

Report:

CIS PROLIFERATION PROBLEMS AND ISSUES FOR THE NPT EXTENSION CONFERENCE

by James Clay Moltz

Dr. James Clay Moltz is Assistant Director and Senior Researcher of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

The continuing political and economic instability in the former Soviet Union has exacerbated a series of related proliferation threats in the region. Two recent conferences organized by the Center for Nonproliferation Studies revealed new information regarding problems in physical protection of nuclear materials and facilities, the implementation of export controls, and divergent views on the upcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Extension Conference. This report is a summary of the key findings from these meetings. Although each of the conferences (in Minsk, Belarus, October 5-6, 1994, and in Almaty, Kazakhstan, October 10-12, 1994) focused on specific themes, this report will focus on information drawn from both meetings in three general areas: perspectives on the NPT; Western assistance and export controls; and international proliferation problems.

NPT ISSUES

The combined efforts of multilateral and bilateral diplomacy, as well as the realities of domestic economic pressures, have now convinced 14 of the 15 Soviet successor states to accede to the NPT.¹ Were these states to vote as a group, they would constitute one of the largest blocks of votes at the NPT Extension Conference in April-May 1995. Regrettably, many of these states still have very little expertise in the issues surrounding the Extension Conference. During the Soviet period, all of the specialized knowledge in the arms control field was concentrated in Moscow. Since the break-up of the former

Soviet Union, therefore, many of these states have been struggling to develop a cadre of qualified experts in the various international regimes and treaties. To date, few of the post-Soviet states have developed either much expertise on the NPT or firm views on its extension (despite some formal statements by government officials in support of unconditional and indefinite extension). The findings of these conferences suggest that there are many security concerns in the Soviet successor states, and unanimous support for an indefinite extension of the NPT is far from guaranteed.

Although Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Russia are on record stating that they will support an indefinite extension of the NPT, the positions of many other states are unclear. During the Almaty meeting in October with Central Asian government officials, several key concerns dominated the discussions.

High-level government representatives from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan attended the workshop, which focused on providing training specifically to those officials who will be either attending the actual Extension Conference or participating in their government's policy formulation beforehand. Senior embassy officials (including several ambassadors) from Russia, Pakistan, Egypt, Ukraine, and the United States also attended the meeting. The workshop featured presentations by leading international nonproliferation specialists, including George Bunn (Stanford University), David Fischer (IAEA, retired), Harald Mueller (Peace Research Institute Frankfurt), Tariq Rauf (Canadian Cen-

tre for Global Security), Roland Timerbaev (Russian Foreign Ministry (retired) and the CNS), and Mohamed Shaker (Egyptian Ambassador to the United Kingdom). Their informational lectures on the specific articles of the NPT were followed by reports from representatives of each of the three Central Asian countries, outlining their government's priorities and concerns. These reports and the following discussions led to some interesting insights into the technical problems and security concerns of the Central Asian governments across the areas of nuclear safety, export controls, waste disposal, and nuclear testing.

One of the main concerns of the Central Asian states is in the area of negative and positive security guarantees. Central Asia is surrounded by a number of states with nuclear weapons capabilities, including Russia, China, India, and Pakistan. Officials are particularly insistent that the U.S. and Russian governments do more to assure Central Asian security if they want to continue to have Central Asian support in international non-proliferation fora. In Kazakhstan, which formally renounced its nuclear weapons inheritance, not everyone supported this decision. During the October meeting, for example, heated debate occurred among the Kazakhstani participants after one academic attending the meeting argued that the country had received virtually nothing for its weapons and suggested that Kazakhstan would have been better off keeping its nuclear weapons as both a security measure and an economic bargaining chip. This individual's view was refuted by the Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Toulegen Zhukeev, who made a powerful argument about the negative security, economic, and environmental effects of retaining nuclear weapons. Following this discussion, Oumirseric Kasenov, director of the host Institute of Strategic Studies, raised an interesting proposal to Western and Russian officials: the states of Central Asia might be willing to form a Central Asian nuclear-weapons-free zone *in return for* greater security assurances.

Other participants, especially from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, emphasized the need for the nuclear weapons states to make further progress on their Article VI (disarmament) obligations, including particularly the signing of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). In fact, on the day before the meeting, participants learned of another Chinese nuclear test at the Lop Nor facility, from which radiation follows the prevailing winds in the region to nearby Kyrgyz and Kazakh territory.

Several environmental officials from the Kyrgyz government and analysts from nongovernmental organizations gave a compelling report on the legacy of nuclear fallout and its medical consequences in Kyrgyzstan, including recent information on radioactive residues in soil and plant samples as a result of Chinese nuclear testing. Meanwhile, Kazakhstani participants also expressed considerable support for a CTBT, given the harsh legacy of nuclear fallout on their own soil from years of Soviet nuclear testing at Semipalatinsk. But Murat Laumulin (Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies) said that continued nuclear testing by China at its nearby Lop Nor test facility has had at least one positive effect: strengthening the anti-nuclear commitment both in the Kazakhstani government and among the Kazakhstani population.²

Despite frequent Russian claims that the CIS countries will follow Moscow's lead at the NPT Extension Conference, Central Asian representatives at the Almaty meeting expressed considerable sympathy with the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement. The harmful exposure of many of these states to the legacy of the Soviet nuclear industry and its waste stream has resulted in a very negative attitude toward nuclear weapons and skeptical views on the promises of the nuclear weapons states. One Uzbek foreign ministry official compared the advice of the nuclear weapons states to the non-nuclear-weapon states to the advice of a group of drunk pilots, who announce to their passengers that they should not smoke on the plane because it is dangerous.

Former Soviet and Russian Ambassador Roland Timerbaev reported that at the Third NPT Prep Comm meeting in September 1994, only four CIS countries had been listed as official participants (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, and Uzbekistan). In fact, a high-ranking Kyrgyz official (responsible for arms control in the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry) stated that his government was not aware of the Prep Comm meetings and asked to be included in the fourth (and final) meeting in January. Other representatives expressed an interest in attending as well. Many of the Central Asian officials, even those responsible for setting government policy on the NPT Extension, stated that the Almaty meeting was their first international conference providing information on the NPT.

One unexpected benefit of the workshop was it facilitation of contacts among the Central Asian officials themselves, who are often isolated by communications prob-

lems, funding shortages, and a simple lack of information about the names and organizational whereabouts of their counterparts. A member of the Uzbek delegation said that the Almaty meeting had been particularly useful in allowing him to meet people with his same concerns in other Central Asian governments. He hoped that joint policies on certain issues, particularly on pressing China to cease its nuclear tests, could be worked out in the future based on these new regional contacts. It was clear at the meeting that many of the Central Asian states preferred collective measures among themselves and, perhaps also with the Non-Aligned Movement, to future reliance on Russia as a source of diplomatic influence.

Finally, an important benefit gained from the workshop was that it gave the Western governments an "inside" view of the specific views of the Central Asian states regarding the NPT Extension Conference. Thanks to the participation of the Assistant Director for Nonproliferation of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (Ambassador Lawrence Scheinman), the U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan (William Courtney), as well as advisors to several other governments, this message reached Western and Russian decisionmakers at the highest level. By facilitating a free exchange of views and questions, the workshop aimed at laying a groundwork for successful cooperation among the Western states, Russia, and the states of Central Asia at the upcoming meeting in New York.

WESTERN ASSISTANCE AND EXPORT CONTROLS

One of the major focus areas of Western concern in recent months has been that of export controls. In this area, however, the litany of problems in the Soviet successor states and the ineffectiveness of current Western aid measures became all too clear at the Minsk and Almaty meetings. Representatives from all of the CIS governments present at the conferences complained that governments cannot provide adequate salaries to nuclear inspectors and officials in charge of export controls, nor can they afford expensive new equipment needed to improve physical protection and border inspection capabilities. In this environment, threats of diversion are coming from not just criminals but from desperate insiders, including unemployed and underemployed staff. The Minsk meeting examined the implications of these problems both for the CIS countries and for the West.

The conference featured presentations from CIS analysts and from international nonproliferation experts, including: George Bunn (Stanford University), Mark Hibbs (*Nucleonics Week*), William Potter (CNS), Tariq Rauf (Canadian Centre for Global Security), Brad Roberts (CSIS and *The Washington Quarterly*), Annette Schaper (Peace Research Institute Frankfurt), and Tadeusz Strulak (Nuclear Suppliers Group, Warsaw). Representatives from the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the North Atlantic Assembly also attended the meeting.

Among the CIS experts, a particularly interesting presentation was made by Ural Latypov (Center for Export Controls and Nonproliferation, Belarus), who gave a thorough overview of the latest developments in Belarusian export control legislation. Latypov is himself writing legislation in this area that will be submitted to Parliament. He complained, however, of the difficulties of acquiring funding for the implementation of export controls, despite the claims of the U.S. government that significant support has been provided. According to Latypov, no funding yet has reached those in charge of implementing export controls and training a new cadre of Belarusian export control specialists. Elina Kirichenko (MEMO, Moscow), Dastan Eleukenov (Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies), Bolot Sadybakasov (Kyrgyz State Committee on Science and New Technologies), and Sergei Svistel (Ukraine's Expert-Technical Committee) also made presentations on current problems in their countries' respective export control systems. All emphasized the need for foreign assistance in training new specialists and in providing more information on firms suspected of engaging in illegal diversions of nuclear materials. They reported that there is a paucity of reliable information on this topic. All agreed that customs officers are inadequately trained to detect possible smuggling and that government organizations assigned to combat smuggling were in engaged in old, Soviet-style information hoarding, much to the detriment of effective controls. Sadybakasov's presentation was particularly sobering about conditions in Kyrgyzstan, where he noted that smuggling of dual-use materials and rare earth metals could have taken place in the past two years (although, in two instances, large shipments of mercury and gallium were detected and the violators severely punished). Ukraine's Sergei Svistel complained that despite the pledges of the Tripartite Agreement among Ukraine, Russia, and the United States, neither the Ukrainian

Expert-Technical Committee nor the Customs Service had received any supplemental funding for the implementation of nuclear export controls.

One of the main concerns of the Central Asian states, as expressed by the officials attending the Almaty meeting, is the inadequacy of customs controls in the region, which makes their countries potential "targets" for nuclear smugglers. A key reason for this lack of controls, many pointed out, is the high cost of installing detection equipment at border posts. A Kyrgyz export control official, for example, noted that his government had turned down his request for additional equipment after the installation of nuclear detection devices at one border point with China had cost the government \$35,000. He was told by state budget officials that he could not continue to make such extravagant expenditures, since the government simply did not have adequate funding to allow greater nuclear controls.

Related concerns were raised by Central Asian representatives about the need for comprehensive assistance from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and from NATO countries in the area of nuclear waste and nuclear clean-up. Uzbek delegates at the Almaty meeting stated there are materials and facilities on their territory that the government simply does not know how to handle adequately. This is an increasingly serious problem throughout Central Asia since the break-up of the Soviet Union, as many Russian technicians have left to return home. The Kyrgyz delegation expressed concern in particular about the need to deal with radioactive wastes left over from mining operations in their country.

INTERNATIONAL PROLIFERATION DEVELOPMENTS

One of the most informative presentations at the Minsk meeting was given by Alexander Mansourov, who previously served as a young Russian diplomat in Pyongyang. He gave a detailed history of the roots of North Korea's nuclear program among scientists trained before World War II in Japan and after 1945 in the Soviet Union. He then examined North Korea's nuclear acquisition strategy during the 1960s-1990s and emphasized the serious threat of a nuclear accident in North Korea's antiquated, Russian-designed reactors. One new point of information was the revelation that Soviet embassy staff in Pyongyang suspected a possible North

Korean weapons program as early as 1987. Evgeny Bazhanov (Deputy Rector, Russian Diplomatic Academy) followed Mansourov's remarks with an equally well-informed analysis of the North Korea threat, noting that the withdrawal of Russian specialists and the cutoff of aid in the early 1990s may have actually exacerbated the North Korean problem by removing a large cadre of independent foreign specialists and also heightening Pyongyang's feeling of abandonment. Although the meeting took place before the establishment of the U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework, both Russian analysts predicted that the Pyongyang government is on the verge of major political and economic reforms.

Sergei Galaka (Ukrainian Institute of International Relations) noted that Ukraine is ahead of schedule on its nuclear dismantlement obligations, having removed 300 warheads from their launchers. He also correctly predicted approval of the NPT by the Rada before the beginning of the 1995 Extension Conference. Alexander Pikayev (Committee for Critical Technologies and Nonproliferation) took a somewhat more pessimistic line, noting how Russia's own dismantlement process has been slowed by its responsibilities for destroying nuclear weapons and delivery systems in Kazakhstan and receiving nuclear materials from Ukraine.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

One of the most positive developments at the meetings was the announcement of the formation of two new Russian nongovernmental organizations in the nonproliferation field. Moscow-based nonproliferation experts Alexander Pikayev and Boris Dluzhnevsky (Association for Nonproliferation) announced their establishment of the Committee for Critical Technologies and Nonproliferation, while journalist Vladimir Orlov (*Moscow News*) discussed the activities of his new Center for Political Studies. Both groups will conduct research, provide publication outlets for scholars and analysts, promote public information in the nonproliferation field, and provide policy recommendations to the Russian government. The two new Moscow-based centers are also cooperating in the publication of a newsletter called *Yaderniy Kontrol'* (*Nuclear Control*), which will be published in Russian and distributed widely throughout the CIS. Soon after the meeting, Vyachaslau Paznyak announced the formation of a third new nonproliferation center, the International Institute for Policy Studies in Minsk.

The continuing efforts of both devoted CIS nonproliferation specialists and Western nongovernmental organizations to build linkages, as seen in these two meetings, provide hope for future cooperation in the nonproliferation field. These exchanges of information, research strategies, and funding opportunities benefit both sides and take on added importance as we move toward the NPT Extension Conference and beyond.

¹ Tajikistan is the one successor state not yet party to the NPT.

² For more on these issues, see Murat Laumulin, "Nuclear Politics and the Future Security of Kazakhstan," *The Nonproliferation Review* 1 (Winter 1994), p. 61.