

# US-NIS Dialogue on Nonproliferation Export Controls

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Controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was the focus of the multilateral conference, "US-NIS Dialogue on Nonproliferation Export Controls," which brought together officials from the United States and the newly independent states (NIS) of the former Soviet Union. The three-day meeting, held in June, 1993 at the Airlie House Convention Center in Virginia, acquainted NIS officials with US export control policy and practice, informed them about international and multilateral export control efforts, and allowed them to describe the export control experiences and needs of their own republics. This forum also provided insight into the unique challenges facing the NIS as they attempt to develop export control systems from the ruins of a command economy.

US participants stressed that export controls on goods, technologies and information were crucial to an overall nonproliferation strategy, since such control makes it more difficult for rogue nations to acquire weapons of mass destruction. US government officials outlined the strengths of the US interagency approach to export controls, describing in detail the process of reviewing, issuing and enforcing export licenses. Representatives of US industry then explained their role in export control compliance, sparking a Russian delegate to propose a future conference between US and Russian industrialists which would explore these topics further. Although the US export control model was acknowledged as "effective," a State Department official also described it as "unwieldy" and not easily emulated by the NIS. The export control practices of Poland and other eastern European countries were set forth as alternative models.

After discussing the US and Eastern European models, NIS delegates described their own efforts to develop and implement export control systems. Russia, whose export controls are already developed due to its inheritance of the Soviet export control bureaucracy, is currently adapting its system to the needs of a market economy. Unlike Russia, other NIS governments must develop an entirely new export control system. They are faced with a lack of experienced personnel and limited financial resources. The non-nuclear

republics in particular expressed a desire for assistance from more experienced governments in training personnel in all aspects of the export control process.

NIS delegates stressed the need for an export control model. In the words of one Kazakh official, "the lack of action in this area leads to mutual distrust and to delays in removing barriers [between countries]." Other NIS delegates cited such action as "one of the major tasks for the near future."

Despite earnest attempts at export control implementation, the NIS face many obstacles. One of the major tasks includes the development of a licensing system. A Kyrgyz delegate said that his country is "working on...creating an automated system for licensing that would include...information on exporters and importers, and...on companies [that] might be intermediaries." Since this work is still in the early stages of development, he mentioned that "it would be very useful to work...with the US Department of Commerce in developing such a system." Political difficulties have also slowed efforts to create a system. Ukraine has prepared documents for creating an export control structure, which would provide the Ukrainian government with the "capacity to exercise control over all of the sensitive materials that could be exported or re-exported from Ukraine," a Ukrainian delegate said. According to the delegate, implementing controls is a high priority for the country. However, issuance of these documents as government regulations has fallen victim to "past political turmoil" surrounding domestic issues.

Because of widespread corruption, a rise in organized crime, and insufficient border control, enforcement of export controls remains the greatest challenge. The situation in Ukraine led its government to assume "very tight control over exports in general, and [over] the export of commodities [that have been discussed at this conference]...in particular." Specifically, the Cabinet of

Ministers decided that the export of goods which are subject to control may be carried out "only by specially authorized organizations."

Throughout the discussion of implementing and enforcing export controls in the NIS, concern for tailoring the controls to fit the individual needs of the country was often mentioned. The creation of a huge and costly bureaucracy would be detrimental to many of the states. An Estonian representative commented that "before implementing the general principles of export control, our domestic conditions must be considered." Reliance on the experiences of neighboring countries that already possess or are developing an effective system of export control would be beneficial, but a country's individual situation must be taken into account.

Conference discussion also focused on compliance with the guidelines of nonproliferation regimes. While US participants stressed the importance of complying with international norms, NIS participants explained the economic costs of compliance. Of primary concern was the desire to have Western-imposed controls on technology transfer, such as COCOM restrictions, removed. One Russian official noted that although COCOM has decided to establish a Cooperation Forum, the organization continues to implement a "tough policy" against former Eastern Bloc countries. The Russian delegation that went to COCOM in Paris to plead for the removal of all remaining restrictions was told "that high-technology items cannot be exported to Russia because COCOM is not quite sure that they will not be diverted to other regions." The Russians, therefore, are actively searching for ways to resolve this issue. They hope to return to Paris and offer proof that their export control system does indeed satisfy COCOM standards.

One Belarusian delegate also expressed displeasure with the lack of change in the COCOM system. He argued that the West should remove Cold War trade restrictions and embrace the NIS as equal partners in nonproliferation in order to support economic and political reforms underway in the NIS. He elaborated by saying that if COCOM is concerned with eliminating restrictions on the export of certain goods and technologies, it should concentrate on issuing "further safeguards," which would allow it to relax its control to some extent. It seems, however, that procedural issues in COCOM are making changes difficult.

The NIS participation in the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) was also discussed. NIS delegates complained that MTCR regulations were unclear, with a

Russian delegate requesting "a well-defined interpretation of certain provisions." A Ukrainian delegate added that the MTCR "is not really very clear to a new country, and it seems that it might well be an obstacle to participation in international trade in this area." Some ambiguities regarding the MTCR, however, were resolved as a result of subsequent US-Russian bilateral negotiations resulting in the cancellation of cryogenic rockets sales to India.

Closing this panel's discussion, a US State Department official expressed the desire of the administration to aid interested NIS states in developing a more tailored export control system to suit their needs. Throughout the conference, NIS participants requested assistance in this area. According to a Russian official, "developing an effective and rational system of export control is an integral part of...[the nonproliferation] process." The NIS recognize that they must each develop their own systems, but acknowledge that "only the international community in its entirety...can effectively resolve the problem" of nuclear proliferation.

While export control problems were the primary focus of the conference, other threats to nonproliferation were cited. The delegate from Uzbekistan was particularly concerned with the victory of Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan. These forces, he explained, have managed to have a profound effect on laying the foundations for Islamic power to consolidate their power. There is concern that the industrial, technical and scientific potential of the Post-Soviet Islamic countries could be targeted for accelerating the proliferation process "under the rubric of Islamic solidarity."

The conference drew praise from both NIS and US participants. Many of the delegates expressed a desire to continue the dialogue that began at the conference, to work toward the normalization of East-West trade relations and to cooperate in global nonproliferation efforts. A US delegate noted that expanded US-NIS export control cooperation is likely to result from the relationships formed at the Airlie House conference.