

Opening Statement for 11/14/01 Hearing on “Combating WMD Proliferation through Non-Proliferation Programs (Part 1)”

The Committee will please come to order. We are here to discuss the threats we face from insecure critical equipment and discontented scientists from the former Soviet nuclear, chemical and biological weapon complex. I want to thank Senator Hagel for joining us today. I also want to thank our other witnesses for being here. We are joined by Ms. Gary Jones, the Director of Nuclear and Nonproliferation Issues at GAO, Ms. Laura Holgate, Vice President of the Russian Newly Independent States Program of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, and Mr. Leonard Spector, Deputy Director of the Monterey Institute of International Studies’ Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

President Bush and President Putin yesterday announced historic cuts to the nuclear stockpiles in the U.S. and Russia. For the future of both our nations, and the prospect of a more secure world, I hope they are successful in addressing another legacy of the Cold War – the materials, facilities, equipment and people used to make these and other weapons in the former Soviet Union.

We have faced a major national security problem since the 1991 break up of the Soviet Union. Control of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapon materials was suddenly spread out among a number of newly independent nations. We could no longer be assured of adequate control of these weapons or the people who had designed them.

Prior to 1991, international non-proliferation policy stressed keeping weapons of mass destruction (WMD) out of the hands of a few states. Since 1991, we have been faced with the possibility that the information and materials which would have taken years to acquire to build a WMD weapon could now be stolen in an instant.

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11th, the problem of preventing WMD proliferation has gained both a new urgency and a greater complexity.

The FBI's assessment that the anthrax attacks which have plagued the Senate and the nation's mails may have been perpetrated by a lone, disgruntled scientist demonstrates how a weapon that had previously only been in the hands of a state can now be wielded by a single terrorist.

Weapons that we previously worried about being delivered by an intercontinental ballistic missile we now know can be infiltrated into our midst without any advance warning. We are faced with the prospect of spending billions to protect our

homeland against multiple threats from multiple sources.

Non-proliferation programs, the subject of today's hearing, are a critical means to prevent weapons, materials, equipment and technology from falling into the wrong hands.

U.S. non-proliferation activities deserve credit for a number of significant accomplishments. With American assistance, all nuclear weapons have been removed from the Ukraine, Kazakstan, and Belarus. And, non-proliferation activities have extended beyond destruction of launchers and safe storage and disposal of nuclear material to address the recruitment of critical scientists and engineers in the former Soviet nuclear, biological and chemical weapons complex.

But this is only the beginning. The proliferation threats and the legacy of the post-Soviet states' inheritance of WMD, sensitive materials and technologies, and related know-how still exist.

I want to thank my colleague, Senator Hagel, for being here to discuss his proposal to achieve a national strategy and improve coordination between the various non-proliferation programs. His legislation, the Nonproliferation Coordination Assistance Act, would establish a coordinating body to ensure that non-proliferation activities are efficient, effective and further national security interests.

The Departments of State, Defense and Energy have asked that their testimony be postponed until after President Bush's summit with President Putin. We have agreed to this and will be rescheduling their testimony in the near future.

In our discussion on current and future non-proliferation plans, and ways to improve and better coordinate them, we must keep two questions in mind. First, how can we adapt to ever changing WMD threats? And second, are our plans and policies making the world more secure?

I look forward to hearing our witnesses' thoughts on these two questions.