



STATEMENT

By

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Foreign Secretary's Statement on Counter-Proliferation

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I should like to draw attention to a statement on counter-proliferation made by the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, to the House of Commons yesterday morning. The statement makes clear our counter-proliferation priorities for the coming months.

Text begins.

Over the past year, there have been some significant breakthroughs in countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The United Kingdom has worked effectively with the United States in the case of Libya's programmes and in countering AQ Khan's network. We have played a leading role, with France and Germany, on the issue of Iran's nuclear programme. We have enforced UN Security Council Resolutions on Iraq. We have been active on the Proliferation Security Initiative designed to interdict the passage of cargoes intended for use in WMD programmes. We support the Six Party talks in North Korea. All of this demonstrates effective multilateralism in action.

I would like to set out for the House other steps we are taking and further proposals we will be discussing with our partners to deter, check and roll back WMD programmes in countries of concern, and to prevent WMD equipment and expertise falling into the hands of terrorists.

Proliferation Security Initiative

The Proliferation Security Initiative has developed well since it was launched in May 2003. Some 60 countries have indicated their support for it and their intention to apply its principles. There is more that we can do to extend its possibilities:

- we are working in the International Maritime Organisation to secure amendment to the Suppression of Unlawful Acts at Sea Convention, which will make it an internationally recognised offence to transport WMD, their delivery systems and related materials on commercial vessels. It is already an offence under the Chicago Convention of the International Civil Aviation Organisation to transport WMD on civil aircraft.

- agreements have been concluded in the past providing for the boarding of vessels which may be carrying drugs. We now plan to negotiate similar agreements with the main commercial flag states allowing for the boarding of vessels which may be carrying cargoes which could be used in WMD programmes. Shipping of the 10 largest commercial flag states covers some 70% of maritime trade. So with a relatively small number of such agreements, a large proportion of the world's shipping would be covered. The options available to the proliferator and rogue supplier would be reduced.

- we will consider with our partners whether new penalties should be introduced to deter air or shipping lines from seeking to transport such cargoes. Might the vessels and planes of any companies found to have engaged in such transport be denied landing or port rights around the world? Should we consider an international register of companies and individuals convicted of proliferation offences?

- we support President Bush's call to use Interpol and all other means to help law enforcement agencies work against the traffickers.

- within the EU, we see a case for Customs experts considering how to tighten regulations and practices, and how better to exchange information in order to prevent the trafficking of WMD.

- in the UK, we have begun work on the screening of traffic for the illicit movement of radioactive materials. This will eventually cover all air, sea and Channel Tunnel traffic - passengers, parcels, vehicles, freight and containers.

Global Partnership

Eighteen months ago, the Kananaskis G8 Summit established a Global Partnership against the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction. Under this initiative G8 leaders decided to support specific cooperation projects, initially in Russia, to assist the destruction of chemical weapons, the dismantlement of decommissioned nuclear submarines, the disposition of fissile materials and the employment of former weapons scientists. The United Kingdom announced that it would make up to USD750 million available over 10 years for this work. The first report of work undertaken by the UK was published in December.

Since Kananaskis, we have had the Iraq conflict and Libya's decision to dismantle its WMD programmes. Work is under way to develop a programme for the employment of former weapons scientists in Iraq. The UK has offered to help with a similar programme in Libya. We would like to see the Global Partnership expanded so that it is fully global in its geographical extent, and for the number of donor states to be expanded so that the target of \$20 billion can become a floor rather than a ceiling.

The United Nations and Counter Proliferation

An anomaly in the field of counter proliferation has been the lack of discussion since 1992 of proliferation in an overall sense by the UN Security Council. Following a proposal by President Bush last September, work is now under way on a resolution which will call on states to adopt tough

national legislation to criminalise the possession, manufacture or trafficking of WMD, in particular for terrorist purposes; to develop effective export controls where these do not exist; and to maintain effective physical protection of sensitive materials. I hope the Council will pass this soon.

We believe the Council should also consider establishing an appropriate follow-up mechanism, perhaps a Counter Proliferation Committee, just as the Council's Counter Terrorism Committee was established in 2001.

The European Union

The European Security Strategy, adopted by the European Council in December, highlights the importance of work against WMD. The month before its adoption, the EU agreed that agreements with other countries should include a non-proliferation clause. We are working with our EU partners and the Commission to see this introduced as new agreements arise or existing ones are renewed.

Non Proliferation Treaty and International Atomic Energy Agency

The Non Proliferation Treaty obliges states party to enter into safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency to verify that nuclear activities are and remain legitimate. Article IV of the Treaty confirms states' rights to develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

But states which fail to comply with their safeguards obligations inevitably lose the confidence of the international community. The bargain which is at the heart of the Treaty is then called into question. We should consider whether such states should not forfeit the right to develop the nuclear fuel cycle, particularly the enrichment and reprocessing capabilities which are of

such proliferation sensitivity. That does not mean that they would be deprived of the possibility of constructing and running civil nuclear power stations. These could still operate with fuel supplied by countries honouring their safeguards obligations. The fuel would be subject to Agency monitoring while in the receiving country, and would be returned to the country of supply when spent. This would prevent a seemingly civil programme masking a weapons programme.

Experience in recent years has shown the need for more wide-ranging Agency inspections of national nuclear industries. The Agency's Additional Protocol provides the basis for carrying out such inspections. It is important that all members of the international community adopt one. Suppliers of nuclear technology should increasingly see this as a key commitment when they judge export licence applications.

The Agency has done well to meet a growing verification workload within the constraints of its budget. But we should not ask it forever to do more within the same resources. We may need seriously to consider further strengthening of its Safeguards Division.

Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention

The Government set out in a Green Paper in April 2002 ideas on how to verify compliance with the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention. We continue to believe that we need a mechanism, possibly under the authority of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for investigating instances of alleged use and suspect biological weapons facilities. We will be putting forward proposals to follow this up at the next meeting of states party of the Convention in Geneva in July.

Conclusion

Countering proliferation remains as important today as it ever was. The part our intelligence services play in it is vital. We and they can be proud of what we have achieved over the past year. But we cannot let up. There is much work still to do. The proposals I have outlined are designed to assist that.