Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction
National Defense University

2007 Annual Symposium
Building International Partnerships to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction

Key Themes

This paper summarizes key themes that emerged from the National Defense University (NDU) Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction's seventh annual symposium, Building International Partnerships to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, held at NDU on May 16-17, 2007. The views presented here do not necessarily reflect those of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or any other U.S. Government agency.*

Building international partnerships is a central element of U.S. strategy to combat weapons of mass destruction. U.S. policy recognizes that the proliferation challenge is far too large, complex, and important for any one nation to tackle alone. Meaningful and sustained progress in combating WMD requires active collaboration among all states that have a stake in solving the problem and the will and capacity to contribute. International cooperation has been central to nonproliferation policy dating to the 1960s and a core element of defense planning for more than a decade. Current policies build on these earlier activities, even as they reflect significant changes in emphasis. There are several hallmarks of the current U.S. approach.

> *The limits of traditional nonproliferation diplomacy*. The international nonproliferation regime of treaties and institutions is an important political and legal foundation in the fight against WMD, especially in establishing norms of behavior and providing the basis for action to punish non-compliance by states. But this regime alone cannot effectively deal with the toughest proliferation challenges we face; it has structural weaknesses not easily overcome, an uneven track record in confronting and reversing non-compliance, and cannot directly confront the problem posed by non-state actors such as terrorists and clandestine WMD procurement networks. A principal thrust of American policy, therefore, has been to complement traditional nonproliferation and disarmament diplomacy with new policy instruments that are focused more on practical cooperation with security partners to build combating WMD capacity and enforce compliance with nonproliferation obligations.
>
> *New frameworks for cooperative action*. In the last several years, the United States has spearheaded a number of initiatives, focused on different aspects of the

proliferation challenge, whose purpose is to create a framework for action among like-minded nations. By design, these initiatives are not engaged in creating large, standing organizations or bureaucracies, but seek instead to adopt actionable principles that enable concrete steps to reduce the WMD threat and increase the capacity of states to act. Some of these initiatives are global in nature – that is, they invite the broadest possible participation. Prominent examples include the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT). Others are designed to leverage the capabilities and resources of more advanced and prosperous states, such the G8 Global Partnership and the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP).

Responsible sovereignty. The U.S. approach emphasizes the responsible exercise of national sovereignty as a critical element in the international effort to stem proliferation. This is no less important than sustaining the authorities vested in the organizations that govern the international treaty regime. Security partners are asked to recognize and act on the obligation all states share to address WMD challenges, through cooperative activities that are consistent with existing international and domestic law (like PSI), and by ensuring that their national territory is not a source of proliferation threats. Here, to cite one example, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 obligates states to adopt national laws to prevent non-state actors from acquiring WMD and related materials and equipment.

By effectively marshalling coalitions of the willing to act against proliferation threats, international initiatives have begun to alter the dynamics of global cooperation in combating WMD. Progress is being made through a flexible network of partnership activities that give a wide range of nations an active stake in the fight against WMD and opportunities to contribute to shared security goals. In particular, these initiatives respond to the unique challenges posed by relatively new proliferation problems such as sophisticated WMD black markets and WMD terrorism – problems not limited to individual states of concern but transnational in nature, and which therefore require active collaboration to address. These initiatives foster a common understanding of the threat, intelligence and information sharing, enhanced capacity and interoperability, and habits of cooperation that over time can be leveraged to address a number of security challenges. Collaborative efforts to combat WMD have progressed despite widespread hostility to many aspects of current U.S. foreign policy. Thus, even countries that opposed the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq have been strong supporters of other U.S. initiatives to counter WMD proliferation. Consider two of the activities cited above.

The Proliferation Security Initiative is probably most mature as an example of how political support for combating WMD goals can be converted into operational capacity to achieve concrete security benefits. The PSI began with 11 member nations, but today more than 80 countries have endorsed the PSI Statement of Interdiction Principles. More than 25 exercises have been conducted to date, and a number of successful interdictions have taken place, including operations that blocked export to Iran of controlled equipment relating to its

missile and nuclear activities. The PSI was established in May 2003, just weeks after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. France and Germany, two nations that strongly opposed the war, were founding partners in PSI.

The G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction offers a different model of international cooperation, more focused on the ability of the major powers to leverage their unique capabilities and resources in targeted WMD risk reduction programs. Established at the 2002 G8 Summit, the Global Partnership committed the G8 nations to raise up to $20 billion by 2012 to support a series of challenging nonproliferation projects, initially in Russia. These projects have contributed directly to destroying or dismantling WMD and associated platforms, improving the safety and security of WMD and associated materials, and redirecting the work of former weapon scientists. Since 2002, 14 additional donors outside the G8 have joined the Partnership and contributed to its activities. As with PSI, the U.S. is engaged through the Global Partnership with governments that have opposed other elements of U.S. foreign policy.

Disrupting the financial flows that fuel proliferation is a powerful new tool the international community is using with growing sophistication. Routine coordination between security agencies and finance ministries is now an imperative. Like terrorists, proliferators require access to the global financial system, and routinely abuse this system to bankroll their activities. Institutions and individuals enabling this abuse are subject to pressure and sanctions that, if properly targeted, can impede the ability of proliferators to operate. Recent actions suggest that targeted policies against financial institutions and others who facilitate proliferation can be effective in exposing and complicating the WMD activities of states of concern, and even influencing their policies. The government of North Korea, for example, was clearly surprised at the disruptive effects of actions taken against a bank used by Pyongyang to support illicit activities. This approach is now being applied to institutions and individuals with ties to Iran's nuclear program.

Both unilateral and multilateral actions underpin the increasing use of targeted financial measures. In the United States, Executive Order 13382, issued in June 2005, is designed to freeze proliferators' assets that come under U.S. jurisdiction and deny proliferators access to the U.S. financial system. To date, 35 entities and 2 individuals have been designated for their links to WMD-related activities in North Korea, Iran, and Syria. Even on their own, U.S. actions can have a global impact, given the central role of the dollar and U.S. institutions in the international financial system. At the same time, the continued effectiveness of U.S. financial sanctions will require their careful, selective application to avoid generating a backlash in the broader international community aimed at reducing reliance on U.S. financial instruments.

Moreover, achieving wider and more lasting effects requires an international response. Increasingly, as finance ministries around the world have become sensitized to the problem, meaningful multilateral actions are enhancing U.S. efforts. Most notably,

four United Nations Security Council resolutions adopted since 2006 provide the means to designate and freeze the assets of entities and individuals linked to the WMD programs of North Korea and Iran. Additionally, an effort is underway to coordinate the work of finance ministries and the Proliferation Security Initiative process, and G8 finance ministers have initiated a study of proliferation financing, with the aim of strengthening international standards.

International cooperative activities reflect a strong emphasis on reducing the danger posed by nuclear threats. The strong nuclear focus underscores the acute concerns nations have with respect to the acquisition of nuclear weapons by rogue states, in particular, and the possibility of nuclear terrorism. Cooperative efforts span several key dimensions of the nuclear problem.

> *Nuclear terrorism.* The Global Initiative to Counter Nuclear Terrorism (GI) aims to create a broad-based international partnership, spearheaded by the United States and Russia, to address the challenge of nuclear terrorism. The GI recognizes that nuclear terrorism threatens not just a handful of states, but poses a global danger for all responsible nations, requiring a truly international response. The GI provides a means for states to expand and accelerate the development of national and collective capabilities to counter this threat, and partner states endorsing the Statement of Principles commit themselves to a series of specific goals. Established in July 2006, the GI has made significant progress in a relatively short period of time, enlisting 51 partner nations, developing a work plan, and completing initial capacity-building activities.
>
> *Nuclear fuel cycle.* The Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) addresses a specific proliferation challenge: the proliferation risks associated with the expansion of civilian nuclear power. The GNEP seeks to marshal the advanced nuclear technology capabilities of selected nations to accelerate the development of technologies that are more proliferation-resistant, offer advanced safeguards, and avoid creating large new stocks of weapons-usable material. In this way, it is hoped that emerging nuclear power needs can be met without spreading the most sensitive fuel cycle technologies for uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing. International cooperation is clearly essential to GNEP's success, and potential partners include Russia, France, Japan, China, the UK, Canada, and South Korea.
>
> *Nuclear detection.* Many nations are participating in the effort to create a global nuclear/radiological detection system. Activities such as the Department of Energy's Second Line of Defense Program and the Department of Homeland Security's Container Security Initiative strengthen the ability of governments to detect and deter illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive materials across international borders and through the global maritime shipping system. These collaborative activities focus on helping foreign partners equip border crossings, airports, and seaports with radiation detection equipment. Ultimately, the United States envisions working with partners to develop national and regional detection

networks that can be netted together to form a global nuclear detection architecture.

Biodefense preparedness is an inherently global challenge, but the international community is only at the beginning stages of constructing a coherent strategy and supporting capabilities. Advances in the life sciences and the very nature of international society and the global economy mean that bioweapons pose a strategic threat on a worldwide scale. U.S. biodefense strategy recognizes this, highlighting international cooperation as a key enabler, but the challenges facing effective collaboration are significant. International partners do not yet share a common perception regarding the scope and urgency of the BW threat; for some, biodefense is seen principally as a public health issue, rather than a national security challenge requiring broad-based preparedness efforts. Further, there is no single actionable chokepoint in the BW development process – which relies largely on dual-use materials – that can serve as a logical focal point for cooperative efforts. High profile simulations suggest that a major bioweapons incident would impose difficult demands on governments and place tremendous strains on political relationships and security commitments, even among close allies. They also point to the weak state of international political frameworks and arrangements to cope with a major event. There has been some progress in developing these mechanisms in international treaty, scientific, public health, and experts forums, but much more work remains to be done. One avenue for further work is in creating a global "culture of biosecurity" through targeted public health, biosafety, and scientific initiatives. Another is to develop international biosecurity alliances under which like-minded states join forces to build capacity for shared surveillance and situational awareness, share the costs associated with developing rapid diagnostic capabilities and countermeasures, and conduct joint threat assessments, plans, and exercises. These initiatives, if successful, would also contribute greatly to mitigating the consequences of – and perhaps one day eliminating – large, lethal, naturally occurring epidemics.

Through theater engagement and security cooperation activities the armed forces play a vital role in raising awareness, developing partnerships, and enhancing the combating WMD capabilities of regional allies and friends. Tailored approaches have taken shape based on the unique requirements of individual regions and combatant command (COCOM) areas of responsibility.

Europe. U.S. European Command has established a number of sub-regional multi-national forums (or "clearinghouses") that serve as a vehicle for collaboration and coordination. NATO, in just a few years' time, has developed a WMD defense concept and operational capabilities focused on both state and non-state threats. NATO's evolving capability is built around a multinational CBRN defense battalion and a supporting Centre of Excellence for education, training, and concept, doctrine and standards development.

East Asia. U.S. Pacific Command's engagement strategy is more functionally-oriented on consequence management, counterproliferation, and combating WMD

deliberate planning. Various bilateral activities (e.g., with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines) are directly focused on capacity building and counter-WMD terrorism. USPACOM also participates in the Multilateral Planning and Augmentation Team (MPAT), a cadre of military planners from 33 nations with interests in the Asia-Pacific Region. MPAT facilitates the establishment and/or augmentation of multinational coalition task force headquarters, with a focus on smaller scale contingencies and operations other than war. MPAT has developed Standing Operating Procedures for contingencies involving CBRN and toxic industrial materials.

Southwest Asia. U.S. Central Command's approach to building partner capacity emphasizes the use of bi- and multi-lateral activities to encourage host nations to develop integrated civil-military response capabilities. In support of this objective, the Command leverages a diverse set of activities: Commander, CENTCOM visits to host nations; Cooperative Defense Program workshops and exercises; the Bilateral Air Defense Initiative; the International Counterproliferation Program; the Disaster Preparedness Program in Central and South Asia; the Regional Disaster Management Center of Excellence in the Horn of Africa; host nation partnerships with state National Guard units in the U.S.; education and training; and foreign military sales.

Mind the gap. The combatant commands are well-engaged in regions of strategic importance, and making progress in standing-up activities and building partner capacity to combat WMD. Perhaps the most important challenge to sustaining effective theater engagement is the growing perception among many partners of a capabilities gap with the United States – a belief that regardless of their force modernization efforts they will continue to fall further behind U.S. military capabilities. This is true for both the conventional warfighting capabilities typically associated with the capabilities gap as well as more specialized areas of the combating WMD mission. (It also may be an issue for non-military, e.g. homeland security, capabilities for addressing the WMD threat.) The implications of this gap – real or perceived – are potentially serious if partners otherwise willing to assume regional security burdens come to believe they are unable to do so because they cannot operate effectively with U.S. forces. Going forward, theater engagement and security cooperation policies should focus on reducing this gap, especially with our closest partners.

While initial progress in advancing new types of international cooperation is promising, there remain major challenges to developing a network of partnership activities that can be sustained over the long-term. A strong foundation has been laid in the efforts of the last several years, but more work must be done to ensure these initiatives take root and continue to offer meaningful collaboration with practical security benefits. A number of critical questions require attention.

Are there too many initiatives asking too much of countries that may have limited capacity? The multiplicity of initiatives reflects the complexity of the threat and

the aggressive search for innovative means to attack it. The strains this can place on the ability of states to contribute are revealed by the gap, in some cases, between commitments and actions. A good example is implementation of UNSCR 1540, which obligates UN member states to criminalize WMD proliferation, enforce effective export controls, and secure nuclear materials. Since its unanimous adoption in April, 2004, there has been steadily growing awareness of 1540 and its requirements, and genuine progress in its implementation. As of May 2007, 136 Member States had submitted reports on implementation measures taken or planned. But 56 states had yet to submit reports. And the reports received to date reveal that virtually all states face significant gaps between steps taken and the obligations of the resolution. These gaps fall in the areas of accountability, physical protection, border controls, law enforcement, export controls, and financial controls. A major assistance effort is required to address shortfalls in technical and administrative capacities that are now an obstacle to a more complete level of implementation. If such shortfalls can be remedied, 1540 can become a powerful tool against the spread of WMD to dangerous groups. The United States and other major powers have a strong stake in the success of 1540 and are also best positioned to help states fill gaps in capacity. This should be considered a policy priority.

Will these initiatives have staying power? It is reasonable to ask whether the existing commitments nations have made can be sustained over the longer-term. At one level, this is a political challenge for the United States. Some partner nations question whether the United States will remain committed to this general approach to the WMD problem, and to specific initiatives, particularly given the change in Administrations that will occur in 2009. In the inevitable policy reviews that will take place, which programs will remain priorities? This concern underscores the recognized leadership role of the United States in forging international collaborative efforts. If the U.S does not continue to push on key initiatives and exert proactive leadership, the political commitments other states have made could weaken. Washington must remain mindful of the fact that for many governments, joining and participating in U.S.-led initiatives entails a significant political and resource investment, especially at a time when there is significant anti-American sentiment. For its part, it is reasonable for the United States to ask: who else will step forward to assume a leadership role in this arena? The United States has facilitated leadership opportunities for states within the framework of existing cooperative efforts, but who will offer the next compelling idea for a partnership initiative?

At another level, the question of staying power is an organizational and management challenge. Can activities that by design have no permanent standing support organization be self-perpetuating? What is the minimum degree of institutional structure required to ensure sustainability even in the face of changes at the political level? Is the United States Government organized to effectively manage the growing number of partnership activities? The “policy entrepreneurship” that gave rise to the wide range of initiatives now underway is

essential to devising innovative approaches to tough policy challenges. At some point, however, there also may be a need for more formal or centralized coordination and harmonization of these activities to ensure unity of effort.