

INCREASING BORDER SECURITY IN RUSSIA AND OTHER STATES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

I. The Issue

The largest inventory of nuclear material and weapons in the world is located in Russia, enough to produce approximately 80,000 nuclear weapons.¹ Dangerous stockpiles of materials are also located in other the states of the former Soviet Union (FSU), including Belarus, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. In recent years, a number of cases of theft or attempted theft of highly enriched uranium (HEU) or plutonium from nuclear facilities in FSU have been documented.² While every effort must be made to secure, account for, and dispose of this material, significant steps must also be taken to stop the trafficking of these materials out of the countries of origin.

Approximately four kilograms of plutonium or 20 kilograms of HEU could be crafted into a nuclear weapon.³ This small amount of fissile material could be transported out of Russia or an FSU country and make its way into the hands of a hostile state or terrorist organization. Iraqi officials have made overtures to a Ukrainian institution that possesses 165 pounds of HEU and are openly pursuing trade deals with other local companies.⁴ Reports of al Qaeda's attempts to purchase nuclear materials as well as documented efforts on the part of Iran to acquire nuclear materials in the aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union make it clear that there is international demand and interest in these materials.⁵

The breakup of the Soviet Union left several states with stockpiles of nuclear materials but without adequate legal and institutional framework to effectively monitor and control exports and without the infrastructure or personnel necessary to enforce such a system. In many cases, these nations have borders that are thousands of miles long and national governments that often do not have the ability to monitor, patrol, or secure them. The latest estimate is that only 45 percent of Russia's customs checkpoints have operable radiation detectors and monitors.⁶ Some borders in the FSU are considered particularly sensitive, including points of entry into Iran on the Caspian Sea, and other nations.⁷

The United States has undertaken a broad range of programs aimed at preventing the trafficking of nuclear materials by working cooperatively with Russia and other former Soviet states. These programs are operated by the Departments of State, Energy, Commerce, and Defense in partnership with the U.S. Customs Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These programs provide export control assistance, including assisting in the development of licensing procedures and establishment of legal and regulatory frameworks, or in strengthening border controls by providing equipment and training to prevent, deter, detect and investigate the trafficking of nuclear and radiological

materials. While these programs have made some progress in reducing the proliferation threat, increased efforts are necessary, as well as improved means to measure the successes to date of these efforts. There are still long stretches of FSU borders that are poorly monitored and export control enforcement continues to lag in some countries.⁸ Additionally, the interagency coordination of U.S. assistance programs has been poor; the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) has recommended the development of a government wide plan to address these issues that will include identifying a unified set of goals, cost estimates, time frames and performance measures.⁹

II. Recent Legislation

- S. 2478, the “Nuclear and Terrorism Threat Reduction Act of 2002,” introduced by Senators Mary Landrieu and Gordon Smith on May 8, 2002, called for increased funding for the Department of Energy’s Second Line of Defense Programs.
- “Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003” (H.R. 4546, which became Public Law 107-314) authorized \$5 million for strengthening export control programs in the FSU to protect against diversion of nuclear or radioactive materials.
- “Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 2002” (H.R. 2311, which became Public Law 107-66) appropriated \$1.9 million for export control development in Russia and the FSU and \$4 million for increased border security through the “Second Line of Defense” program.
- The “Kenneth M. Ludden Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 2002” (H.R. 2506, which became Public Law 107-115) appropriated \$42.2 million for export control and border security assistance in Russia and the FSU.

III. Obstacles

- The Department of State chairs a group of six agencies charged with coordinating all U.S. assistance efforts to enhance border security and export controls in the FSU, but the agencies do not always coordinate their efforts through this group.¹⁰
- Lack of overall coordination of U.S. assistance efforts has led to an inconsistency in the quality and type of detection equipment installed at FSU borders leaving some more vulnerable than others.¹¹

IV. Q & A

Q: Why shouldn’t Russia and the other FSU states deal with border security issues on their own?

A: The FSU have very limited resources for this work, which is extremely important to the security of America and its friends and allies. Moreover, the United States has—and for only a few million dollars a year can provide—the equipment, expertise, and legal and regulatory experience that are essential for effective border-control programs. Failure to do so increases the chance that a terrorist or hostile state will be able to smuggle nuclear or radiological material out of these countries and build a weapon of mass destruction or radiological dispersal device.

Q: Have there been any prominent successes in these programs?

A: Yes, a number of attempts to smuggle nuclear materials out of the FSU have been prevented by improved border security efforts. The earlier WMD smuggling attempts are detected the greater the likelihood that we can prevent a terrorist attack using WMD. Also, U.S. export control assistance programs have helped lay the legal and institutional basis for nuclear, missile and dual-use export controls in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. As a result of U.S. interaction, Russia introduced the principal of “catch-all” export controls in January 1998. A “catch-all” clause essentially ensures that there is a legal basis for preventing exports of certain goods and services, even if those goods and services are not on any control lists, if there is reason to suspect that those goods and services will be used to facilitate the development of weapons of mass destruction. Additionally, Department of Energy has installed radiation detection monitors at eight border crossings, with plans to increase that number to 57 by the end of FY 2004;¹² the State Department has provided radiation detection equipment to 30 countries; and the Defense Department had provided equipment and other assistance to about 20 countries.¹³

V. Talking Points

- As the bipartisan Baker-Cutler Task Force noted eight months before September 11, 2001, “The most urgent unmet national security threat to the United States today is the danger that weapons of mass destruction or weapons-useable material in Russia could be stolen and sold to terrorists or hostile nation states and used against American troops abroad or citizens at home.”¹⁴
- The loss or diversion of even a small amount of nuclear material to a rogue state or terrorist organization is a serious national security threat.
- While accounting, securing, and reducing weapons and materials is of the utmost importance, increasing border security in Russia and the FSU will provide a “second line of defense” against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials.
- As nuclear weapons and materials travel further from their source, they become increasingly difficult to track and detect.
- Export control assistance builds a cooperative relationship between U.S. agencies and their counterparts in Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union. This cooperation fosters the information and intelligence sharing necessary to successfully fight the war on terrorism.
- Since less than 50 percent of all Russian fissile material is in facilities that have received comprehensive security upgrades, this increases the importance of efforts to detect materials that people attempt to smuggle out of the FSU.

VI. Factoids

- The stockpile of plutonium and highly enriched uranium (HEU) in Russia is enough to produce more than 80,000 nuclear weapons.¹⁵
- There is substantial evidence to document at least 14 cases of theft or attempted theft of HEU or plutonium from nuclear facilities in FSU.¹⁶

- Hundreds of metric tons of weapons-usable nuclear materials are located in over 300 buildings in Russia alone.¹⁷

VII. Applicable Treaties, Legislation, and Other International Agreements

- The “National Defense Authorization Act of FY 1995” (P.L. 103-337) authorized the creation of the Department of Defense/FBI Counterproliferation Program.
- The “National Defense Authorization Act of FY 1997” Section 1424 authorized the creation of the Department of Defense/ U.S. Customs Service Counterproliferation Program.
- Department of State FY 2003 budget consolidates into the Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR) account most export control and border security assistance previously funded in the FREEDOM Support Act/FSU account.
- Department of Energy FSU Export Control Program began in 1995.
- Department of Energy Second Line of Defense Program began in FY 1998.

¹ Howard Baker and Lloyd Cutler, “A Report Card on the Department of Energy’s Non-Proliferation Programs with Russia,” *The Secretary of Energy Advisory Board and the Department of Energy*, January 10, 2001, p. iv.

² Scott Parrish, “Illicit Nuclear Trafficking in the FSU.” Issue Brief prepared by the Center for Nonproliferation Studies FSU Nonproliferation Program for the Nuclear Threat Initiative, March 2002, accessed at: www.nti.org/e_research/e3_8b.html.

³ David Albright, Frans Berkhout and William Walker, “Plutonium and Highly Enriched Uranium 1996: World Inventories, Capabilities and Policies,” SIPRI (Oxford Press: 1997), p. 8, cited in Howard Baker and Lloyd Cutler, “A Report Card on the Department of Energy’s Non-Proliferation Programs with Russia,” *op. cit.*, p. iv.

⁴ Joby Warrick, “Nuclear Terrorism Focus Shifting to Research Facilities,” *Washington Post*, November 28, 2002, p. 1.

⁵ Scott Parrish, *op. cit.*

⁶ U.S.-Russian Legislative Working Group on Nonproliferation, “Statement on the Need to Expand Nonproliferation Export Control Assistance to Russia,” adopted January 28, 2003.

⁷ Senator Richard Lugar, “Statement before the Emerging Threats Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee,” March 23, 1999, accessed at: www.senate.gov/~armed_services/statemnt/1999/990323rl.pdf.

⁸ Scott Parrish and Tamara Robinson, “Efforts to Strengthen Export Controls and Combat Illicit Trafficking and Brain Drain,” *The Nonproliferation Review*, Spring 2000, p. 122.

⁹ United States General Accounting Office, “Nuclear Nonproliferation: U.S. Efforts to Help Other Countries Combat Nuclear Smuggling Need Strengthened Coordination and Planning (GAO-02-426),” May 2002, p. 25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹² United State Department of Energy, Fiscal Year 2004 Congressional Budget, International Nuclear Materials Protection and Cooperation programs summary, p. 624.

¹³ Gary L. Jones, “Nuclear Nonproliferation: US Efforts to Combat Nuclear Smuggling,” Testimony before the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities of the Senate Armed Services Committee, July 30, 2002.

¹⁴ Baker, Howard and Cutler, Lloyd, *op. cit.*, p. iii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. v.

¹⁶ Scott Parrish, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ National Intelligence Council, “Annual Report to Congress on the Safety and Security of Russian Nuclear Facilities and Military Forces,” February 2002, accessed at: http://www.cia.gov/nic/pubs/other_products/icarussiansecurity.htm.