

Fissile Materials Working Group

Policy Recommendations to the Obama Administration To Secure Vulnerable Fissile Materials in Four Years

Policy Goal and its Urgency

President Obama in his April 5th Prague speech outlined his arms control and nuclear nonproliferation objectives. At the top of the list was his assessment that terrorists are “determined to buy, build, or steal” a nuclear weapon and that to prevent this, the U.S. will lead an international effort to “secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in four years.”

In early May 2009, the Peace and Security Initiative (PSI) gathered 25 top U.S. experts to discuss the President’s goal and to develop consensus policy recommendations that the Administration should pursue. This *ad hoc* group has now coalesced into a formal Fissile Materials Working Group that will provide input to the Obama administration’s fissile material security policy, evaluate its progress, and promote the achievement of its objectives.

The working group members, individually and for the organizations that they represent, have agendas that they are pursuing with the Administration, the Congress, foreign nations, and international organizations. The policy recommendations below represent the consensus of the group on the policy priorities that the Administration should pursue and that the working group and the organizations that its members represent can work on collectively.

Before detailing the policy priorities of the working group it is important to recount a few other underlying opinions that most of the working group share.

First, there is strong support for the Administration’s goal of securing all vulnerable fissile materials in four years. There is a clear sense that this is a time-urgent goal that requires active and sustained presidential leadership, the rapid forging of an international consensus in support of the objective, and an implementation plan that is aggressive. The working group is willing to work with the Administration in whatever capacity is most productive to help it meet its goal.

Second, there is a sense that the Administration’s goal, while critically urgent, is in the process of losing a year of momentum because of inadequate funding and staffing. Both the FY10 budget request and most of the subsequent authorization and appropriations legislation are viewed as falling short in seeking and providing the funds necessary to achieve the four year goal. There are opportunities for remedying this situation, for example in conference committees or through supplemental appropriations requests, but the Administration must more clearly and urgently articulate its budgetary preferences to the Congress in support of this agenda.

Third, the working group views President Obama's 2010 global Nuclear Security Summit as critical to the achievement of the Administration's fissile material security objectives; it is particularly important for galvanizing international support and financing for this plan. The summit must produce tangible and actionable outcomes, not just a communiqué of intentions. The global community, with U.S. leadership, has been seriously addressing the challenges of vulnerable fissile materials since the fall of the Soviet Union. But, seventeen years later, the challenges persist and continue to mount. Adding the four years of the President's goal to the existing effort will take the timeline to over two decades. There needs to be a greater global consensus on the urgency of this agenda, more and continued financing for it by the world's wealthiest nations, and a multilateral implementation plan.

Consensus Policy Priorities

The Fissile Materials Working Group involves many different individuals and organizations that have many issues and ideas that they want to analyze and promote. There is nothing that prevents working group members from pursuing their objectives. However, a principal goal of the working group was to generate consensus in support of several policy priorities that all agreed the Administration should pursue. Therefore, the following are the top five consensus policy proposals the working group is seeking from the Administration. It is not a complete or exhaustive list of all actions that the Administration should take.

- **Launch a new “Next-Generation Nuclear Security Initiative”** at or before the global nuclear summit that includes a new global nuclear material security roadmap, a plan for broader international scientific cooperation to prevent nuclear theft and terrorism, and a political and technical action plan to achieve the four year goal. This initiative should be used to brand the Obama administration's nonproliferation agenda, provide a refreshed policy umbrella under which new nonproliferation initiatives can be launched and current ones improved, and ensure the consistent commitment to the objective across government agencies. For most of the last decade, the nuclear material security initiatives that were created in the 1990s have been carried forth and expanded when agreements could be reached. But, President Obama has raised the profile and level of political importance of this agenda and it needs to be expanded and rebranded to reflect the realities of the 21st century.
- **Accelerate efforts to secure and eliminate global highly enriched uranium (HEU), plutonium, and nuclear weapon stockpiles**, including in the U.S. There are several essential policy objectives that the Administration should pursue. First, minimizing the number of locations at which fissile materials are stored through elimination and consolidations (including down blending the maximum amount of excess military and civilian HEU). Second, improving security at all locations and reducing the size of global fissile material inventories. Third, extending international monitoring over all remaining excess military and civilian stockpiles.

- **Implement the Administration policy of minimizing HEU use** by including in the policy HEU use in all of its manifestations and creating a timetable for a ban on the civil use of HEU. The President has spoken of his support for limiting the use of HEU but not for banning its use in civilian applications. HEU is the most accessible fissile material for a terrorist nuclear device in part because of its use in the civil sector. While we recognize the need to continue to produce vital medical isotopes and support the transition of research reactors that use HEU to low-enriched fuels, not enough is being done to eliminate the use of civil HEU. The working group believes that the Administration should set an example by declaring a ban on civil HEU as a U.S. policy objective and setting a deadline for its phase out on a global basis.
- **Request and aggressively pursue sufficient funding** for removing and securing all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in four years. Domestically this would include increasing funding for the NNSA's Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI) and International Nuclear Materials Protection and Cooperation (INMPC) programs which implement the bulk of America's international fissile material security efforts. Internationally, the Administration should work to ensure that the international community's collective contribution equals the yearly U.S. expenditure for international nuclear material security over the next four years.
- **Extend and expand the G-8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction for another 10 years** at the 2010 meeting in Canada, reconfiguring it to have a global focus. Alternatively, we would recommend creating a similar multilateral mechanism to replace the Global Partnership if it cannot be extended and expanded. The Global Partnership has evolved into a successful multilateral effort to secure weapons of mass destruction (WMD) primarily in Russia, and the multilateral character of this initiative must be preserved but its focus expanded globally. The G-8 Global Partnership, either in its existing configuration or as an expanded *ad hoc* multilateral initiative, should continue beyond its 2012 expiration, focus on nuclear and other WMD security issues globally, assist developing nations to meet their U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 obligations, and continue to provide financing on the order of \$20 billion over 10 years for this process.

Benchmarks of Success

The President has set an extremely ambitious goal of securing "all vulnerable" fissile materials around the globe within four years and the definition of this encompassing objective remains unclear. The working group is realistic about the probability that some nuclear materials in countries like North Korea may not be captured under this goal and that those issues are being worked through different channels. We are also cognizant that the fissile materials stockpiles in every nation are their sovereign possession and that each has the national obligation to protect it to the highest level and, therefore, may not welcome U.S. or other international assistance in meeting this goal. However, it is necessary to have

benchmarks for measuring the success of the Administration's actions to reduce the nuclear danger.

The working group will be closely following the progress of the Administration's four-year goal and will be developing benchmarks that we believe are relevant. We will provide them in a subsequent document. However, in the near-term the working group believes that the Administration needs to establish global fissile material and warhead security as a top-level international objective. This should be done either before or at the 2010 global Nuclear Security Summit. In assessing models for developing this objective, the working group turned to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which entered into force in 1992. This convention established as a long-term objective the protection of the climate system. Subsequent actions guided by the convention have been aimed at mitigating the impact of climate change on the global environment. The working group believes that the threat to mankind from vulnerable fissile materials and nuclear weapons, especially those posed by terrorists, is equal in international importance to the dangers posed by climate change, but it is receiving less urgent attention. Therefore, the continual improvement in nuclear security should be acknowledged to be a global priority and specific steps should be taken to ensure that it is achieved as an international imperative.