

THE DEFENSE MONITOR

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Dear Friends & Colleagues:

Many of you are aware of CDI's 30-year history of research and commentary on U.S. defense topics. You may also have noticed the expanding breadth of our international projects and activities, such as our ground-breaking *China Security Bulletin* featuring contributions from a retired Chinese general, and a forthcoming report on Russia's defense spending by a Russian scholar who heads our Moscow office. To better reflect our global scope and project diversity, we have created the **World Security Institute** — which can be thought of as our "holding company." We felt that this title better describes all of our activities that now encompass a wider definition of "security."

Other notable changes include the creation of the WSI International Media Division — the Chi-

nese, Russian, Arabic, and Farsi language information services launched originally under the CDI banner head — and Azimuth Media, an independent company that produces the weekly PBS show "Foreign Exchange with Fareed Zakaria." Due to the overwhelming success of these innovative projects, there was a need to separate core research projects at CDI from independent journalism activities reaching audiences across the globe. Although the projects will maintain a cooperative affiliation, all editorial control and content will remain distinct among divisions.

Please rest assured that the **Center for Defense Information** remains as vibrant and vital as ever. As an independent, core division within our new entity, it will continue its research and unflinching

commentary on defense matters. The *Defense Monitor* will remain a CDI publication, but it occasionally will include updates on WSI projects.

For more information, go to the new WSI website: www.worldsecurityinstitute.org, or to CDI's website: www.cdi.org.

And as always, we — as Director of CDI and President of WSI — appreciate your continued support and feedback as our organization tackles the security challenges of the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Theresa Hitchens, *Director,
Center for Defense Information*

Bruce G. Blair, *President,
World Security Institute*

Iran and the Rogues: America's Nuclear Obsession

Bruce Blair, CDI Senior Advisor and WSI President.

This was originally published on CDI's website on Sept. 19, 2005, as part of "Bruce Blair's Nuclear Column."

Nuclear weapons are supposedly making a comeback after fading from prominence following the end of the Cold War. Nukes are seen as assuming newfound significance as the rogue states Iran and North Korea move closer to acquiring them, and as the United

States looks to its own nuclear arsenal for a solution. Among other voices heard sounding the tocsin is the Bush administration's, which is making a real fuss over the efforts by those nations to go nuclear, as it did over the nuclear program imputed to Iraq before the war. And much clamor is being stirred by the Pentagon's plans to develop specially designed nukes to use

preemptively to neutralize the emerging rogue nuclear threats. While diplomatic pressure, cou-

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pled with economic incentives, has been exerted to arrest the momentum of rogue proliferation, President George W. Bush repeatedly refers to the possible necessity of military action, possibly involving U.S. nuclear strikes. Without saying so explicitly, nuking Iran or North Korea is one of the options on the table that he insists will remain there.

It seems as though a rather volatile new situation has descended on the world, but history tells a different story. In fact, neither the perception of a rogue nuclear threat nor the idea of resorting to U.S. nuclear weapons to suppress it is new to Pentagon planners. On the contrary, a nascent nuclear threat was attributed to these very same countries over 20 years ago, and nuclear strike plans were devised to suppress it. These early plans were as unsound, extreme, and surreal as the preemptive plans being drawn up today.

Twenty years ago, Iran and North Korea (along with China, Syria and Iraq) were minor nuclear nuisances compared to the Soviet Union, whose huge nuclear arsenal posed a threat of apocalyptic proportions to the United States and U.S. allies. The main U.S. nuclear strike plan, known as the Single Integrated Operational Plan, or SIOP, envisioned rapid strikes by U.S. strategic forces against a Soviet target set consisting of some 16,000 targets. Since the U.S. strategic arsenal was brimming over at the time with upwards of 13,000 nuclear weapons, a full-scale assault on the Soviet Union would

have left it a smoking, radiating ruin with over one-hundred million dead and at least as many wounded and sick. The comparably over-sized Soviet strategic arsenal would have inflicted even greater destruction on the United States, Western Europe and Japan. The collective overkill in the two arsenals would have left their respective countries and much of the rest of the northern hemisphere in total ruins and agony.

Now that the U.S.-Soviet nuclear rivalry has become the side-show... U.S. nuclear planners enjoy new license to conceive scenarios for using U.S. nukes against the rogue states and China.

So the nascent nuclear powers such as Iran and North Korea, along with the others states mentioned above, including China which had been removed from the U.S. strategic war plan in 1981 following the normalization of Sino-American relations in 1979, were sideshows in the grand game of nuclear brinkmanship between the Americans and Soviets. But these sideshows were still seriously factored into U.S. nuclear planning. War gamers argued that Iran or one of the other putative nuclear rogues or China might emerge from the ashes of a U.S.-Soviet nuclear exchange and exploit U.S.

weakness using nuclear blackmail. In their imaginations, the United States stood to be defeated by upstart nuclear powers such as Iran in the wake of a cataclysmic strike by Russia that utterly devastated the United States. And therefore it was imperative in their estimation for the United States to organize its war plans to ensure that a counter-rogue nuclear expeditionary force composed of surviving U.S. nuclear forces would be able to destroy the nuclear infrastructure — reactors and nuclear-related facilities, as well as nuclear command and control and the means of delivering them — in Iran and other countries that sat out the opening salvos between the Cold War adversaries.

This scenario of post-World War III strikes against Iran or others obviously rested on flimsy evidence of the actual nuclear weapons threat that these countries could have posed at the time. In the case of Iran, U.S. strategic forces were assigned to attack the country's incipient nuclear threat that in the mid-1980s was still at least 23 to 34 years from realization. Hard intelligence was far more elusive then than today, and evidence was immaterial anyway. U.S. planners simply assumed the extreme worst-case for both the capabilities and the intentions of the inscrutable and angry regimes in Iran and elsewhere. That the imagined context of the post-World War III conflict between the United States and Iran was utter nonsense was lost on the war gamers.

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crats, with reason, sense a white-wash. More adept is presidential hopeful Sen. Hilary Clinton's, D-N.Y., suggestion of a 9/11-type commission. The original 9/11 Commission wowed everybody with its adult behavior.

But, the 9/11 Commission was run by politicians, a former Republican governor and a retired Democratic congressman — a model to be avoided now. And, in hindsight, that commission's stature has shriveled. We now know it rejected, as inconsistent with its preferred findings, evidence that some of the

Sept. 11 terrorists were known to the Defense Department before the attacks. More troubling, we also know today the commission's staff director now serves as a senior adviser to the very same Condoleezza Rice, as secretary of state, that he was investigating when she was White House National Security Adviser.

There is only one right way to perform an investigation of the Katrina disaster: Eschew the politicians — from both parties. Find instead people with lesser political motives who also have real expertise. The last Clinton FEMA director, James Lee Whitt, and the

first Bush one, Joseph Albaugh, certainly have their personal political biases, but they both also performed in the job with enough competence to know a real answer from a dodge. Moreover, give them a professional staff, perhaps career professionals from FEMA's Inspector General, and bar that staff from ever accepting a political appointment. Then, perhaps we will have an inquiry we can trust. ■

For 31 years, Winslow T. Wheeler worked for U.S. Senators from both parties and the Government Accountability Office.

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Now that the U.S.-Soviet nuclear rivalry has become the side-show and nuclear proliferators have stolen the limelight, U.S. nuclear planners enjoy new license to conceive scenarios for using U.S. nukes against the rogue states and China. They have restored China as a major target of the U.S. strategic war plan, and are drawing up nuclear

strike options to neutralize the still uncertain nuclear threats posed by the rogue states. Preventive and preemptive nuclear strikes are among the military options that the Bush administration does not want to take off the table.

America's and the world's concern over Iran's future nukes and North Korea's virtual small arsenal of nukes is warranted, but the so-

lution to this proliferation will not be found in the U.S. nuclear planners' kitbag. The war gamers lost their credibility and perspective on the utility of U.S. nukes in dealing with nuclear rogue states over two decades ago. They are still living in that strange dreamland. We can only hope that enlightened national leadership will bring them down to Earth. ■

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this year, the United States actively lobbied the European Union not to lift its arms embargo on China, which would have allowed some weapons exports.

Unfortunately, the loosening of restrictions with India is only one example of a general policy shift that emerged after Sept. 11, 2001 that has seen the United States trade military assistance and arms sales for cooperation in the "global war on terror." Now, even pro-

posed U.S. nuclear cooperation with India, which has the potential to exacerbate tensions with Pakistan, are being discussed. This would have been unheard of prior to Sept. 11, 2001, as India had been illegible to receive U.S. weapons due to its 1998 nuclear testing.

As the world's largest arms exporter to both the developed and developing worlds, the United States has a particular duty to ensure that its weapons are used responsibly and by solely the intended end-us-

ers. As such, the United States must not only adhere to the letter of U.S. law, but also the spirit, and ensure that U.S. weapons do not go to undemocratic regimes, human rights abusers, or supporters of terrorism. The trends outlined in the CRS report reflect important foreign policy developments. The United States would be wise to ensure that its arms transfer policy reflect the realities of today's world and are managed with accountability and responsibility. ■

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