective in stopping, interdicting, or deterring the proliferation of WMD. DTRA should also lead the way in providing expertise, equipment, and training to international partners in responding to potential WMD attacks. In other words, we must extend our cooperation to domestic preparedness. I recommend establishing bilateral and multilateral cooperation programs to assist in the development of decontamination and remediation capabilities. The response, mitigation, and restoration of public services following a WMD attack will be critical.

Our nation should make maximum use of the Nunn-Lugar program. The experts at DTRA are committed to protecting this country. They are an incalculable strategic asset for U.S. national security. We must find ways to help them do their job better and reduce the burdens we impose upon them.

Over the years, I have described our work with foreign governments to address threats posed by weapons of mass destruction as a "window of opportunity." We never know how long that window will remain open. We must not restrict or encumber our ability to act. Nor should we ignore opportunities to reduce the number of nuclear warheads or enhance the verification regime attendant to those drawdowns. Our government has the experience and capabilities to strengthen our role as the world leader in nonproliferation and counterproliferation. Our challenge is to devise the best way to implement programs devoted to these ends.

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