

Tough and Smart on WMD

Stopping the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction

A Message Memo by the Third Way National Security Staff

The Message:

George Bush and a conservative Congress have talked tough, but they have failed to keep America safe from weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

I will fight for a tough and smart new strategy to protect us from the single greatest threat to American security.

Offering a New Plan

I believe the single greatest threat to our security today is the spread of weapons of mass destruction. I am very concerned that these weapons will end up in the hands of rogue states or terrorists, who are doing everything they can to get WMD to use against Americans. We must do everything we can to stop them.

When elected to Congress, I will:

1. Secure and Destroy Cold War WMD

Problem:

Right now, we run the risk of a worldwide black market in these deadly weapons. President Bush and his allies in Congress have done little to secure the single greatest source of these materials, which is the decaying Cold War nuclear, chemical and biological arsenal of the Soviet Union.

Solution:

We must stop nuclear terrorism at its source by working with Russia to secure and destroy Cold War WMD. This is smart — it worked in the 1990s, when Russia and the US destroyed thousands of nuclear weapons and hundreds of tons of nuclear materials. We must finish the job.

Policy:

Fully fund and accelerate the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which provides funds and technical assistance to Russia and other former Soviet states for securing or destroying WMD.

2. Shut Down the Trade in Dangerous Weapons

Problem:

The Bush Administration and Congress have no plan for how to stop dangerous or unstable states from seeking or selling WMD. They only have extreme positions with no practical answers. As a result, on this Administration's watch, Iran and North Korea accelerated their nuclear programs and Pakistan allowed a black market ring in nuclear weapons to operate freely.

Solution:

We must have a strategy that uses every means in our power — from diplomacy and incentives to law enforcement and military force, if necessary — to stop rogue and unstable nations from acquiring or trading in WMD.

Policy:

Adopt a comprehensive plan to halt the spread of WMD, including by engaging in tough and smart diplomacy. This should include direct talks with North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program. Make clear to the North Koreans that regime change is not on the table but military action is. Increase funding for covert and overt military and law enforcement operations to halt and disrupt illicit trades in WMD.

3. Lead the International Fight against WMD

Problem:

Under the Bush Administration, the United States has undermined security and legal arrangements that stop the spread of WMD and hold states accountable for their conduct. Most recently, President Bush may have fatally damaged the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by entering into a nuclear cooperation agreement with India. This might sound like a tough calculation of our long-term strategic interests, but the agreement was not smart; we gave up more than we got without a plan for how to salvage the NPT.

Solution:

We have to be tough about having the right security arrangements with other nations for 21st century needs, but we also have to be smart about preserving agreements that work. The United States must return to leading the world in the fight against WMD by strengthening good agreements, supporting smart new arrangements, and setting a good example.

Policy:

Sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Strengthen and update the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Block or change the agreement with India. Cease R&D on new nuclear weapons, which we don't need to sustain military superiority.

Criticizing Bush and the Congressional Majority

The Bush Administration and leaders in Congress talk tough, but their talk is empty and their policies are arrogant and unrealistic. The bottom line is that they have failed to stop the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The bi-partisan 9-11 Commission gave the Bush Administration a grade of "D" when it comes to preventing terrorists from getting WMD.

- The Commission slammed the Bush Administration for "insufficient progress" on denying al-Qaeda a nuclear weapon.
- The Commission called on Bush to "dramatically accelerate the timetable for securing all nuclear-weapons usable material" and "publicly make this goal his top national security priority."
- Bush apparently learned nothing from his bad report card — he still has not made WMD a top national security priority or done enough to secure nuclear materials.

Bush and his allies in Congress failed to secure Cold War WMD and allowed dangerous or unstable states to acquire more WMD.

- They failed to help Russia lock up its massive stocks of nuclear material and prevent its sale on the black market.
- They failed to stop Iran from building a nuclear weapons program.
- They failed to prevent North Korea from building nuclear weapons.
- They failed to get Pakistan to punish or even effectively interrogate the man who sold nuclear secrets to terrorists and dictators.

Responding to Attacks

Attack:

Liberals like you want to put our national security in the hands of international bureaucrats, with a bunch of red tape treaties that don't work. The President has started new international efforts that actually work — like the Proliferation Security Initiative.

Response:

President Bush has walked away from proven treaties and poured money into a bunch of one-off efforts — he has also let other nations do the talking for us to North Korea and Iran. We have to be tough and smart about international agreements that bring results — every President from Kennedy to Clinton was able to convince other nations to give up WMD. In the 1990s, for example, we negotiated to secure and destroy thousands of Cold War nuclear weapons and millions of chemical weapons from scores of nations.

Attack:

Clinton let the North Koreans and Iranians call all the shots, and they lied and cheated — it's dangerously naïve to negotiate in blind good faith with outlaw regimes.

Response:

This is 2006 — when will the right wing stop blaming Clinton? The problem belongs to George W. Bush and his allies in Congress. This President put ideology ahead of our security and now we are in a far more dangerous situation than we were 5 years ago. President Bush didn't stand up to the North Koreans or Iranians — he walked away.

Attack:

Other nations only respect and respond to power and military strength. Liberals don't know how to use either to protect us from nuclear enemies.

Response:

The Bush Administration likes to talk tough about power, but has not been smart — power is about more than military force, as they've learned the hard way. Our nation has to bring the full range of its strength to this fight, not just military force, but also economic might and global leadership. That's the kind of strength from the US that has kept nations such as Brazil, Japan, and Germany from developing nuclear weapons.

Attack:

The President boldly acted in America's long-term security and economic interests by reaching an historic agreement with India, a rising global power.

Response:

An economic and security partnership with India is in our interests, but not at the expense of other equally important interests, such as stopping the spread of nuclear weapons. Many states capable of producing nuclear weapons chose not to do so in large measure because of the costs and benefits that come with being a party to the NPT. The agreement certainly needs updating to reflect 21st century realities and that will be hard — but that's all the more reason the US needs to lead the way.