

Senate Committee On Foreign Relations
Chairman Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement
New Initiatives in Cooperative Threat Reduction
February 9, 2006

The Foreign Relations Committee meets today to examine U.S. policies and programs in two critical threat reduction areas: conventional weapons dismantlement and counter-proliferation assistance.

Senator Obama and I observed first hand U.S. efforts in both of these areas during visits to Ukraine and Azerbaijan last August. These visits and our subsequent joint research convinced us that the United States can and should do more in both of these areas. On November 1, 2005, we introduced S. 1949, the "Cooperative Proliferation Detection and Interdiction Assistance and Conventional Threat Reduction Act." Modeled after the Nunn-Lugar program, our new legislation seeks to build cooperative relationships with willing countries to secure vulnerable stockpiles of conventional weapons and to strengthen the ability of other nations to detect and interdict illicit shipments of weapons or materials of mass destruction.

The Nunn-Lugar program must, and will, remain our flagship nonproliferation program. The elimination of threats at their source is the most effective means of preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. But the United States has the ability to perform multiple missions in response to proliferation threats. Focusing more attention on the threats posed by conventional weapons and improving the capabilities of other nations to interdict weapons of mass destruction can be achieved without negative consequences for the Nunn-Lugar program. The lessons learned from the Nunn-Lugar experience should be applied to other fronts in the fight against terrorism and weapons proliferation. To do less would be irresponsible and would forfeit critical national security opportunities.

The first part of our legislation would energize the U.S. program against unsecured lightweight anti-aircraft missiles and other conventional weapons. There may be as many as 750,000 man-portable air defense systems in arsenals worldwide. The State Department estimates that more than 40 civilian aircraft have been hit by such weapons since the 1970s. In addition, loose stocks of small arms and other weapons help fuel civil wars in Africa and elsewhere and provide the means for attacks on peacekeepers and aid workers seeking to stabilize war-torn societies. In Iraq, we have seen how unsecured stockpiles of artillery shells and ammunition have been reconfigured into improvised explosive devices that have become the insurgents' most effective weapon. Senator Obama and I are attempting to ensure that everything possible is being done to secure such stockpiles worldwide.

American efforts to safeguard conventional stockpiles are under-funded, fragmented, and in need of high-level support. The U.S. government's current response is spread between several programs at the Department of State. The planning, coordination, and implementation of this function should be consolidated into one office at the State Department with a budget that is commensurate with the threat posed by these weapons.

The second part of the Lugar-Obama legislation would strengthen the ability of America's friends and allies to detect and intercept illegal shipments of weapons and materials of mass destruction. American forces cannot be everywhere at once. Our security depends not just on the willingness of other nations to help; it depends on whether they have the capabilities to be effective. The State Department engages in several related anti-terrorism and export control assistance programs. But these programs are focused on other stages of the threat, not on detection and interdiction. Thus, we believe there is a gap in our defenses that needs to be filled.

The Proliferation Security Initiative has been successful in enlisting the help of other nations for detection and interdiction operations. But some PSI countries lack the capabilities to be active and effective partners. Lugar-Obama seeks to improve the capabilities of foreign partners by providing equipment, training, and other support. Examples of such assistance may include maritime surveillance and boarding equipment, aerial detection and interdiction capabilities, enhanced port security, and the provision of hand-held detection equipment and passive WMD sensors.

The legislation would create a new office at the State Department to support and coordinate U.S. assistance in this area. Existing foreign assistance law contains discretionary authority for the Secretary of State to establish a list of countries that should be given priority in U.S. counter-proliferation funding. It is our view that these efforts have been insufficient. As a result, we believe that such a program should be mandatory.

The Lugar-Obama bill sets aside \$110 million to start up the program and proposes an innovative use of current foreign military financing assistance. Under the bill, the President would ensure that countries receiving foreign military financing would use 25 percent of these funds on WMD interdiction and detection capabilities, unless he determines that U.S. national security interests are not served by doing so. This offers a potent but flexible tool to build a robust international network to stop proliferation.

Senator Obama and I have sought to work closely with the Administration on our legislation. We have raised the issue in several venues and have been given general statements of support. Today, we are eager to finally receive an official reaction from the administration and to discuss ways in which our legislation can be perfected.

I believe that the Bush Administration recognizes the problems that we are trying to address. Last month, Senator Obama and I wrote to Secretary Rice urging full funding for programs aimed at counter-proliferation and safeguarding conventional weapons stockpiles. I am pleased that funding for the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, De-mining and Related Programs account received a \$43 million increase in the Administration's budget request over the amount enacted last year.

Historically, however, new threat reduction techniques and proposals have not always been warmly received by the executive branch. I remember well the initial executive branch reaction to the introduction of the Nunn-Lugar Program in 1991. Senator Sam Nunn and I were told by the Administration that the United States was already doing everything necessary to address the problems posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the collapse of the Soviet Union. We were astounded by this response, because other sources, including Russian military leaders themselves, were describing rampant difficulties with the security around weapons of mass destruction. They voiced their fears of an emerging black-market in WMD fueled by economic desperation and collapsing governmental authority. Only months later, after Defense Department officials were on the ground in Russia witnessing the problem, did the administration begin to recognize the urgency of the situation.

The proliferation threats that Senator Obama and I have witnessed may be less comprehensive than those that confronted the United States at the genesis of the Nunn-Lugar program. But the problems are obvious, nonetheless. Moreover, these security gaps exist in an era when we know that terrorist groups are actively seeking both weapons of mass destruction and lethal conventional arms.

We have seen these vulnerable stockpiles in person, and we are resolved to do something about them. We understand that the United States cannot meet every conceivable security need everywhere in the world. But filling the security gaps that we have described should be near the top of our list of priorities. We are asserting that these problems have not received adequate attention.

Senator Obama and I are hopeful for a constructive response that recognizes the nuances of the threats involved and the necessity of preventing bureaucratic obstacles to action. We are hopeful for a partnership with the Administration that assigns these tasks a high priority. We look forward to working closely with the Administration to get this done.

To assist the Committee in our evaluation today, I am pleased to welcome Undersecretary of State Bob Joseph. Undersecretary Joseph has been a good friend of this Committee and a tireless advocate for U.S. national security through his work on the Proliferation Security Initiative, Libya's renunciation of weapons of mass destruction, and other important projects. We especially appreciate his willingness to appear today, given the intense schedule he has undertaken with regards to the Iranian nuclear issue. Thank you for being with us to share the Administration's views of the legislation and to help us think through important nonproliferation and threat reduction issues.

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