

# COOPERATION BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE U.S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS SAFETY

by General Evgeniy P. Maslin

*General Evgeniy P. Maslin is Head of Strategic Forces, Main Directorate, Russian Ministry of Defense. He presented this paper at the conference on "The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program: Donor and Recipient Country Perspectives," Monterey, California, August 20-22, 1995.*

The world has radically changed from the point of view of global security. The end of the 40-year period known as the Cold War has caused far-reaching geopolitical transformations worldwide. The bipolar state of affairs in international security—based on rivalry, arms racing, and the mutual deterrence of two nuclear superpowers—has been destroyed. Meaningful nuclear threat reduction is a positive result of bipolarity's disappearance.

As the presidents of our countries stated at the end of the Cold War, considerable progress has been achieved in the sphere of strengthening global strategic stability and nuclear security based on nuclear reductions and dismantlement. Russia and the United States have reduced their nuclear arsenals considerably and are now adopting measures for confidence-building and mutual openness.

Nuclear nonproliferation is a concern for both the United States and Russia, as well as for the rest of the world community. Of course, the nuclear nonproliferation problem requires enormous political and economic efforts among many international organizations and states, especially the United States and Russia. It is impossible to act alone in addressing these problems.

Particularly for Russia, as the successor of the former Soviet Union, nuclear reduction and nonproliferation are closely linked to a number of problems that greatly complicate implementation and planning for these activities.

First, after the Soviet Union's disintegration, nuclear weapons were located on the territories of a number of independent states. Urgent measures were immediately taken by Russia to ensure the nonproliferation of former Soviet tactical nuclear warheads. The return of several thousand units of nuclear ammunition to the territory of Russia was completed by May 1992.

Russia and the United States made additional and considerable efforts to achieve the present agreements on strategic nuclear weapons deactivation and their assignment to Russia for further dismantlement. Russia assumed primary responsibility for ensuring nuclear security in the territories of Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus.

I am very pleased to report that today all strategic nuclear weapons have been completely removed from the territory of Kazakhstan. In 1995, we plan to remove the remaining weapons from the territory of Belarus as well. At Ministry of Atomic Energy

(MINATOM) enterprises in Russia, 900 of the 1,000 nuclear weapons removed from Ukraine have been destroyed under Ukrainian supervision.

Second, serious difficulties emerged in ensuring nuclear security in the transport of nuclear weapons. It is important to note Russia's commitment to solving the problems of tactical nuclear weapons reduction and practical implementation of START I. Nuclear weapons transportation and destruction by the Russian Defense Ministry and MINATOM have become well developed and well mastered technologies. The necessary protective measures have been taken to ensure the safety of this process. But there is a shortage of special-purpose transport trains and ammunition supercontainers. Transport and storage containers for fissile materials are also in critically short supply at MINATOM.

Third, the criminal situation has worsened in some regions of the former Soviet republics, as well as in Russia itself, making the theft of nuclear weapons and components, as well as nuclear terrorism, a possibility. These conditions have forced us to reexamine the whole system of nuclear weapons protection and to strengthen material accounting and control.

Fourth, the deteriorating technical state of equipment and railway transportation has forced us to consider the threat of nuclear accidents. Various technologies, equipment, and facilities made in Russia and elsewhere are required to ensure damage control in case of nuclear accidents.

Finally, the problem of declining living conditions for military specialists and civilian personnel working in the nuclear weapons complex has become urgent during the process of nuclear weapons reduction. This problem concerns the Ministry of Defense as well as MINATOM. A weak social security system, the lack of housing, and drastic job cuts in the nuclear industry complex contribute to the threat of a leakage of nuclear specialists and technologies into third countries. The most effective means to stop this process is to solve the housing and unemployment problems quickly.

But solving these problems in Russia presents considerable difficulties because of economic complications. I have no doubt that we will overcome these difficulties, however, because we have solved a lot of problems in the history of our country.

We are very pleased to note that in such a difficult period for our country, the United States has offered to cooperate with us in the spheres of nuclear weapons storage, transportation, dismantlement, and destruction.

In December 1991, the U.S. Congress adopted Public Law 102-228, which allows the executive branch to allocate funds from the U.S. Defense Department for the development of the Nunn-Lugar (Cooperative Threat Reduction) Program.

It is important to state definitively that cooperation in the program not only furthers U.S. interests and gives U.S. firms a certain economic benefit, but also provides Russia with the means to help itself. According to U.S. expert estimates, the provision of a relatively small amount of funding today will provide a meaningful return in eliminating threats and contributing to global security.

This cooperation benefits Russia as well. It accelerates the process of reducing military expenditures and at the same time increases the security of our nuclear reductions. Our concerns about possible disruptions in the strategic balance are alleviated by on-going U.S. nuclear reductions.

Cooperation on the Nunn-Lugar program speeds these processes, strengthens security and transparency in the disarmament effort, and establishes stronger relations between our two states. Moreover, the program does not harm either state's rights or interests. The whole world also benefits from greater confidence in the future and expanded cooperation in other fields. This is why it is logical and correct that other states are involved in rendering assistance to Russia for nuclear weapons dismantlement and destruction. Great Britain, France, and Italy all participate (in varying shares) in this assistance.

For its part, the United States has already completed or is in the process of fulfilling the following Nunn-Lugar program obligations in the sphere of reduction assistance:

- It provided 250 complete sets of nylon protective coverings and 252 sets of kevlar blankets. These materials ensure that fire and small-arms will not threaten the dismantlement process. We have actively used these items while transporting nuclear weapons from the former Soviet republics.
- Russia has received 100 complete sets for equipping freight cars and 15 sets for observation/control cars. These sets are being mounted on rail cars to provide for the safe transportation of nuclear weapons to their places of liquidation under conditions of emergency control and high fire protection.
- Most of the nuclear accident recovery equipment has been received and put in place. This equip-

ment is handled by specialists from nuclear emergency units of two Russian ministries. In 1994, complex training, involving nuclear emergency techniques and methods using U.S. equipment, was undertaken, allowing Russian specialists to improve their practical skills. The high reliability and efficiency of these methods were confirmed.

The U.S. Defense Department and the Russian Ministry of Defense signed two agreements on cooperation in the sphere of safe nuclear transport and storage in April 1995. According to these agreements, the following deliveries are planned for this year: 150 transport containers for dismantled nuclear ammunition; 200 computer and software packages for nuclear ammunition control; and five emergency railway units for nuclear ammunition control and protection. These are the only deliveries that are assigned to and governed by the Ministry of Defense.

Other Nunn-Lugar program deliveries and developments will be carried out under the direction of MINATOM, including: transport and storage containers for fissile materials; material control and accounting equipment for nuclear materials at MINATOM facilities; and hardware/software assistance in the design and construction of protective and ecologically sound storage facilities for dismantled nuclear materials.

Officials and experts of the two defense ministries have gained sufficient experience in cooperation to ensure implementation of planned tasks. One positive result of such cooperation has been the close personal contacts developed between various officials and experts. Now, we can better understand our common requirements and possibilities. Distrust, strained relations, and suspicions have vanished. The negotiations have been conducted in an atmosphere of goodwill and are aimed at achieving optimum, mutually beneficial decisions.

While cooperating, we have discovered new directions for our relations, including data exchange in the sphere of safety and security of nuclear weapons. The Russian side (and I think the American side too) believes current assistance meets the interests of both sides and supports continuation of our cooperation.

Unfortunately, we still require some further assistance. Improvement of the social and living conditions of the military's nuclear specialists, who are being discharged from service, is an urgent problem. We expect that some assistance will be forthcoming on the construction of housing. I have repeatedly spoken about

this problem in different meetings in Brussels, Washington, and New York. We must prevent the leakage of scientific and technical knowledge in the field of all weapons, but especially weapons of mass destruction. This was stated in the U.S. law establishing Nunn-Lugar program funding (Public Law 102-228, section 211, paragraph 2a). Meeting this threat must become a top priority. Moreover, in a personal meeting I had with Senator Nunn, he spoke about the need for "humanism" in the program's activities.

In the framework of the Nunn-Lugar program, we consider it expedient to move actively and energetically against nuclear terrorism. In our opinion, it is necessary to combine our activities in banning any unlawful nuclear actions that threaten the security of our two states. To do this, we currently need technical facilities for servicing and protecting nuclear ammunition considered to be in a vulnerable state. A great amount of this equipment is used by MINATOM.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that I believe these issues are urgent. Our cooperation in trying to solve them provides practical material benefits, deepens our mutual understanding, and forms the basis for long-term relations that will build confidence and trust between the United States and Russia.