

Published in

Newsline

Published weekly for employees of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

Friday, April 4, 1997, Vol. 22, No. 13

Strengthened treaties key to nonproliferation success, says arms control expert

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NEWSLINE STAFF WRITER

Continued efforts to strengthen international agreements are the key to preventing the proliferation or use of weapons of mass destruction, arms control expert Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr. told Lab scientists Wednesday.

Graham, the special representative of the president for Arms Control, Nonproliferation and Disarmament, drew on his extensive arms negotiating experience, particularly the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), in a talk entitled "The Future of Nonproliferation Regimes."

"Regimes" or agreements the ambassador discussed included the NPT, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

"Strong international norms exist against the use or spread of all forms of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, biological and chemical," he said. "These norms are embodied in and bolstered by these treaties created specifically to address them."

"Norms as embodied in these treaties have been relatively successful in the past. These treaties have been able to slow or curb the spread of weapons of mass destruction," Graham said. "The future will involve efforts to strengthen all three norms and their treaty regimes to make it even more difficult for rogue states to acquire weapons of mass destruction."

Such agreements have grown in strength over the years and changed the attitudes of many nations. In the early 1960s, Graham said that many people believed that there would be as many as 30 nuclear weapons states by the 1970s.

"In the 1960s, the acquisition of nuclear weapons was a banner achievement and a source of national pride," he said, citing the successful detonation of a nuclear device by the French.

But when India conducted tests in the 1970s

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outside the "regime" of the 1970 NPT, member nations were alarmed and India was criticized.

Graham led the US effort to achieve a permanent Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty through the 1995 extension conference for the treaty. From 1994-96, he led a number of delegations to foreign capitals to gather support for the indefinite extension of NPT, and in 1996 to urge conclusion of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland.

"The NPT has been the most successful arms control agreement in history," he declared. "It has 185 parties with only a small number of nations currently outside this 'Club of Civilization.'"

Technological developments have brought about the need to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, which entered into force in 1975. "For many years, biological weapons were not a source of great concern, since few states were capable of producing them," Graham said. "However, the technology for making biological weapons is becoming more widespread. People are beginning to worry about them again."

The treaty has been criticized because it "contains no provisions for on-site inspections," he said, adding that an effort is under way to "draft a legally binding protocol that will enhance openness and improve compliance."

In contrast, the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993 "bans the stockpile, transfer, and production of chemical weapons, mandates the elimination of existing stockpiles, and requires parties to submit to intrusive on-site inspections."

The convention, which is to go into force April 29, is a "landmark in the struggle against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," Graham said. "It will make it tougher for rogue states to acquire chemical weapons. The convention is designed to punish those countries that

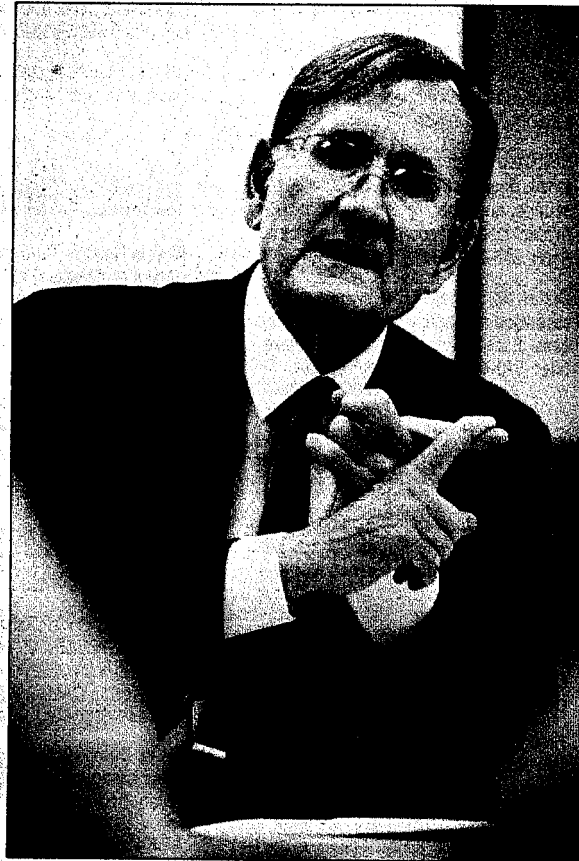
choose to flout international norms."

Graham warned that if the US fails to join the Chemical Weapons Convention regime, "US credibility in the fight to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction would be eroded" and the US chemical industry would be subject to trade sanctions.

Informal forums like the "Australia Group," a group of 30 states — including the US — that is seeking to harmonize export controls on precursor elements for biological and chemical weapons, complement the more formal weapons conventions.

"The US expects the Australia Group to remain a key element of US nonproliferation policy and an important means to combat the use and spread of chemical weapons," Graham said.

Likewise, regional treaties creating nuclear-weapon-free zones complement the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, he said. Since NPT was extended in May 1995, the US has signed two new agreements: the Treaty of Rarotonga — the South Pacific Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone agreement, and the Treaty of Pelindaba — the African



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Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr.

Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty. A third Latin American agreement — the Treaty of Tlatelolco — is nearing full implementation.

These agreements can serve to bring in nations that are not yet party to the NPT, like Cuba and Brazil, Graham said. Brazil has joined and Cuba, for example, has signed the Tlatelolco agreement.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is another important means of strengthening the nuclear nonproliferation regime, he said. "CTBT is a bulwark against the spread and further development of nuclear weapons capabilities and reinforces and complements the international norm of nonproliferation embodied in the NPT."

"Looking to the future, the experiences of these conventions and treaties

suggest that just as the Cold War is part of the past, so is narrow bloc politics in multilateral arms control negotiations," Graham said. "The reflexive antagonism between East and West and North and South has been overtaken by history. Ongoing efforts to strengthen nonproliferation agreements demonstrate that there is support for them all over the world and that, when appealed to directly, all states are prepared to make their own decisions about their own security."