

Policy Frameworks for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction

Statement of

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before

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me and my good friend Brent Scowcroft to kick off this hearing on Nonproliferation and Arms Control: Strategic Choices. Brent could not be here today, but he asked me to make this brief opening statement on behalf of both of us.

First of all, Brent and I commend the Committee for addressing itself to this topic, which is the most important security imperative of our era and which President Bush has succinctly posed as the need to “keep the worst weapons out of the hands of the worst people.”

Brent and I have long worked together on issues involving WMD. Initially our concern was, of course, the nuclear arsenals of the cold war superpowers and their potential to unleash destruction on a scale that would almost literally have wiped out civilization. I was a member of the Scowcroft Commission during the Reagan administration that assessed the options for maintaining a nuclear deterrent to Soviet attack that was strong and, at the same time, survivable and stabilizing.

For a time Brent and I co-chaired the bipartisan Aspen Strategy Group, which has counted among its members over the years many important thinkers about U.S. national security, including Vice Presidents Cheney and Gore, National Security Advisor Condi Rice, and you yourself, Mr. Chairman, as well as Senators Hagel and Brownback of this Committee, and Senators Reed and Hutchison. This past summer the four of us making statements before you today – Brent and myself, Ash Carter, and Arnie Kanter, all members of the Aspen Strategy Group – were reflecting on how the WMD problem has

changed from the cold war days. Out of that discussion came our proposal, detailed in the New York Times op-ed attached to my statement, to strengthen the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty regime to deal better with such serious problems as the Iranian nuclear program. A national and indeed international debate on this proposal, and what we hope would be swift adoption of it in some form, is an example of the kind of policy response to the WMD threat that the series of hearings being launched today can catalyze. I was pleased that President Bush included this concept in his recent speech at National Defense University.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to make two principal points on our behalf in opening this hearing.

The first is to stress the grave importance of this problem and the utmost priority that should be given to it in U.S. national security policy. It is not alarmism but cold reality that without vigorous U.S. counterproliferation efforts a nuclear weapon might explode on U.S. soil sometime in coming years. Such an event – or even an ever-present knowledge that nuclear weapons were “loose” in the hands of terrorists – would transform the way we live. Who would wish to live or work within the concentric rings of progressive destruction around this Capitol if we came to believe that a nuclear detonation here was possible any minute? Yet we could face this knowledge in the future if only a fraction of the fissile material already made, let alone that which may be in the making in such places at North Korea, fell into the hands of the many who would use it – without warning, without remorse, and without fear of retaliation. America’s national security leaders owe our people freedom from this fear, above all else.

Second, there is no silver bullet of policy to stop proliferation of WMD – neither preemption, nor arms control, nor export controls, nor diplomacy, nor missile defense, nor deterrence, nor any other single tool. The point so often missed in debate over this central security problem is that we need, in one way or another, all of these approaches. The problems of WMD spread to state and non-state actors are different in different places, and the variety of the problems must be matched with a variety of approaches. The magnitude of the problem requires that we leave no option out of our consideration. We need to be strengthening each and every one of our counterproliferation tools. Some of our approaches date back decades and, like the NPT example I gave above, are in need of fundamental overhaul.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, we need a war on WMD as vigorous as the war on terrorism. Like the war on terrorism, the war on WMD requires strong U.S. leadership but cannot be accomplished by U.S. action alone. The Committee’s effort to frame the agenda for a comprehensive, stronger, and global approach to protecting the U.S. from WMD is exactly what is needed at this time, and Brent Scowcroft and I are pleased to share today in your effort.