

Special Section on the September 11, 2001, Attacks

Interview with Ambassador Robert G. Joseph

CONDUCTED BY LEONARD S. SPECTOR

BACKGROUND

Ambassador Robert G. Joseph is Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Proliferation Strategies, Counterproliferation, and Homeland Defense, U.S. National Security Council Staff. He is recognized as a leading member of the group of Republican defense strategists whose writings helped to shape the national security outlook of candidate George W. Bush. Since joining the Bush administration, Ambassador Joseph has played a key role on such issues as developing a new strategic framework with Russia and improving coordination of U.S. counterproliferation initiatives.

Prior to joining the National Security Council (NSC) staff, Dr. Joseph served as a Professor of National Security Studies and Director of the Center for Counterproliferation Research at the National Defense University. In the previous Bush administration, he held the positions of U.S. Commissioner to the Standing Consultative Commission on the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and Ambassador to the U.S.-Russian Consultative Commission on Nuclear Testing. In the Reagan administration, he held several positions within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, including Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Forces and Arms Control Policy.

The interview was conducted on October 15, 2001, by Leonard S. Spector, Deputy Director of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies and Editor-in-Chief of the Center's publications.

ORGANIZATION OF NSC STAFF

NPR: Thank you for agreeing to this interview with *The Nonproliferation Review*. Let me begin by saying that my colleagues at the Monterey Institute and I recognize the great effort the administration is making to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11. We all share your hopes for success.

I'd like to begin by asking you to comment on the new title that was given to your position when you joined the NSC staff. Formerly the position was "Senior Director for Nonproliferation." It is now called "Senior Director for Proliferation Strategies, Counterproliferation, and Homeland Defense." Why did you make these changes?

Joseph: Thank you for your words of support. As for the change in title, the Bush administration is strongly committed to reducing the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD). We believe this requires a multifaceted approach that combines traditional nonproliferation

policies and programs—national, bilateral, and multinational—along with more active measures to deter and defend against existing and expanding threats posed by WMD and their delivery systems. “Counterproliferation” refers to those policies and programs needed to counter a wide spectrum of threats to the United States and to protect against the consequences of proliferation. We wanted to consolidate all of these under one Senior Director at the NSC to enhance coordination and heighten the visibility of these combined activities.¹

NPR: What is the scope of your responsibilities regarding “homeland defense?”

Joseph: In the context of this directorate, homeland defense is limited to defense against state threats, not terrorist threats. Most of that segment of the directorate’s portfolio has to date been devoted to missile defense issues, including the ABM Treaty.

DETERRENCE

NPR: To clarify the point you mentioned, you have spoken about “detering” proliferation threats. Is part of that portfolio trying to ensure the adequacy of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile?

Joseph: No, the stockpile is not one of this office’s responsibilities. This office, however, does have a role in shaping the administration’s deterrence policy. I would refer you to the May 1st speech [at the National Defense University (NDU)] in which the president emphasized the requirement for a comprehensive strategy to deal with the proliferation threat, the threat of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. This speech reflected in many ways the responsibilities of this directorate, because the comprehensive strategy is based on three principal components: strengthening nonproliferation (and we certainly want to lead in that effort); effective counterproliferation (for the first time counterproliferation is being done at the national level here at the NSC); and a new deterrence concept to address today’s threats. The new deterrence concept is based less on offensive nuclear capabilities and more on defensive capabilities, particularly the ability to defend against limited missile threats.

NPR: Let me pursue your comment on deterrence. Is it accurate to say that the vision of deterring offensive missiles pointed at the United States is not to

threaten the sender with retaliation, as much as it is to render his efforts useless?

Joseph: The idea is very straightforward: the Cold War is over and new threats have emerged. We need to move away from the deterrent concept of the past involving two superpowers, each with thousands of nuclear weapons pointed at each other. In this circumstance, strategic stability was defined as having the capability to annihilate each other. Today’s threats are vastly different. We are no longer talking about a superpower with thousands of nuclear weapons aimed at us. We are talking about a number of rogue states, each with handfuls of long-range missiles. None of these states seeks, in the Cold War context, to launch a first strike against us. Rather, they seek to hold our cities hostage and thereby deter us from coming to the assistance of friends and allies in key regions of the world. We believe that our deterrence concept must change to fit the times. It no longer makes sense to maintain thousands of nuclear weapons and the same counterforce offensive capabilities that we had in the Cold War. It simply does not fit the security environment of today. However, limited defenses against handfuls of missiles, rather than against hundreds or thousands of missiles, do make sense. Defenses play a key role, but they are only one capability in the spectrum of capabilities required to defend across the broad range of threats we face.

NPR: Are you using the term deterrence to look at the full spectrum of threats, as opposed to the traditional third world proliferation threat?

Joseph: In terms of the new concept that the president articulated in his NDU speech, deterrence is defined as deterrence against rogue types of threats such as states that are acquiring or already possess weapons of mass destruction and the capability to deliver these weapons at long range through ballistic missiles. We realize that this is only one way to deliver the weapons, and we are also enhancing our ability to protect against these other modes of attack, such as the “suitcase bomb.”

NPR: In effect, you are saying that the number of offensive weapons that we have to deal with these threats need not be on the same scale and magnitude as we needed to deter the Soviet threat in the Cold War.

Joseph: That’s correct, but I would also go further and say that we believe a deterrent based exclusively on of-

fenses is not going to be sufficient to deter the types of threats we face today. These threats are different. The leaderships of rogue states are different from the leadership of the former Soviet Union. The leaders of these states have demonstrated a willingness to gamble the lives of their nationals. We do not communicate with these states as effectively as we did with the Soviet Union. We also do not have agreed understandings with these states. That dynamic of deterrence is much different than in the Cold War. Quite frankly, the prospects for deterrence failure are greater now than they were in the past and therefore defenses are also needed to protect against the danger of its failure.

ABM TREATY

NPR: Have the administration's efforts to work with Russia on a new framework for the ABM Treaty and to flesh out a lower level of deployed offensive warheads slowed down at all in response to the events of September 11th? Are senior officials focusing more on terrorism now without having the opportunity or occasion to advance the missile defense agenda, so prominent before the terrorist attacks?

Joseph: I think the senior team put in place by this administration is incredibly strong. Not only have the principals been able to focus on the immediacy of the war on terrorism, but they have very much kept going at an intensive level the discussion with Russia on the new strategic framework. In fact, next week, the president will be talking to President Putin again at the Asia-Pacific Economic Summit in Shanghai. The ABM Treaty is one of the major issues for discussion. There have also been consultations in channels of the Department of Defense, conducted by Under Secretary Feith and Secretary Rumsfeld, and consultations through the State Department with Under Secretary Bolton and Secretary Powell. The schedule of meetings has been very intensive. The original concept of the strategic framework again goes back to the May 1 speech, in which the president said that part of this new security strategy is a cooperative relationship with Russia, based on mutual interest, not mutual vulnerability.

NPR: Have the dynamics of the discussions changed, given the fact that we are now more dependent on Russia for approval of over-flight rights and for cor-

dially accepting our forces in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan?

Joseph: I would not describe the relationship as dependent. Thus far, I have been very struck by the breadth and depth of our cooperation with Russia on counterterrorism. I think Russia has been very forthcoming as have a good number of other members of the international community. I think that the relationship we have on counterterrorism is a good model for the type of new framework we want with Russia and in fact I think this situation has accelerated the ability to establish such a relationship.

NPR: In principle, the administration had discussed the possibility of conducting some tests that might violate the ABM Treaty next summer, for example, sea-based systems or airborne lasers tested against strategic targets. If the administration plans to give six months' notice of withdrawing from the ABM Treaty before undertaking those tests, then its window of opportunity for resolving the future of the ABM Treaty with Russia is only a few more months. If the Russians do not "play ball," how will we get tough with them while still attempting to build this more positive relationship?

Joseph: Again, I differ with the characterization of "getting tough with the Russians." That is not what this is about. This is about changing our relationship to one based on cooperation, *not* confrontation. In terms of the Ballistic Missile Defense program, the administration has been clear that in constructing the program, it would do so without reference to the ABM Treaty. We have also been clear that we will come up against the limits of the ABM Treaty in a matter of months.

NPR: Am I correct in assuming that this is not because a test will take place in a matter of months, but because we would face the six-month withdrawal deadline?

Joseph: Well, we have been very clear that we will not *violate* the treaty. Even though we favor joint withdrawal from the treaty, we *are* going to move beyond the treaty, because it does not allow us the limited defenses that we need in today's security environment. The treaty also inhibits the positive relationship we want to have with Russia. At the very core of the treaty is the notion that we

have to be able to destroy each other in a nuclear exchange. We simply think that Cold War concept is outmoded.

NPR: But what if we approach late December, and you are thinking, “six months from now I would like to be doing a certain test,” but the negotiations on the new strategic framework with Russia are still unfinished? Are we going to take a strong line and unilaterally withdraw from the ABM Treaty? Under the current circumstances, is the administration still prepared to pursue this stance?

Joseph: The president very recently was explicit about his views on the ABM Treaty.² I do not want to give you the impression that there is an ultimatum or a deadline—there isn’t one—we are not in the business of giving ultimatums because that goes against the type of relationship we want to create with Russia. On the other hand, we have made very clear that we are going to move beyond the treaty to advance the types of defenses that we require. The Russians understand where we are on this. Their Defense and Foreign Ministers, among others, have made clear that the treaty is only one issue in our relationship. They agree with us that we need to focus on the broader set of issues of mutual interest. Ultimately, the real prize is not an agreement on the ABM Treaty, but establishing this new relationship.³

OFFENSIVE NUCLEAR FORCES

NPR: Part of this new relationship would include significant cuts in offensive nuclear forces. The administration has a vision of this framework that I am sure it would like to see embraced by the Russians at the Crawford Summit. However, I am not sure that the Department of Defense Nuclear Posture Review will be completed by that time. Has there been discussion of whether the Review or the Summit will come first? Will we have a vision of what we need before going into that meeting?

Joseph: The Nuclear Posture Review is coming to a conclusion. The president envisions substantial reductions of nuclear forces. We will deploy the minimum number of nuclear weapons that we require for our security. Presidents Bush and Putin, when they last met, agreed that there is a relationship between offenses and defenses. That is part of what we have been exploring in our very intensive consultations.

NPR: Has 1,500 deployed strategic nuclear weapons been a number to which the administration has given serious thought?

Joseph: 1,500 is the number the Russians intend to maintain. In the Nuclear Posture Review we have looked at our national security requirements to ensure they are consistent with our commitments.

NPR: So is 1,500 a possibility?

Joseph: I would not want to predict what the number or range of nuclear weapons will be.

TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS

NPR: As you work the nuclear balance with the Russians and try to establish the new nuclear framework, have you focused on the issue of tactical nuclear weapons? The U.S. view, I understand, is that the Russians have a rather large number of these weapons, while we have been reducing ours rather aggressively. Russia’s sub-strategic weapons are numerous, easily portable, and pose a proliferation threat, as well as a potential military threat to us.

Joseph: There is a substantial disparity in the numbers that exists in sub-strategic theater nuclear weapons. We have focused on issues associated with the safety and security of those weapons.

NPR: Are plans underway to reinforce the 1992 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives reducing deployments of substrategic weapons?

Joseph: I can’t discuss the details of the Nuclear Posture Review. I can say that the asymmetry that exists is significant, and we are looking at it.

NPR: The Nuclear Posture Review is just the American side. It sounds like we will not have a lot of reductions until we are satisfied that the disparity. . .

Joseph: [Interrupting] I would not draw that conclusion from what I said. The administration is committed to making deep reductions and to leading in that effort.

NPR: There have been discussions of the need for a two-tiered deterrent system, in order to deter Third World states on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other. In this view, smaller nuclear weapons might be needed for bunker busting, or to act as a more credible deterrent against smaller nations that might threaten us, while larger weapons would continue to act as general deterrents. Has the administration actively looked at the idea of developing smaller yield nuclear weapons to meet this kind of challenge?

Joseph: The Nuclear Posture Review is looking at all of our nuclear requirements. That said, I do not hear anyone in the administration advocating the testing of new nuclear weapons, or of any nuclear tests for that matter. The president has said that he supports the moratorium on testing.

CHINA

NPR: Let's turn to China. We appreciate that the administration has developed a vision of how to work with Russia on missile defenses and overall offensive forces. We all understand that the scale of the U.S. defensive system is going to be so modest compared to the offensive forces on the Russian side that Russia will be able to preserve its deterrent capability. However, concerns have been raised that even a small national missile defense (if I can use that term), would impact China's deterrent. In answer to this question, the administration usually replies, "We know they are modernizing anyway and in the end our missile defenses will not have much of an impact on their deterrent force." Do you think that by our having a national missile defense of some scale, we will accelerate, expand, and enlarge what China might otherwise do?

Joseph: I certainly wouldn't minimize the fact that the Chinese are modernizing their nuclear capabilities. The Chinese force will grow in numbers as well as qualitatively. One has to go to the rationale for missile defenses, and explain that missile defenses do not threaten any state that would not threaten us. We believe that missile defense should not be an issue in our relationship with China. Missile defense is directed at rogue states that would attempt to blackmail us or prevent us from coming to the assistance of our friends and allies in regions of interest.

They should not be a factor in U.S.-Chinese relations. We have recently sent a team to Beijing to discuss missile defenses and to brief the Chinese on the program, to give them the same information that we have given the Russians, in terms of the rationale and capabilities we seek. And remember, the first step is to conduct a development and testing program to see what is feasible in terms of future deployments.

NPR: What was the Chinese reaction to the delegation?

Joseph: I would not want to try to characterize the reactions of parties in the context of consultations, but we are being very open about the program. I think everyone we deal with appreciates that.

NPR: My impression is that in your prior life as Director of the Center for Counterproliferation Research you were associated with the view that if we had a robust missile defense it might be a way to contain China. Have you adjusted your focus since taking on your responsibilities here?

Joseph: I don't think I have ever advocated containing China.

NPR: OK, maybe that's not the right word, but to blunt its offensive nuclear capabilities with missile defenses?

Joseph: Again, I believe missile defenses are going to be effective against those states that would threaten us with long-range missiles. I do not see that threat coming from the Russians in the future, because I think our relationship is evolving in a very positive way. I hope our relationship with China will also develop in such a way that we do not define each other as enemies.

NPR: We're not there yet.

Joseph: No, we're not there, but we are working on it.

IMPACT OF MILITARY SYSTEMS IN SPACE

NPR: As you've been developing missile defenses, there has been discussion of deploying space-based sensors in the earlier stages of this program and of developing additional capabilities in space at a later

stage. Has there been concern that these military activities might damage U.S. commercial space activities? For example, debris from tests on military systems in space could damage the space station or communications satellites.

Joseph: That has not been part of any discussion I have had.

NPR: Allow us to send you a paper on this by a colleague, Clay Moltz.⁴ The issue may not have come up yet because we may be too early in the process, but I think the concern of my colleague is that the more we think in terms beyond sensors, the more we intrude on civilian capabilities and the comfort level of people putting these objects into space.

Joseph: Again, I would just emphasize that the administration's program is a research, development, testing, and evaluation program, which must necessarily take place before we define deployment architecture.

REVIEW OF NONPROLIFERATION PROGRAMS IN THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT STATES (NIS)

NPR: My impression is that the review of U.S. nonproliferation programs in the former Soviet Union that the administration launched soon after it took office has been completed and is being briefed on Capitol Hill.

Joseph: There have been briefings on the Hill. However, the review is pre-decisional, in that the senior leadership has not taken positions on the recommendations.

NPR: Has the review altered the vision of what we want to accomplish in Russia? Has our focus changed as a result of the events of September 11? Do you think, for example, since terrorists are getting more sophisticated, there is added reason to control or eliminate nuclear materials and that budgets should be increased to reflect this change?

Joseph: I can't comment on the budget aspects of the question. However, I will say that the review did confirm the need to continue the large majority of these programs, and to accelerate some of them, including the Materials Protection, Control, and Accounting program, which would address some of the concerns you raised. The Depart-

ment of Energy nonproliferation programs, the Department of Defense Cooperative Threat Reduction programs, and the related State Department programs are very important components of our nonproliferation strategy and add to our national security.

NPR: As the White House champion for these programs, are you seeking part of the \$40 billion anti-terrorism funding to be assigned to accelerate some of this work?

Joseph: Again, I can't address budget aspects. We need to get the Cabinet members to engage and decide. I hope they will approve the recommendations of the review. The review calls for the acceleration and expansion of some of these programs. Only then can we deal with issues of budgeting.

NPR: Allow me to pursue this for a second. The budget is likely to be resolved within the next several weeks, as the authorizations and appropriations bills finish working their way through Congress. There will be an effort to figure out how to spend \$40 billion in anti-terrorism funds to intensify intelligence capabilities, fight terrorism, etc. This would seem to be an apt moment to weigh in if one were hoping to get some of those funds for nonproliferation programs.

Joseph: One of the findings of the review was that the overall level of effort is about right. That was a finding prior to the September 11th incident. How we look at expanding these efforts post-September 11 is an ongoing process.

NPR: You are saying the current level of spending is about right.

Joseph: That was the conclusion of the review prior to the 11th.

NPR: There are different "current" levels of spending, for instance, the administration's budget request and last year's higher spending levels. If I correctly read between the lines, what you are saying is that there aren't any new initiatives being contemplated as part of the review, for example, the accelerated down-blending of highly enriched uranium (HEU), which could be stored now and then drizzled into the market place later on.

Joseph: The HEU blend-down program is the subject of a separate review. It has been ongoing for several months. I think there are some things we can do to strengthen that program (this is also pre-decisional, so I can't get into what they are) and to ensure long-term predictability in that program. We believe that the HEU blend-down program is very important for successful nonproliferation.

NPR: If you were going to take the initiative in this area and accelerate this program, it sounds as if any new initiatives will be deferred for a year rather than pursued in the next few weeks during the current appropriations cycle.

Joseph: There are ways of restructuring the HEU agreement in a way that will provide greater predictability.

NPR: You are in a very unusual position in that because you are watching many different parts of this field, you get to make trade-offs among competing priorities, at least in principle. The budget for missile defense is sizable, but the budget for nonproliferation programs in Russia is a bit lean. In a sense, that trade-off is one you may not have made with the stroke of a pen, but it is one that you could have influenced in one direction or another. Have you had the occasion to say, "The most urgent threat is over here, maybe we should direct money this way," or, "I'm most worried about theater missile defenses? Let's hold off on national missile defense while we evaluate existing programs." Have those kinds of decisions come to your desk?

Joseph: I would not want to suggest false precision in terms of ranking the threats. September 11th tells us that we do not have the luxury of choosing between the threats we will prepare for and defend against. We need to defend against the ballistic missile threat, the suitcase bomb, and the loss of sensitive materials in the former Soviet Union. In terms of the budget for missile defense as opposed to assistance programs, you know the process. Different departments develop their budgets separately, so Congress needs to bring the trade-offs into focus. The administration had proposed a budget that takes into account what we need to do in different areas.

COORDINATION OF NIS NONPROLIFERATION PROGRAMS

NPR: Let me ask you about the idea of undertaking crosscutting studies looking at the Russia programs as a whole. This could be under the supervision of an interagency group looking at the synergies among the Russia programs, the places where they step on each other's toes, etc. Have any efforts been made to intensify the planning process, which I also think is the subject of a piece of legislation introduced by Senator Hagel before the Foreign Relations Committee as part of the Security Assistance Act.⁵

Joseph: One of the conclusions of the review was that we need to have a mechanism with the ability to look across the departments to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of the different programs. It is important to do that in the context of a strategic plan. If the review's recommendations are accepted, we will set up this mechanism to see how these programs can best work together to achieve their purpose.

NPR: Will this be a planning team that reports directly to you or will it be chaired by an interagency group of some kind?

Joseph: The idea is to have an interagency group chaired at the NSC. I read your piece in *Arms Control Today* on this.⁶ You said, "You have a choice, you can have high level official do it, or you can have Bob Joseph do it" [laughter].

SOUTH ASIA

NPR: Let's talk about South Asia. First, although the administration has lifted nuclear-related sanctions against India and Pakistan, it is my understanding that we still require a recipient country to have International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections on all of its nuclear facilities before we will sell it nuclear equipment or fuel. Is that restriction still in place?

Joseph: Yes, that requirement is unchanged.

NPR: The Russians pressed around the edges of some of these rules by supplying the fuel for the Tarapur reactors in India. They have spoken about adding

more and more reactors to their 1988 contract with the Indians. Those of us watching the rules and discipline of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) have said that these Russian transactions are pressing hard on the exceptions allowed under the group's guidelines. Is it a fair statement to say that we want to see discipline continue in the NSG?

Joseph: Certainly we want to see discipline in the NSG and improve the effectiveness of the IAEA. We are very serious about strengthening nonproliferation in the nuclear area, as we are in the biological, chemical, and missile areas.

NPR: **Currently, is there any intention to support a changing of the rules of the NSG to permit sales to countries without full-scale safeguards?**

Joseph: None that I'm aware of.

NPR: **I think everyone is nervous about failed state or coup d'etat scenarios in Pakistan. Have you taken any measures to protect against the contingency of Pakistani nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands?**

Joseph: I'm afraid I just can't comment on that one.

NPR: **With the new relationships we now have unfolding with Pakistan and India, there will be opportunities for the United States to play a useful role in easing tensions over Kashmir. Is the administration considering such a role?**

Joseph: We are looking at a number of different approaches to risk reduction in South Asia, as well as elements of strategic dialogues with both countries.

NPR: **But not necessarily Kashmir-specific?**

Joseph: A broad range of issues. Again, we are drawing on a lot of work that has been done in your organization and in other think tanks.

THE MIDDLE EAST

NPR: **The situation in the Middle East is volatile. Many of us have focused on the ongoing situation in Iraq and the absence of inspections there. Secretary**

Powell seemed to be moving forcefully on this issue when the administration first took office, although he didn't succeed in having inspections restored. Now we have a better relationship with Russia, which had disagreed with Secretary Powell's approach. This might ease the way for UN Security Council action on this issue. We also have a more urgent situation because of the anxiety over the biological and chemical weapons in Iraq and Iraq's known support for certain terrorist organizations. Is the administration giving high priority to plans to build an international coalition at the UN Security Council to get inspectors back in?

Joseph: The absence of inspections has clearly increased apprehension about what is occurring in Iraq, especially on the reconstitution of its biological and chemical weapons programs. The nuclear and missile sides are concerns as well. We would like to see effective inspections reinstated, and we are working with others to achieve that goal. Iraq is a difficult problem, one that demonstrates both the need for nonproliferation and the need for effective counterproliferation measures. We are working both aspects with allies, in addition to Russia, China, and other states that have been suppliers in the past.

NPR: **Will this issue be on the agenda of the Bush-Putin summit scheduled for November in Crawford Texas? Will it come up at the meeting the president will have with Putin and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Shanghai?**

Joseph: I can't tell you with certainty what will be discussed.

NPR: **Any new openings with the Iranians? There was a brief moment of cordiality after the September 11th attacks, but it seems to have faded away as hardliners there pushed back.**

Joseph: I can only comment on the proliferation side of the problem. Iran is a country that is determined to acquire the full range of WMD, as well as increasingly sophisticated ballistic missiles. It remains a real proliferation problem.

NPR: **Has the administration had any success in reducing Russian transfers to Iran?**

Joseph: Yes, although we need to do more.

NPR: Have I heard you correctly? We have had some success in halting certain sensitive transfers?

Joseph: Yes, in some areas we have been quite successful. In other areas we continue to have real concerns.

NPR: If you have anxiety that Iran possesses chemical weapons, you have an opportunity for challenge inspections under the CWC (Chemical Weapons Convention). Why has the administration been hesitant to use this mechanism? I understand why now would not be the appropriate time to pursue this question when we need Iranian support for our efforts in Afghanistan, but why the hesitation earlier this year?

Joseph: A challenge inspection has not occurred under the convention. We are looking at challenge inspections as one tool. We are going through an assessment process, not necessarily just relating to Iran, but as a nonproliferation tool that could be effective more broadly.

NPR: Is that a major review?

Joseph: It is a study that has been undertaken by the State Department.

THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

NPR: What were the administration's concerns about the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Monitoring Protocol? I believe the focus of your opposition was that the protocol was so weak and so onerous that it was not satisfactory.

Joseph: Shortly after coming into office, the administration embarked on a thorough review of the BWC Protocol. The review was conducted and led by individuals that had been associated with the negotiations for over six years. The finding of this review was that the BWC Protocol did not meet the objective that had been established. It would not discourage proliferation. It would not increase the prospects of cheaters being discovered. It would risk giving the seal of approval to those that do have offensive programs. The inspection provisions would be ineffective.

NPR: I understand the administration is going to develop some alternative measures. Will they be pre-

ented or circulated in advance of the BWC Review Conference in November/December 2001?

Joseph: We intend to take the ideas we have developed and talk to our allies and friends about them. We would like to get their views on our ideas, as well as their own ideas and input on strengthening the BWC. We intend to do that in the near term, prior to the conference.

NPR: Would these measures be offered in lieu of the protocol?

Joseph: Our view is that the protocol does not add to the goal we have of strengthening the BWC. We are 100 percent for the convention and for strengthening it. We have come up with a number of alternative concepts. Each by itself is modest, but in total, they strengthen the convention.

NPR: Would these be binding or voluntary?

Joseph: This is pre-decisional, so I can't get into the terms, but there are a good number of measures.

NORTH KOREA

NPR: Has there been a loss of momentum in our non-proliferation efforts with North Korea? The administration paused when it took office and undertook a big review. Now we are trying to return to the bargaining table. How do you see that unfolding?

Joseph: This administration conducted reviews in key national security areas upon entering office. North Korea is a key area, so we did conduct a thorough review. We concluded that it was in our broader interest that we have constructive discussions with the North Koreans on the full set of issues of concern. Clearly nuclear, missile, conventional, and humanitarian issues are of concern. We have been very clear about the issues on which we want to engage. We also have repeatedly stated that we are willing to sit down and have discussions anywhere, anytime, and without preconditions.

NPR: At the moment, no talks are scheduled.

Joseph: The problem is North Korea.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

NPR: Are there any points you would like to emphasize that we have not covered?

Joseph: I would emphasize that the administration has come into office with the recognition that we need an overall strategy for dealing with and preventing proliferation. Proliferation is a major national security threat that we face, along with our friends and allies. Some have seen us as not putting enough emphasis on nonproliferation. I take real issue with that. There are some misperceptions surrounding this, perhaps because we also concentrate on other things in the area of proliferation, such as counterproliferation and a new form of deterrence that we believe is appropriate to the new threats of today's world. The fact that we are doing these other things does not in any way detract from our commitment to strengthen nonproliferation.

NPR: Is there a particular event you would like to highlight in terms of nonproliferation activities? I know you spoke about the importance of the IAEA, but the budget has not been increased. I am not minimizing your commitment, I'm just trying to look back to see if there has been a salient accomplishment over the past six or eight months that reinforces your point.

Joseph: The fact that we are taking measures that actually can strengthen the BWC is an indication of our seri-

ousness about nonproliferation. The very fact that we are looking at ways to enhance the IAEA's capabilities demonstrates our seriousness. The fact that we have confirmed that most of the programs dealing with assistance to Russia are in our interest and should be maintained (or accelerated and expanded in some cases) indicates our seriousness. That said, we believe prevention will not be successful 100 percent of the time and therefore not only must we redouble our efforts to prevent proliferation, we also must protect against it. We're going to do both.

NPR: A strong note to end on. Thank you.

¹ Office of the White House Press Secretary, Press Release, May 1, 2001, "Remarks by the President to Students and Faculty at National Defense University," <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010501-10.html>>.

² In his press conference the president was asked, "If he [President Putin] does not agree with you, would you withdraw from the ABM Treaty this year?" President Bush responded by stating, "I have told Mr. Putin that the ABM Treaty is outdated, antiquated, and useless. And I hope that he will join us in a new strategic relationship." White House Press Office, "Presidential Holds Prime Time News Conference," October 11, 2001, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011011-7.html>>.

³ On October 24, 2001, the Bush administration postponed two tests of missile defense components that it feared might be interpreted as violating the ABM Treaty. "Missile Defense Tests Are Put Off," *Washington Post*, October 25, 2001, p. A1.

⁴ James Clay Moltz, "Space Arms Control and the International Missile Defense Debate" in *Missile Proliferation and Defences: Problems and Prospects* (Monterey, CA, and Southampton, U.K.: Center for Nonproliferation Studies and Mountbatten Centre for International Studies, May 2001), <<http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/opapers/op7/op7.pdf>>.

⁵ The Nonproliferation Assistance Coordination Act, S. 673, <<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c107:S.673.IS>>.

⁶ Leonard S. Spector, "Missing the Forest for the Trees: U.S. Non-Proliferation Programs in Russia," *Arms Control Today* 31 (June 2001), p. 6.