

Political leaders and public opinion in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine are concerned that the U.S. Congress seems inclined to reduce funding for the Cooperative Threat Reduction or “Nunn-Lugar” program, which originated in the U.S. Senate in 1991 and later became a part of the budget of the U.S. Department of Defense. In our view, reduction of this program would not serve the interests of international security, nor would it serve the national security interests of the United States.

We believe it is fair to say that recent, major successes in the field of non-proliferation, including the May 1995 decision of the Non-Proliferation

Treaty Review and Extension Conference in New York City to extend the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) indefinitely, were to a considerable extent facilitated by the adoption and implementation of the Nunn-Lugar program. This program has provided U.S. technical and financial assistance to Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine for nuclear weapons reduction as well as for realization of other important nonproliferation objectives.

It is worth recalling that in 1991, one of the most serious problems facing the West in the field of international security and stability was the future of the strategic nuclear arsenals that Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine inherited as a result of the breakup of the Soviet Union. The decision by Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine to eliminate nuclear weapons has contributed to international peace and stability but also substantially enhanced the security of the United States and played a crucial role in the decision to extend the NPT indefinitely, thus strengthening the international nonproliferation regime.

A major consideration that helped our parliaments to take this decision was the offer of Nunn-Lugar assistance, which is regarded by our people as a long-term commitment by the United States to support our denuclearization effort. Reduction of this program will be considered by public opinion in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine as a breach of this commitment, will create doubts as to reliability of the United States as a long-

term partner, and could cause serious delays in the final elimination of nuclear weapons that have not yet been dismantled.

The Nunn-Lugar program has become a vital factor in the fulfillment by our three governments of our obligations under the START I Treaty, which of course has an important impact on the national security of the United States. U.S. assistance under the Nunn-Lugar program made it possible for us to liquidate nuclear weapons and strengthen nonproliferation regimes. In particular, American assistance is being utilized in Belarus, Kazakhstan,

and Ukraine to remove warheads from strategic delivery systems for eventual dismantlement in Russia, to destroy fixed and mobile launchers, to create and perfect export control systems, to inventory and safeguard fissile materials, to restore the environment around strategic nuclear military facilities, to recycle highly toxic rocket engine fuel, and to assist the transition of strategic rocket force personnel to civilian life.

Moreover, the program has become an integral part of our international relations. It has created and strengthened new areas of partnership among Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and the United States. It is noteworthy that defense ministries are the main project coordinators in all four states. As a result, the Nunn-Lugar program has fostered confidence-building among our respective military establishments. It would be unfortunate if reduction of this program were to weaken these important, developing ties.

We believe that as Congress considers the future of this program, it should take full account of the negative consequences for our countries and for the United States and Russia of cutting or restricting existing Nunn-Lugar activities—particularly those related to nuclear weapons

**VIEWPOINT:  
THE NUNN-LUGAR  
PROGRAM SHOULD  
BE INCREASED,  
NOT REDUCED**  
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destruction and to the development of national infrastructures in recipient states designed to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that an objective analysis of the program's overall implementation to date will show that it has played a key role in facilitating the nuclear disarmament and the nonproliferation process for now non-nuclear Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine.

We therefore hope that Congress will decide to preserve and upgrade the Nunn-Lugar program, not reduce it. U.S. equipment, materials, and technical means, which this program has brought us, are used to achieve common goals of enhanced security. We value highly our consultations with American specialists on a wide range of issues concerning nonproliferation, as well as the assistance we have received for decommissioning our strategic rocket forces and helping their adaptation to civilian life. We believe that if Congress views the Nunn-Lugar program through the prism of U.S. national security interests, it will see that the program serves U.S. vital interests as well as those of our countries.

Finally, it would be appropriate to consider carefully the worldwide impact of the future of the Nunn-Lugar program. Will it serve as a positive stimulus for the so-called "threshold" nuclear countries to give up their national nuclear weapons ambitions? Or will it provide a justification for the ill-founded but unfortunately widespread perception that only those possessing weapons of mass destruction are treated with international respect?