

Opening Statement for 11/29/01 Hearing on Combating WMD Proliferation Threats through Non-Proliferation Programs (Part II)

The Committee will please come to order. I want to thank our witnesses from the administration for being here with us today. We are joined by Vann Van Diepen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Non-Proliferation; Marshall Billingslea, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Negotiations; Kenneth Baker, Principal Assistant Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Non-proliferation from the Department of Energy; and Matthew Borman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Export Administration.

[I would like to reiterate that our Committee rules require all testimony to be submitted 48 hours before a hearing. The Departments represented today were invited to testify at this hearing more than two weeks ago. In spite of this and repeated reminders, as of yesterday afternoon, we had received only one statement. I would like to apologize to the members of the Subcommittee for the Administration's inability to comply with Committee rules.]

This morning's hearing is a continuation of one we held on Wednesday, November 14th. The reason I called these hearings is because I have been deeply concerned about potential proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons from the former Soviet Union. Since September 11th, I think this is an issue that we have to focus on with even greater intensity.

President Bush came into office declaring that he would ask, "the Congress to increase substantially our assistance to dismantle as many of Russia's weapons as possible as quickly as possible." He began his administration announcing a review of Russian Non-proliferation programs. This was a welcome first step. One of the reasons for this hearing is to determine how we can refocus our aid efforts more effectively.

Unfortunately, the Administration cut the budgets for these programs before completing its review. This approach does not seem to me to make sense, particularly in light of the events of September 11th and the subsequent anthrax attacks.

I hope today the Administration will be able to brief us on the results of its review and indicate to us what its intentions are concerning funding for and the future of these vital programs. If it still proposes to advocate cutting these programs, the Administration needs to justify why these cuts increase our security.

We have lost valuable time in figuring how to recork the bottles containing dangerous chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. I hope the Administration shares my sense of urgency. And if it does not, I would like to know why not.

After the first day of the Bush-Putin summit, President Bush remarked that “Our highest priority is to keep terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction...we will strengthen our efforts to cut off every possible source of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons material and expertise.” Today’s witnesses will discuss how the Administration proposes to carry out that pledge.

I hope we may learn how the various programs in the different agencies involved in non-proliferation and threat reduction work together, how these agencies include private sector and non-governmental efforts in non-proliferation activities. We must make certain that government and non-government spending on non-proliferation programs complement each other so that resources are used effectively and efficiently.

Let me thank our witnesses again for being with us today. I look forward to your testimony on these important and timely questions.