



Bringing business models to our nation's security

June 28, 2004

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
The U.S. House of Representatives
2265 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0552

Dear Chairman Hunter:

The 9/11 Commission recently issued a stark warning: "Al Qaeda remains extremely interested in conducting chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear attacks. ...[It] continues to pursue its strategic objective of obtaining a nuclear weapon." These findings reinforce the fact that terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction pose "the greatest threat before humanity today," as the president correctly said in February. One of America's first and best defenses against these dangers is the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program – aimed at securing and destroying Russia's vast arsenals of doomsday weapons.

Business Executives for National Security (BENS), a national non-partisan organization, strongly agrees with that approach. We support CTR as a proven, cost-effective way to eliminate deadly weapons at the source, *before* they can be stolen by or diverted to terrorists. In particular, BENS sees as critical the successful completion of the Shchuch'ye chemical weapons destruction facility, which is the only certain means to remove the threat posed by millions of nerve gas shells and warheads. We also see the need for initiatives to meet new challenges and are encouraged by the Energy Department's proposal for a "Global Threat Reduction Initiative" (GTRI) to secure at-risk nuclear and radiological materials worldwide. As you begin conference over the Fiscal Year 2005 defense authorization bill, you can strengthen threat reduction in the following ways:

- Grant permanent waiver authority for Shchuch'ye. Both the House and the Senate recognize the need for presidential waiver authority on conditions linking Shchuch'ye funding to Russian cooperation. BENS supports making that authority permanent, on two grounds. First, having to renegotiate temporary waivers every year creates annual risk, as unrelated delays to the defense bill can block funding well past the start of the fiscal year. Second, progress on Shchuch'ye has been positive: Russia has met four of the six requirements and generally shown good cooperation and good faith. As Senator Richard Lugar argues, while the conditions' policy goals are important, "elimination of weapons of mass destruction must be our top priority." BENS supports the Senate's inclusion of permanent authority in the defense bill.
- Eliminate the "or expended" clause. Current language prohibits the Defense Department from expending Shchuch'ye funding in the absence of a waiver – even if that money was already obligated and authorized by Congress or otherwise "in the bank" from a prior year. We support the Senate's proposal to strike this ban.
- Fully support the GTRI. The Energy Department's plan to secure nuclear and radiological materials is a vital, much-needed contribution to our national security, one that will deny terrorists some of their most attractive and deadly weapons. As such, BENS urges Congress to do everything in its power to support this initiative. Specifically, the Senate bill contains authorizing language that would greatly facilitate GTRI implementation. We ask that you approve this language and encourage the administration to proceed with all haste.

By strengthening CTR and the GTRI, you strengthen some of the most cost-effective and bipartisan weapons America has to combat proliferation and eliminate grave threats to our national security.

Sincerely,

Charles G. Boyd
General, USAF (Ret)
President and CEO

Stanley A. Weiss
Chairman



Bringing business models to our nation's security

November 21, 2005

The Honorable John Warner
The United States Senate
225 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4601

Dear Chairman Warner:

Terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction represent what President George W. Bush calls "the greatest threat before humanity today." The vast arsenals of the former Soviet Union are a likely source of such weapons: roughly half of Russia's bomb-grade nuclear materials, lethal viruses, and millions of shells of deadly nerve agent are poorly secured and at risk of theft or diversion.

Fortunately, a strong first line of defense exists: the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, which is providing vital security upgrades for nuclear weapons transport and storage, locking down biological pathogens, and working to destroy the most vulnerable and proliferable of nerve agents – all at an annual cost of one-tenth of 1 percent of the Pentagon's budget.

Unfortunately, a series of restrictions on CTR has, in recent years, slowed its efforts and made spending even those modest funds unnecessarily difficult. To remove such bottlenecks, Sen. Richard Lugar, one of the program's founders, introduced language to lift both general CTR and chemical weapons-specific conditions. As an amendment to the Senate FY 2006 Defense Authorization Bill, the Senate embraced his proposal by an overwhelming, bipartisan 78-19 vote.

Business Executives for National Security (BENS), a national non-partisan organization, strongly supports this measure and agrees with Sen. Lugar that, during a war on terror, any self-imposed delays to CTR's urgent work are "destructive to our national security." The House-Senate defense conference must approve language removing the restrictions for two key reasons:

- The danger of delay. Current restrictions carry real costs on the ground. In mid-2002, all new CTR projects – including security upgrades at 10 nuclear weapons storage sites – stalled for four months because the conditions could not be certified. Work to destroy the Shchuch'ye chemical weapons stockpile was delayed some 15 months from 2001 to 2003 for similar red-tape reasons. Such stoppages not only prolong threats to America, they also endanger the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars already invested in Shchuch'ye and other projects.
- Wasted Resources. So long as the conditions stand, Defense and State Department staffers and intelligence analysts annually must spend thousands of hours assessing Russia's compliance – even when it is immediately clear that Russia cannot meet them. Nor can the president simply bypass the restrictions – whether his waiver authority is of a temporary or permanent variety – without first letting that certification process run its course.

Good intentions may underlie the CTR conditions, but those clauses cannot be allowed to jeopardize our first and most urgent priority: securing and destroying as many Soviet weapons as quickly as possible. By removing the conditions, you remove a key roadblock to those efforts and strengthen one of America's most cost-effective national security tools.

Sincerely,

Charles G. Boyd
General, USAF (Ret)
President and CEO

Stanley A. Weiss
Chairman



Bringing business models to our nation's security

September 12, 2006

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
The U.S. House of Representatives
2265 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0552

Dear Chairman Hunter:

Five years after the September 11th attacks, our country faces another deadly threat. Terrorist attacks on U.S. soil using weapons of mass destruction "would be the surest way to top 9/11," as former acting CIA director John McLaughlin testified in June. A likely source of this grave threat also persists: the vast arsenals of the former Soviet Union – bomb-grade nuclear materials, lethal viruses, and millions of shells of nerve agent – remain under-secured and at risk of theft or diversion.

However, a cost-effective first line of defense exists: the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, which is providing needed security for nuclear weapons storage and transport, locking down biological pathogens, and working to destroy the most vulnerable and proliferable of chemical weapons – all for less than one-tenth of one percent of the Pentagon's annual budget.

Business Executives for National Security (BENS), a national non-partisan organization, strongly supports the CTR program's urgent mission and applauds measures by the House and the Senate, in their versions of the FY 2007 Defense Authorization Bill, to bolster its impact. The House proposal for a National Academy of Sciences study – to assess challenges to the program and devise ways to better manage and facilitate it – makes eminent business sense and deserves Senate backing. Both chambers also have offered useful language to extend waiver authority for a chemical weapons destruction facility, reducing the chance that procedural delays could endanger this important project and the vast sums already invested in it.

Unfortunately, this and past measures do not go far enough to remove legislative bottlenecks that continue to slow progress and waste valuable resources. Each year, administration officials must spend thousands of hours assessing Russia's compliance with standing conditions on chemical destruction and the CTR program as a whole – even when it is immediately clear that Russia cannot meet them. Moreover, conditions like Russia's adherence to human rights obligations, although important, do not directly bear on the critical issue of its weapons' security; instead, that disconnect may alienate our foreign partners in this cooperative venture. Annually struggling through this lengthy exercise, while diverting time and effort that could better address proliferation challenges, makes neither business nor common sense.

Fortunately, a solution is at hand. The Senate version of the Defense Authorization Bill contains language that removes the CTR conditions and the inefficiencies they bring. This measure met with overwhelming bipartisan support when raised by the Senate last year; this year, it was approved as an amendment by unanimous consent. BENS urges the House-Senate defense conference to similarly approve this highly practical proposal and incorporate it into the final authorization bill. Anything else simply keeps America muddling through bureaucracy in the face of one of its gravest threats.

Sincerely,

Charles G. Boyd
General, USAF (Ret)
President and CEO

Stanley A. Weiss
Chairman