

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
“Next Generation Cooperative Threat Reduction Act of 2013”
Senator Jeanne Shaheen

May 21, 2013

Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction around the globe and to introduce legislation aimed at modernizing the way the United States addresses this critical national security challenge. My bill, the Next Generation Cooperative Threat Reduction Act of 2013, requires the President to establish a multi-year comprehensive and well-resourced regional assistance strategy to coordinate and advance cooperative threat reduction and related nonproliferation efforts in one of the most critical regions to U.S. national security interests: the Middle East and North Africa.

Fifty years ago, in 1963, President Kennedy famously said that he was “haunted” by the possibility that the United States could soon face a rapidly growing number of nuclear powers in our world. At the time, he predicted that by 1975, there could be as many as twenty countries with nuclear weapons. However, thanks to strong, forward-thinking and innovative American leadership on the nonproliferation agenda, including efforts like the Nonproliferation Treaty and the Nunn-Lugar program, we have so far averted Kennedy’s nuclear nightmare.

Recent WMD-related developments, including Syria’s chemical weapons stockpile and Iran’s nuclear program, have begun to test the limits of our nonproliferation regime. I am afraid we may be quickly reaching an important crossroads – one where we either prove President Kennedy wrong for a little while longer, or find out that his nightmare prediction was simply a half-century too soon.

As WMD-related materials and know-how continue to spread, the challenge of WMD proliferation is getting more diffuse and harder to track. Our focus and our resource commitment need to match the severity of this emerging threat. Now is the time for us to recommit to an aggressive nonproliferation agenda and to demonstrate to the world that the U.S. will continue to lead in curbing the threat posed by nuclear, chemical and biological weapons around the world.

We should start in one of the most dangerous, most unstable regions in the world today: the Middle East and North Africa.

Nowhere is the proliferation challenge more glaring than in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, where political instability and deeply-rooted violent extremism sit atop a complex web of ethnic differences, a history of violence and extremism, robust military capabilities, a growing collection of unsecured conventional and possible WMD-related weapons and a variety of inexperienced and potentially unstable governments brought into power by the Arab Spring.

Continued upheaval in Syria and the threat posed by the Assad regime’s substantial chemical weapons stockpile pose a grave challenge to U.S. interests. Iran’s continued illicit development of its nuclear program and its movement towards an advanced nuclear weapons capability threatens the U.S. and our allies and could lead to a nuclear arms race in the region. Terrorist

groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and al Qaeda continue to operate throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and their direct ties to the Iranian and Syrian regimes only exacerbates the threat posed by these groups as they seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction or know-how.

Add to these threats the fact that the Arab Spring and continued revolutions across the region have brought popularly elected, yet untested governments into power that possess minimal capability and very little experience in countering WMD proliferation.

In the face of this growing and complex challenge, it is obvious that the Middle East and North African region represents the next generation of WMD-related tests for the United States. Yet, our resources and our programming are not getting ahead of the threat. In fact, the nonpartisan “Project on U.S. Middle East Nonproliferation Strategy” estimates that, excluding programs in Iraq, only two percent of last year’s nonproliferation-related programming, or approximately \$20,000,000 of an estimated \$1,000,000,000, was spent in Middle East and North Africa countries.

Luckily for us, we have a successful model for engagement on this issue that we can fall back on. Just over two decades ago, Senators Sam Nunn and Dick Lugar initiated what has proven to be one of the country’s most effective foreign policy efforts. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program has led to the successful deactivation of well over 13,000 nuclear warheads, as well as the destruction of over 1,400 intercontinental ballistic missiles and almost 40,000 metric tons of chemical weapon agents. Because of Nunn-Lugar, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus are nuclear weapons free and Albania is chemical weapons free.

The principles of Nunn-Lugar can and should be more fully translated into the Middle East and North Africa. Congress has long supported expanding CTR into the Middle East, but it was only last fall that the Administration finally completed the bureaucratic changes necessary to more robustly engage in this region.

It is time we expand and ramp up our CTR efforts to prevent the potential proliferation of WMD-related weapons, technologies, materials, and know-how in this difficult and volatile part of the world. That is why I’m introducing the “Next Generation Cooperative Threat Reduction Act of 2013,” which is aimed at modernizing our CTR and nonproliferation programs and expanding them more comprehensively throughout this region.

The bill calls for the President to develop and implement a multi-year comprehensive regional assistance strategy to coordinate and advance CTR and nonproliferation in the Middle East and North Africa. The strategy requires an integrated, whole-of-government commitment to building on the cooperative threat model demonstrated by Nunn-Lugar’s successes, the initiation of new CTR programs with newly elected partners in the region, and plans to ensure burden-sharing and leveraging of additional outside resources.

The bill allows for the support of innovative and creative assistance programs aimed at enhancing the capacity of governments in the region to prevent, detect, and interdict illicit WMD-related trade. Activities could include:

Encouraging and assisting with security and destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles; Promoting the adoption and implementation of enhanced and comprehensive strategic trade control laws and strengthening export controls and border security, including maritime security; Promoting government-to-government engagement among emerging political and public policy leaders, including the possibility of training courses for parliamentarians and national technical advisors; Promoting activities that seek to work with civil society organizations, media representatives, and public diplomacy officials to help develop a culture of nonproliferation responsibility among the general public; The possible establishment of nuclear, chemical, or biological security Centers of Excellence in the Middle East; Supporting, enhancing, or building upon regional nonproliferation programs and institutions already in place, including such multilateral initiatives as the December 2010 Gulf Cooperation Council conference on the implementation of UNSCR 1540 or the Arab Atomic Energy Agency and its Arab Network of Nuclear Regulators; Supporting, enhancing, or building upon previous multilateral initiatives, including the Group of Eight's Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction or the White House-led Nuclear Security Summits in 2010 and 2012 to more fully incorporate and include countries of the Middle East and North Africa region; Encouraging countries to adopt and adhere to the IAEA Additional Protocol; Promoting and supporting WMD-related regional confidence-building measures and Track Two regional dialogues on nonproliferation and related issues; Working collaboratively with businesses, foundations, universities, think tanks and other sectors, including the possibility of prizes and challenges to spur innovation in achieving appropriate Middle East and North Africa nonproliferation objectives; Supporting and expanding successful existing Middle East and North Africa partnerships, including the Middle East Consortium for Infectious Disease Surveillance; Promoting the establishment of professional networks that foster voluntary regional interaction on weapons of mass destruction-related issues; or enhancing United States-Europe cooperation on combating proliferation in the Middle East and North Africa region.

The threat posed by WMD-related materials falling into the hands of terrorists remains our greatest and gravest threat. As former Defense Secretary Robert Gates said, "Every senior leader, when you're asked what keeps you awake at night, it's the thought of a terrorist ending up with a weapon of mass destruction, especially nuclear."

To date, we have largely kept WMD materials out of terrorists' hands. Unfortunately, however, being successful "to date" is not good enough. When it comes to terrorism and WMD in our world, the reality is that the international community cannot afford to make a single mistake. We cannot be complacent because one miscalculation...one unprotected border...one unsecured facility...could all lead to a mushroom cloud somewhere in our world.

We need to remain vigilant, to think ahead, and to anticipate where the next threats will come from and adapt to get ahead of it.

That is why I would urge my colleagues in the Senate to take up and pass the "Next Generation Cooperative Threat Reduction Act of 2013." We need to demonstrate that the United States will continue to lead the international community in curbing the threat posed by WMD proliferation. My legislation does just that. I hope the Senate will support this important effort.

Before yielding the floor, I want to thank my colleagues in the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, at the White House and at the Departments of State and Defense who contributed to this legislation. I also want to give special thanks to the Co-Chairs of the Project on U.S. Middle East Nonproliferation Strategy, including David Albright, Mark Dubowitz, Orde Kittrie, Leonard Spector and Michael Yaffe, whose report, "U.S. Nonproliferation Strategy for the Changing Middle East," served as the inspiration for this legislation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.