

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
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1. [Opportunities Unfolding in U.S.-Russian Relations \(04-14-2010\)](#)
Under Secretary of State Burns highlights new cooperative relationship

By Keida Kostreci
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S.-Russian relations are now on a much more solid footing than they were just one year ago, says William Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs.

“Many challenges and difficulties remain, and we have a great deal of work to do together to widen and strengthen the base of cooperation, but we’ve made a promising start,” Burns said April 14, a day after the [Nuclear Security Summit](#) in Washington.

[Speaking at the Center for American Progress](#), a nonpartisan public policy organization, the under secretary said that both President Obama and Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton have made relations with Russia a high priority.

“Rarely has there been a time when getting relations right between our two countries, and between our two societies, mattered more than it does today,” Burns said.

April 15, 2010

The under secretary said the [new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty](#) (START) signed by President Obama and President Dmitry Medvedev in Prague on April 8 “enhances American security, reduces the threat of nuclear war, and sets a powerful example of responsible U.S.-Russian leadership in managing and reducing our remaining nuclear arsenals on the eve of the NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] Review Conference in May.”

Missile defense, which has been a source of such suspicion and tension between Russia and the United States, instead can be a transformative opportunity for both countries, he added.

“We can explore practical steps toward cooperation on missile defense, consistent with the new phased adaptive approach of the Obama administration,” the under secretary said.

Burns talked about the increased cooperation by the two countries to ensure that other countries do not acquire nuclear weapons. He singled out the bilateral and multilateral efforts to remove the threat of nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula and the new United Nations Security Council sanctions resolution about Iran.

“That level of cooperation was unimaginable in the depths of U.S.-Russian acrimony at the end of 2008; while we will no doubt continue to have our share of tactical differences, we have come a long way in a relatively short time in our efforts together on Iran,” Burns said.

He said that the fight against violent extremism is a second area of significantly improved cooperation, stressing that “the attacks on the Moscow Metro two weeks ago are a horrific reminder of what we have both suffered at the hands of terrorists, and of our common stake in defeating them.”

Burns also cited the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission and its 16 working groups as providing an important new structure for future cooperation on issues ranging from energy efficiency and youth sports exchanges to university partnerships and preserving the Arctic environment.

But Burns said that many challenges remain in the U.S.-Russian relationship, emphasizing that the two countries disagree fundamentally about the situation in Georgia, and the [status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia](#). Acknowledging the genuine concerns that each country has for the regions closest to its borders, Burns said that “21st century values and expectations — and not 19th century views about spheres of influence — should drive a frank dialogue over our interests in the world as a whole, as well as in areas closer to home.”

“Even as basic differences persist, we both have an obligation to help ensure that tensions do not erupt into violence again,” he said.

Burns said the United States will “continue to be plainspoken and unapologetic about our interest in universal human rights, and our conviction that democratic institutions and the rule of law are the keys to unlocking the enormous human potential of Russia, America and any other society in the 21st century.”

“It is deeply in the self-interest of Russians and their future,” he added, to address all of the challenges that have to do with fighting corruption, empowering civil society and building respect for rule of law.

Burns added that it is in the interests of the United States to contribute to Russia's economic modernization, and to "re-energize" Russia's bid for membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), despite the considerable complications posed by Russia's decision to enter into a customs union with Kazakhstan and Belarus, both of whom are also still outside the WTO.

On another economic issue, Burns said that "it is long past time to repeal the Jackson-Vanik amendment," which imposes trade penalties on countries that restrict emigration.

Going back to the concept of "reset," Burns said that it carried the misleading notion that the slate could be wiped clean with the push of a button, starting anew unburdened by the past. He cautioned that reality, of course, is a little more complicated.

"But for the first time in a long time, the possibilities before us outnumber the problems. That is a very good thing for Russians and Americans, and for the entire world," he said.

2. Summit Achieves Commitments to Prevent Nuclear Terror (04-14-2010)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Obama administration national security officials say the April 12–13 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington succeeded not only in increasing international recognition of the shared threat from nuclear terrorism, but also resulted in concrete actions and decisions from the participants, ranging from increasing the security of nuclear materials and expertise to reducing the availability of highly enriched uranium and plutonium.

At the summit's conclusion April 13, Gary Samore, the senior White House coordinator for weapons-of-mass-destruction counterterrorism and arms control, Laura Holgate, the senior director for WMD terrorism and threat reduction, and Ben Rhodes, deputy national security adviser for strategic communications, spoke to reporters about the summit's accomplishments.

The [summit communiqué](#) embraces the goal of [securing all of the world's vulnerable nuclear materials within four years](#), which President Obama called for in an [April 2009 speech](#) in Prague.

Samore said the two-day gathering removed lingering doubts among some countries over the seriousness of the nuclear terror threat, resulting in a strong agreement that "the threat is serious enough to justify the kind of resources needed to solve the problem."

The participants also agreed that "the solution to the threat is actually pretty simple," he said. Just as governments and private companies know how to provide physical protection for valuables such as gold reserves, they can also provide similar high-level protection for supplies of plutonium and highly enriched uranium (HEU).

"The exact solution may differ from country to country," Samore said, depending on whether countries choose to eliminate their fissile material, or put the resources and programs in place to ensure it is well protected and accounted for.

The summit's [work plan](#) identified existing international agreements and resources that are available to countries as they work to secure or eliminate their stockpiles.

Holgate said individual countries have been asked to join existing global initiatives, as well as to consolidate stockpiles and build the capacity of their law enforcement, industry and technical personnel to protect them. The summit communiqué also calls for sharing the best practices and increasing financial support and expertise to help the International Atomic Energy Agency “develop nuclear security guidelines and to provide advice for its member states on how to implement them.”

At the same time, Holgate said, the communiqué is “making sure that the security measures do not prevent countries from enjoying the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy.”

The communiqué balances security concerns with continued national sovereignty over nuclear materials. Samore said an outright enforcement regime is “not attainable” and would distract from the more urgent and immediate need to actually secure the materials.

The agreement relies on cooperative mechanisms, as well as countries’ “self-interest in securing nuclear material and avoiding terrorism,” he said.

Rhodes said “broad collective action and global action” are needed to make progress, “and it’s also going to take the intensive efforts of leaders focusing on this and ... holding their own governments accountable.”

The past two days saw [national commitments](#) on the part of many of the participants, such as getting rid of their HEU and plutonium, converting their research reactors to use low-enriched uranium, supporting international organizations and mechanisms, and investing in education centers to help develop better safety standards and exchange best practices.

These commitments “illustrated precisely the kind of actions that we’d like to see that are embedded in the work plan,” Rhodes said.

On April 13, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Enrique Taiana signed a Megaports Agreement that will help prevent the smuggling of nuclear materials at the Port of Buenos Aires. The United States will cooperate with Argentine customs to install radiation-detection equipment and provide port personnel with training and technical support.

The initiative now extends to 30 ports around the world and “aims to strengthen the capacity of governments to deter, detect and interdict illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive materials transiting the global shipping system,” Clinton said.

[Key Documents — U.S. Nuclear Policy](#)

[3. Al-Qaida Has Sought Nuclear Weapons for 15 Years \(04-13-2010\)](#)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — As the international community meets with the goal of safeguarding the world’s nuclear materials, an Obama administration official warns that the world faces a determined enemy in the form of al-Qaida, which is actively seeking a nuclear device, and that international criminals are keenly aware of how much the organization is willing to pay to acquire it.

“The ability to obtain a nuclear weapon and to use it is the ultimate and most prized goal of terrorist groups,” said John Brennan, who is the president’s assistant for homeland security and counterterrorism.

Speaking at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington April 12, Brennan said there is “indisputable evidence that dozens of terrorist groups have actively sought some type of weapon of mass effect,” including biological and chemical weapons.

The most devastating weapon with the longest-lasting effects is a nuclear device, he said. Al-Qaida “has been engaged in the effort to acquire a nuclear weapon for over 15 years, and its interest remains strong today,” Brennan said.

If al-Qaida is successful, it “would have the ability not only to threaten our security and world order in an unprecedented manner, but also to kill and injure many thousands of innocent men, women and children, which is al-Qaida’s sole agenda,” he said.

Brennan cited 1994 court testimony by Jamal al-Fadl that the organization was seeking to acquire uranium from Sudan. This, he said, is supported by “other types of information we have about ... the people and their efforts to acquire these materials.”

There are individuals within al-Qaida who have been given the responsibility of obtaining nuclear material, he said.

The organization is looking for vulnerabilities in nuclear facilities and stockpiles, as well as individuals with access to nuclear materials and the expertise to fabricate and improvise nuclear devices, he said.

Compounding the risk from al-Qaida’s determination are international criminal syndicates and gangs that “are keenly aware of the strong interest of terrorist groups to acquire fissile material, which has prompted these criminals to pursue nuclear materials for their own personal gain,” Brennan said.

Those types of criminal elements exist all over the world, he added, and while they have succeeded in scamming al-Qaida with fake materials such as “red mercury,” the terrorists have not been deterred in their quest.

Brennan said there is no indication the organization currently has a nuclear capability or weapons, despite claims by some of its senior members, but the world must work together to deny the terrorist group the capability.

“They have already said publicly that if they acquired ... that type of weapons capability, that they would use it,” Brennan said. “Our future and the future of generations yet to come depend on our ability to safeguard these materials and expertise.”

The Nuclear Security Summit is addressing nuclear-material vulnerabilities that need to be eliminated, and Brennan said he expects a continual international effort in the years to come. “This is not just a one-time event,” he said.

In addition, expanded use of nuclear energy around the world will increase the amount of nuclear byproducts and expertise that are being targeted.

“This is why we want to make sure that we’re able to work with all of the countries of the world so they can do their part,” Brennan said.

4. U.S., China Share Concern over Iranian Nuclear Program (04-13-2010)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao have instructed their delegations to work with other nations and the U.N. Security Council in drafting potential sanctions against Iran over its nuclear development program, a senior presidential adviser says.

“The Chinese very clearly share our concern about the Iranian nuclear program,” said Jeff Bader, senior director for Asian affairs at the National Security Council. “The resolution will make clear to Iran the costs of pursuing a nuclear program that violates Iran’s obligations and responsibilities.”

The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — plus Germany have been conducting intensive diplomacy with Iranian officials over its nuclear program. This group grew out of earlier efforts by Britain, France and Germany to convince Iran to suspend uranium enrichment in return for a package of incentives. The six powers offered Iran a package of trade and diplomatic incentives three years ago to forgo its uranium enrichment efforts, and have added to the incentives, but Iranian authorities continue to reject suspension of uranium enrichment.

Obama and Hu met for about 90 minutes April 12 on the sidelines of the two-day, U.S.-hosted [Nuclear Security Summit](#) in Washington. It was the fourth time that Obama and Hu have met directly. [Bader told reporters during a conference](#) call that the two leaders held a conversation about issues that affect China and the United States, but also on more strategic issues such as Iran.

“The two presidents agreed that the two delegations should work on a sanctions resolution in New York, and that’s what we’re doing,” Bader said. “We’re going to be working on that in the coming days and weeks.”

Bader also said the discussion sends a clear signal of international unity to the Iranian leadership, and that the Chinese are actively at the negotiating table at the U.N. Security Council.

“It’s also, I think, a strong indication of the way in which the U.S. and China are working together in a positive way on Iran and other issues,” he said.

SANCTIONS IMPOSED

The U.N. Security Council has previously imposed three rounds of political and economic sanctions to convince Iranian leaders to halt uranium enrichment and give up plans for a weapons program. The first set concerns sensitive nuclear materials and froze the assets of individual Iranians and some companies. The second set included new arms and financial sanctions, and the third set added further travel and financial sanctions.

The United States shut out [Iran's Bank Saderat](#) from the U.S. financial system in September 2006, and added [Bank Melli and Bank Mellat](#) in October 2007. The United States has also sanctioned [Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard](#), which controls the nuclear development program.

The European Union has imposed visa bans on senior Iranian officials and its top nuclear and ballistics experts. Britain has frozen Iranian assets under EU- and U.N.-imposed sanctions.

5. Global Leaders Endorse Securing of All Nuclear Material by 2014 (04-13-2010)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Following two days of meetings in Washington, leaders from around the world agreed to take tangible and meaningful steps to secure the world's nuclear materials.

President Obama, who initiated the global effort in a speech in Prague in April 2009, called the collective agreement “a testament to what is possible” in multilateral partnership.

Speaking at the conclusion of the Nuclear Security Summit April 13, Obama said, “We have made real progress in building a safer world.”

All the participating countries now have “a shared understanding of the risk” that nuclear materials could fall into the hands of terrorist organizations and be used to produce a weapon, he said.

The summit participants also endorsed the president's goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear material within four years, which Obama described as an ambitious goal, but one that can be achieved.

“The urgency of the threat and the catastrophic consequences of even a single act of nuclear terrorism demand an effort that is at once bold and pragmatic,” he said.

The participating countries also unanimously reaffirmed their responsibility to safeguard and secure all nuclear materials and facilities under their control and committed themselves to “a sustained, effective program of international cooperation on national security,” the president said.

“We call on other nations to join us,” Obama said.

For its part, the United States will strengthen its own nuclear facilities and invite the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to review security measures. The president said the United States also has joined Canada's appeal for the international community to commit \$10 billion to strengthening nuclear security around the world.

The next Nuclear Security Summit will be held in Seoul in 2012, and the president thanked Korean President Lee Myung-bak for his country's willingness to host the gathering.

According to the text of the summit communiqué released April 13, all participating nations and international organizations agreed to a series of cooperative measures aimed at prioritizing the protection of nuclear material within their countries and in transport, and acknowledged the need to build greater capacity for nuclear security around the world.

The communiqué reaffirmed support for pre-existing international agreements dealing with the safety and handling of nuclear material. Along with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540, which obliges countries to take effective measures against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the 1987 Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) represents a legally binding instrument to protect nuclear material. It also establishes measures related to the prevention of outside seizure, the detection of material in transit and the punishment of nuclear material offenses.

The summit's April 13 work plan calls on more countries to ratify the CPPNM's 2005 amendment, which places legal requirements on signatories to protect their nuclear facilities and material and expands cooperation in recovering stolen material. The amendment, which the work plan describes as "vitally important for nuclear security," must be ratified by two-thirds of the 142 CPPNM signatories before going into force.

In addition, the participating nations cited the 2005 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which the work plan describes as a key part of preventing terrorists from getting weapons of mass destruction as it offers definitions, identifies potential targets and specifies rules for extraditing or prosecuting violators.

The work plan encourages all participants to make use of resources provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including the agency's expertise on security capacity building, technical guidance and training programs.

In his remarks, President Obama said it had become clear during the summit discussions that "we do not need lots of new institutions and layers of bureaucracy."

Instead, the international community needs to "strengthen the institutions and partnerships that we already have and make them more effective," he said.

6. Clinton, Gates Discuss U.S. Nuclear Strategy (04-12-2010)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States will not use nuclear weapons against any nation that does not have nuclear weapons and that is in compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), says Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

"But we leave ourselves a lot of room for contingencies," Clinton said in interviews on news television shows April 11 along with Defense Secretary Robert Gates to talk about the newly released U.S. nuclear strategy.

"If we can prove that a biological attack originated in a country that attacked us, then all bets are off," Clinton said on CBS News' Face the Nation.

In addition, the United States has made an exception in the case of North Korea and Iran, Gates said. "Because they're not in compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ... all options are on the table," Gates said.

President Obama has issued a new U.S. nuclear strategy that sharply narrows the use of nuclear weapons, but still maintains their traditional role to deter a nuclear strike against the United States. [The Nuclear Posture Review](#) (PDF, 2.7MB) was presented at a Pentagon briefing April 6 by Gates, Clinton, Energy Secretary Steven Chu and Navy Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The review of the nation's nuclear policy, the first since 2001 and third since the end of the Cold War, is presented at the beginning of each new administration.

The new nuclear policy also defines measures to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime, with emphasis on the importance of international treaties such as the 1970 NPT and the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). It specifically renews a U.S. commitment to hold accountable people who provide terrorists with nuclear weapons or the materials to make them.

Clinton and Gates emphasized that under the nuclear strategy, any nation that uses a biological weapon against the United States could face a nuclear response. Gates added that if the United States sees a nation developing biological weapons that could endanger national security "or create serious concerns," then the president reserves the right to revise this policy.

Gates also pointed out that if a nation does attack the United States with a chemical or biological weapon, the Nuclear Posture Review makes clear that the United States will respond with "a devastating conventional retaliation, and we will hold the leaders and the commanders in that country personally responsible."

The new strategy also calls for spending \$5 billion this year to modernize the U.S. nuclear arsenal, which is part of a broader goal of maintaining "a robust nuclear deterrent," Clinton said on ABC News' This Week. Clinton and Gates, in part to defend against critics who have questioned the strategy's goals, have emphasized that this strategy is not intended to weaken U.S. national security.

"The United States will defend [itself], and defend our partners and allies," Clinton said.

7. Curbing Nuclear Proliferation Lessens Global Insecurity (04-09-2010)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — While the chances of a nuclear exchange between superpowers is unlikely today, the threat from the spread of nuclear weapons and the materials to build them and from terrorists who might obtain them has increased, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says.

"Nuclear proliferation is a leading source of insecurity in our world today," Clinton said during a speech April 9 at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. "A nuclear attack anywhere could destroy the foundation of global order."

"Nuclear terrorism presents a different challenge, but the consequences would still be devastating," she added.

The spread of nuclear weapons and the means to build bombs endangers the United States, Russia, its allies and broader global interests, she said. And it can lead to unwarranted arms races in regions of the world already facing increasing uncertainty.

“That’s why nuclear security does matter to us all and why we’re determined to meet this challenge,” Clinton said.

Clinton’s remarks came shortly after she returned from Prague, where President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev [signed a new START Treaty](#), which would reduce both nations’ arsenals of nuclear warheads to 1,550 each and also would reduce the launchers and vehicles to deliver them. It is the steepest reduction in nuclear weapons by the two former Cold War foes since the 1950s, the first full decade of the nuclear age.

Two days before the treaty signing, the Obama administration introduced its new [Nuclear Posture Review](#), which defines the way the United States will employ its nuclear weapons and under what conditions they could be used. On April 12–13, leaders and delegations from 50 nations and international organizations come to Washington for a [global nuclear security summit](#) that was proposed by the president in an effort to further halt the spread of nuclear weapons and to keep the weapons and the components to make them from falling into the hands of terrorists.

“We have an urgent interest in bolstering the world’s nuclear nonproliferation framework and enforcement and verification mechanisms. And the new START Treaty, signed yesterday [April 8] by President Obama and President Medvedev in Prague, helps us advance that goal,” Clinton said.

The United States and Russia currently hold 90 percent of the nuclear weapons in the world, Clinton acknowledged, but said this new treaty will mean lower verifiable limits on the number of strategic nuclear weapons deployed by both countries.

But the new treaty has another critically important ingredient, Clinton said, and that is expanding a more constructive partnership with Russia. Both nations have been working with Britain, China, France and Germany to convince Iran to forgo a nuclear weapons development program, and the United States and Russia, along with South Korea, Japan and China, have also been trying to convince North Korea to give up its nuclear development program and eliminate nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula.

Because the United States and Russia are willing to abide by the new START Treaty, which is named for the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that it replaces, and the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, they set an example for other nations to follow, Clinton said.

“This boosts our credibility as we ask other countries to help shore up the nonproliferation regime,” Clinton said.

8. [Research Aids — Nuclear Security \(04-09-2010\)](#)

Useful articles and documents produced by nongovernmental sources

The U.S. State Department’s Foreign Press Center offers the references below as a convenience to researchers and journalists. The inclusion of these reports, studies and articles on this list does not imply State Department endorsement, approval or recommendation.

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