

Taiwan, meanwhile, announced it had agreed to a visit by a senior Beijing negotiator to prepare for resumption of high-level dialogue between the two rivals, separated by the 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait.

The developments indicate that after a three-year freeze, talks could begin as early as this fall between the two sides. They also underscore the important role the United States has played in forcing Taiwan to the bargaining table. Clinton's statement, during his recent nine-day trip to China, was taken as a significant defeat in Taiwan even though U.S. officials contended it was simply a reiteration of U.S. policy.

Clinton's June 30 remarks in Shanghai made clear the United States would not support any formal independence bid by the island of 21 million people, or a policy backing "one China, one Taiwan," or "two Chinas." Clinton also said the United States will oppose any Taiwanese bid to join international bodies that accept only sovereign states as members.

Although the policy was first enunciated in October, Clinton himself had never said it publicly before. Thus, it was taken as a major defeat in Taiwan, which relies on the United States for most of its political support and weapons. In Washington, Clinton's statement has drawn some criticism. On Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) called Clinton's remarks counterproductive, and he threatened unspecified congressional action.

The Beijing government, which views Taiwan as a renegade Chinese province, has said it is satisfied with Clinton's remarks, even though it had tried to have Clinton commit them to writing. Chinese officials have said they plan to use the remarks as a lever to force Taiwan into political talks on reunification. Taiwanese officials say they want to limit any new talks to specific issues, such as immigration, cross-border crime, fishing rights and protection of investments. China rejects this limited approach and insists a broader discussion of reunification is necessary for improved ties.

Taiwan and China ostensibly have been separated since 1895, when Japan occupied the island following its victory over Imperial China in the Sino-Japanese War. In 1949, Nationalist Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan from the mainland after his forces lost a civil war to Chinese Communist forces led by Mao Zedong. Since then, the two sides have moved further away from each other—in both economic and political development.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Tang Guoqiang said Clinton's statement has "positive implications for the resolution of the Taiwan question," and he added: "We hope that Taiwan authorities will get a clear understanding of the situation, face reality and place importance on the national interest."

"Similarly, the official China Daily quoted one of Beijing's top negotiators with Taiwan as saying that Clinton's remarks had helped China. "This has provided favorable conditions for the development of cross-strait relations," said Tang Shubei, vice president of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait. "But cross-strait issues will ultimately be solved by the Chinese people." Meanwhile, that group's Taiwanese counterpart, the semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation, informed the Chinese association that its deputy secretary general, Li Yafei, could visit Taiwan July 24-31. Li's visit is to be followed by a reciprocal trip to China by the leader of the Taiwan foundation, Koo Chen-fu. In June, Beijing invited Koo to visit China sometime in September or October, and Koo said later he plans to go in mid-September.

In 1993, Koo and Chinese association leader Wang Daohan met in Singapore in a land-

mark gathering that signaled warming ties between the old rivals. But after two years of improving relations, the ties collapsed in 1995 when Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui obtained a visa to visit the United States for the 25th reunion of his Cornell University class.

China launched a series of military exercises off the Taiwanese coast in 1995 and 1996, lobbing cruise missiles into the area. In 1996, the United States dispatched two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region as a warning to China not to contemplate a military solution.

RUTH E. CROXTON

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have on my right an obituary. This obituary is very meaningful to the people of a small village in Alaska called King Cove.

Ruth E. Croxton, 29, was killed July 15, 1981, when her twin-engine plane crashed and burned on a hillside. The plane was on approach to the King Cove, Alaska airstrip—in what was called "typical Aleutian weather." Five other people died in the accident, including the pilot, Ernest D. Fife.

Ms. Croxton was an anthropologist, a pilot, and a 1974 graduate of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. Born in Salem, Ore., her family moved to Alaska when she was six years old. She was graduated from Juneau-Douglas High School in 1969.

Ms. Croxton and her pilot were bringing four cannery workers into King Cove but would have been evacuating a medical case once they reached the Aleutian village.

She is survived by Mr. and Mrs. Loren Croxton of Petersburg; a sister, Mary, of Barrow; and her maternal grandfather, William Older of Livermore, Calif.

Ms. Croxton died along with her passengers because there is no road between King Cove and Cold Bay.

How many more people must die before we do something about it?

I yield the floor.

(Mr. GRAMS assumed the Chair.)

DISPOSAL OF WEAPONS-GRADE PLUTONIUM

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, Senator ROD GRAMS and Senator FRED THOMPSON and I traveled to Russia, preceded by 3 days in France. Senator GRAMS accompanied me to France; Senator THOMPSON, on the Russian part of the trip. We went to France and Russia to do very distinct things. In France, we wanted to talk about nuclear power and the nuclear fuel cycle, and if I have time this afternoon I will address that. If not, I will do that on another day. I would like to proceed with what we went to Russia for and what we determined and what recommendations and thoughts I have that come from that trip.

Our primary goal when we went to Russia was to explore and develop options for the rapid disposition of Russian weapons-surplus plutonium. These

materials represent a potential clear and present danger to the security of the United States and the world. The 50 tons that Russia has declared as surplus to their weapons program represents enough nuclear material for well over 5,000 nuclear weapons. Diversion of even small quantities of this material could fuel the nuclear weapons ambitions of many rogue nations and many nations in general.

During our visit, we discovered that there was a very critical window of opportunity during which the United States can address the proliferation risks of this stock of weapons-surplus plutonium. We have urged that the administration, our President and our Vice President, seize on this opportunity. No one can reliably predict how long this window will stay open. We must act while it is open.

Unclassified sources estimate that the United States and Russia currently have about 260 tons of plutonium—100 tons here and 160 tons in Russia. Much of this material is in classified weapons components which could be readily built into weapons.

While we saw significant ongoing progress on control of nuclear weapons in Russia, much of which was with the assistance of the United States of America through our national laboratories, our visit confirmed the dire economic conditions in their closed cities, the cities that they used to provide ample resources on a high priority because they were the source of their nuclear strength. These conditions fuel concerns of serious magnitude.

The United States has an immediate interest in ensuring that all Russian weapons-grade plutonium, as well as ours, as well as highly enriched uranium that is theirs and that is ours, is secure. Furthermore, Mr. President, as soon as possible, that material must be converted into unclassified forms that cannot be quickly reassembled into nuclear weapons. Then the materials must be placed in safeguarded storage.

These actions, plus a reduction in Russia's large nuclear weapons remanufacturing capability, are necessary precursors to future arms control limits on nuclear warhead numbers.

The United States and Russia have declared 50 tons of weapons-grade plutonium as surplus. Current administration plans have asked in the budget for Congress to proceed with a program to use 3 tons per year of our surplus as mixed oxide, generally referred to as MOX fuel, for commercial nuclear reactors, while the Russians are focused on a program that would not use much of their plutonium as MOX. The process that is going on of negotiating between America and Russia is that Russia would have only 1.3 tons converted.

So to summarize the concerns with the efforts thus far, I state the following with very grave concerns. No bilateral agreement is in place to control

each country's rate of weapons dismantlement, conversion into unclassified shapes, and storage under international safeguards. We were told by the Russians that they were moving faster than the United States in this regard. But we need adequate transparency to assure our citizens on this count.

The rates of MOX—mixed oxide—use that we propose and they propose are not equal and would in the long run exaggerate the larger Russian quantities. The planned mixed oxide use rate of Russian plutonium is so slow that it requires more than 30 years to dispose of the 50 tons that we have each declared to be surplus. The potential proliferation risk from this material exists as long as it is neither under international safeguards nor used in a reactor as MOX fuel. Thirty years is too long to wait for verifiable action on this material.

On our trip, we explored whether other European entities would help with MOX fabrication and use in order to assist in increasing the plutonium disposition rate: We did not find a receptive audience that would consider introduction of this weapons plutonium into the European nuclear economy, where it would upset their goal of balance within their civilian nuclear cycle between plutonium recovered from spent fuel and plutonium expended as MOX fuel.

We also discussed the French-German-Russian plan for relocation of a German MOX plant to Russia to provide their 1.3 ton capability. While the equipment and expertise are available, funding for this move has not been identified within the G-7 to date.

As additional information, we learned from the Russian Minister of Atomic Energy Adamov that he would prefer not to use their surplus weapons plutonium as MOX. Instead, he favors saving it for use in future generations of advanced reactors. We learned that MOX fabrication and use in Russia will occur only with Western funding of their MOX plant and compensation to encourage their use of MOX in present reactors.

The combination of Minister Adamov's vision combined with the economic situation in Russia provides an important opportunity to address mutual interests. I believe that he would support bilateral dismantlement of weapons, conversion from classified shapes to unclassified forms, and internationally verified storage. These steps must be accompanied by appropriate levels of transparency.

These initial steps could and should occur rapidly, with a target goal of 10 tons per year. I also believe that Russia would accept MOX disposition of their plutonium at the slow rate that is currently planned, leaving most of their plutonium in storage for their subsequent generations of reactors. The United States, as well as other G-7 countries, may have to help Russia with resources.

The program I've outlined would rapidly reduce potential threats from Russian surplus plutonium in a transparent and verifiable way. It could move far faster than our current program that focuses on immediate use of converted material in MOX fuel.

This new program would shift focus onto the rates of material involved in the steps preceding MOX fabrication and use. It would still continue with MOX use, at a slower pace than dismantlement, conversion, and safeguarded storage. The final move to MOX would remain part of an integrated disposition program. Minister Adamov strongly noted his views that use of the plutonium as MOX in reactors is the only credible final disposition route.

The United States has failed to fully appreciate the opportunity that exists to permanently reduce the threat posed by inventories of weapons-grade plutonium in Russia. Furthermore, the United States should not proceed with any unilateral program for disposition of our own weapons-surplus plutonium.

Leadership from the White House will be essential to ensure success. These issues should be prominently featured at the July Gore/Kiriyenko meeting and the September Clinton/Yeltsin summit. Mr. President, I intend to work with you and our Senate colleagues to pursue actions towards these initiatives.

One of our primary recommendations to President Clinton is that he designate a special envoy solely for the vital task of plutonium disposition in order to provide the full-time focused oversight and interagency coordination that is vital to achieving success. This envoy should also coordinate actions among the G-7 countries to ensure their participation in this challenge.

It is evident that efforts in this Administration towards plutonium disposition have not been marked by a suitable level of urgency, commitment and attention. Designation of this special envoy is essential to address this serious issue.

Finally, Mr. President, in our discussions within Russia, each Senator emphasized that many Russian actions are viewed in Congress as adding fuel to the fires of global weapons proliferation. We explained to our Russian hosts that Congressional concerns over their activities jeopardize the entire range of U.S.-Russia cooperative programs.

These strong expressions of interest and concerns, directly from U.S. Senators to Russian leaders, should provide a framework within which the Administration can negotiate bilateral agreements that address these proliferation risks and truly enhance global security.

I would just like to discuss with the Senate what went on in Russia, and further elaborate on the suggestions that I have. We were privileged to meet with the highest Russian officials who work in the area of atomic or nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons. In these

meetings, I believe it was mutually understood that there is a reason to take 50 tons of plutonium that they have from weapons, and 50 tons that we have, and if we cannot agree, and if the world will not accommodate efficiently more tons being converted to MOX fuel for reuse in nuclear powerplants, that we should establish in each country a storage facility that is internationally monitored, subject to international controls in both countries, where we will place this plutonium in changed forms so that in this new form it will be, as far as possible from being usable for military purposes and bomb production.

What a gift we could make to the world if America and Russia could agree that, because of dismantlement—which is occurring, we have 50 tons of plutonium, and I have just told you the number of weapons it could produce if it was used again for nuclear weapons—that we could both say dismantling the weapons system is working. We agree with each other; we are going to have some abiding principles of transparency and control, and we are going to start to take this out of circulation.

There is one other item that came to our attention as we discussed this proposal. Some of us were familiar with the now-heralded Nunn-Lugar proposal, whereby the United States helped Russia with some of the problems that it had with nuclear proliferation commodities and storage of fissionable materials in their country. The history of Nunn-Lugar, although it recently is very successful, was that for a number of years it could not get off of center. It stayed kind of stuck because of the myriad of agency involvements and rules and regulations. Knowing of that, we recommend that a special envoy be appointed by the President to be in charge of this program of attempting to reach a bilateral agreement on getting rid of 50 tons of plutonium that could be reused for bombmaking.

So, in summary, the recommendations we make to our President and to our Vice President as they begin to work anew with Russia are as I have described them. Frankly, we believe, the three of us—and one of the three is the occupant of the Chair who attended the entire visit to France and Russia with reference to nuclear energy and nuclear weapons—we recommend that the President engage with and quickly reach agreement with the Russians on the disposition of 50 tons of plutonium; and that we commit, likewise, from our side, that this ultimately be done in a fashion whereby what cannot be turned, through MOX fuel, to a substance that cannot be used for bombs, that the remainder be changed in shapes and forms, but that the storage be monitored by international controls and international bodies so as to account for its safekeeping, and getting it out of circulation as potential use for nuclear weapons.

In that regard, we have written to the President of the United States. The

letter which we wrote, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD, and I ask a similar letter to the Vice President receive similar treatment. The detailed letter that we prepared to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Honorable Sandy Berger, which was transmitted to the President and the Vice President—I ask unanimous consent that all those be printed in the RECORD so any Senator trying to further assess what we are recommending will have a full display in front of that Senator of the various proposals and ideas.

There being no objection, the letters were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, July 14, 1998.

The PRESIDENT,
The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We recently traveled to Russia to explore serious proliferation risks associated with Russian surplus weapons plutonium. We urge that you seize a critical opportunity that we found to dramatically reduce Russian stocks of this material. We recommend that this opportunity be carefully considered in the upcoming Presidential Summit and in the Vice President-Prime Minister meeting.

Your leadership will be essential to achieve success in this key area. We will aggressively pursue this issue within the U.S. Senate. We recommend that you appoint a special envoy solely focused on oversight of these disposition efforts to whom you delegate your authority to provide coordination across the multiple agencies involved in a final solution and to develop an integrated G-7 approach to these issues.

The attached letter to your National Security Advisor, Mr. Sandy Berger, outlines details of our concerns with weapons-surplus plutonium and the current opportunity.

A closely related non-proliferation opportunity arose in our meetings that also deserves your attention. We expressed serious reservations about Russian export of nuclear technologies to nations like India and Iran. In addition to nuclear reactor sales to Iran, serious questions have been raised as to whether or not Russia is complying with its commitments with regard to uranium enrichment technology transfers. Also, reports persist that Russian companies are supplying equipment and materials for the design and manufacture of ballistic missiles. In addition, Russia has rejected our export control assistance.

Minister Adamov, of the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy, discussed their strong concerns with proliferation of nuclear technologies and sought to assure us that any actions on behalf of the Russian government were consistent with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

We discussed with Minister Adamov creation of a Commission to review nuclear export activities of signatories to the NPT for potential proliferation impact. It was suggested that such a Commission could evaluate specific cases, as well as review the structure of the NPT to ensure that its formulation adequately addresses modern international proliferation challenges. We recommend that you pursue this suggestion in your meetings, as well as reiterating that Russia must make major improvements with regard to the export of nuclear technologies and technologies of mass destruction.

As we discussed Russian activities that can fuel proliferation of nuclear weapons, we emphasized that Congressional concerns over

these activities jeopardize the entire range of U.S.-Russian cooperative programs. We suggest that you reinforce the gravity of these concerns and potential consequences in your meetings.

Our visits within Russia served to indicate the interest and concern of the Legislative Branch on these critical proliferation issues. We urge that your future interactions with Russia build upon this foundation.

Sincerely,

PETE V. DOMENICI.
FRED THOMPSON.
ROD GRAMS.

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, July 14, 1998.

The VICE-PRESIDENT,

The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. VICE-PRESIDENT: We recently traveled to Russia to explore serious proliferation risks associated with Russian surplus weapons plutonium. We urge that you seize a critical opportunity that we found to dramatically reduce Russian stocks of this material. We recommend that this opportunity be carefully considered in the upcoming Presidential Summit and in the Vice President-Prime Minister meeting.

Your leadership will be essential to achieve success in this key area. We will aggressively pursue this issue within the U.S. Senate. We recommend that you appoint a special envoy solely focused on oversight of these disposition efforts to whom you delegate your authority to provide coordination across the multiple agencies involved in a final solution and to develop an integrated G-7 approach to these issues.

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Branch on these critical proliferation issues. We urge that your future interactions with Russia build upon this foundation.

Sincerely,

PETE V. DOMENICI.
FRED THOMPSON.
ROD GRAMS.

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, July 14, 1998.

Hon. SANDY BERGER,

Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, The National Security Council, The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. BERGER: Our recent visit to Russia uncovered a critical window of opportunity during which the United States can address the proliferation risks of weapons-surplus plutonium. We urge that the Administration seize the opportunity.

Unclassified sources estimate that the United States and Russia currently have about 260 tons of such plutonium; 100 tons here and 160 tons in Russia. Much of this material is in classified weapons components, which could be readily rebuilt into weapons. This material could be a significant threat to the national security of the United States.

While we saw significant ongoing progress on control of nuclear materials in Russia, our visit confirmed the dire economic conditions in their closed cities. These conditions fuel concerns of serious magnitude.

We believe that the United States has an immediate interest in ensuring that all Russian weapons-grade plutonium, as well as their highly enriched uranium, is secure. Furthermore, as soon as possible, that material must be converted to unclassified forms that cannot be quickly re-assembled into nuclear weapons. We believe that conversion of that material and its placement in safeguarded storage, plus a reduction in Russia's nuclear weapons re-manufacturing capability to bring it more in line with our current capability, are necessary precursors to future arms control limits on nuclear warhead numbers.

The United States and Russia have each declared 50 tons of weapons-surplus plutonium as excess. Current Administration plans call for a U.S. program to use 3 tons per year as mixed oxide (or MOX) fuel for commercial nuclear reactors, while the Russians are focused on a program that would initially use only 1.3 tons per year as MOX.

To summarize our major concerns with the Russian efforts (while recognizing that bilateral progress is essential to enable progress):

No bilateral agreement is in place to control each country's rate of weapons dismantlement, conversion into unclassified shapes, and storage under international safeguards. We were told that Russia is moving faster than the U.S. in this regard, but we need adequate transparency to assure our citizens on this.

The rates of MOX use are not equal, and only exaggerate the larger Russian quantities.

The planned MOX use rate of Russian plutonium is so slow that it requires more than 30 years to dispose of the 50 tons they have declared to be surplus. The potential proliferation risk from this material exists as long as it is neither under international safeguards nor used in a reactor as MOX fuel. Thirty years is too long to wait for verifiable action on this material.

On our trip, we explored whether other European entities would assist with MOX fabrication and use to increase the planned disposition rates. We did not find a receptive audience that would consider introduction of this weapons plutonium into the European nuclear economy, where it would upset their goal of balance within their civilian nuclear

cycle between plutonium recovered from spent fuel and plutonium expended as MOX fuel.

We also discussed the French-German-Russian evaluation of relocation of a German MOX plant to Russia to provide their 1.3 ton capability. While the equipment and expertise are available, funding for this move has not been identified within the G-7 to date.

As additional information, we learned from the Russian Minister of Atomic Energy Adamov that he would prefer not to use their surplus weapons plutonium as MOX. Instead, he favors saving it for use in future generations of advanced reactors. We learned that MOX fabrication and use in Russia will occur only with Western funding of their MOX plant and compensation to encourage their use of MOX in present reactors.

However, we believe that he would support bilateral dismantlement of weapons, conversion from classified shapes to unclassified forms, and internationally verified storage (for Russia, at their Mayak facility). These steps must be accompanied by appropriate levels of transparency. These initial steps could and should occur rapidly, with a target goal of 10 tons per year. We also believe that Russia would support MOX disposition of their plutonium at the slow rate that is currently planned, leaving most of their plutonium in storage for their subsequent generations to reactors. We recognize that the United States, as well as other G-7 countries, may have to help Russia with resources.

The program we outline would rapidly reduce potential threats from Russian surplus plutonium in a transparent and verifiable way. It could move far faster than our current program that focuses on immediate use of converted material in MOX fuel, by shifting the program focus to the rates of material involved in the steps preceding MOX fabrication and use. And it would still proceed with MOX use, at a slower pace than the dismantlement, conversion, and safeguarded storage. The final use as MOX must remain part of an integrated disposition program; certainly Minister Adamov notes that use of the plutonium in reactors is the only credible disposition route.

We believe that the United States has failed to fully appreciate the opportunity that exists to permanently reduce the threat posed by inventories of weapons-grade plutonium in Russia. We also believe that the United States should not proceed with any unilateral program for disposition of our own weapons-surplus plutonium.

We intend to aggressively pursue these initiatives within the Senate. Leadership from the White House will be essential to ensure success. We further recommend that these issues be prominently featured at the July Gore/Kiriyenko meeting and the September Clinton/Yeltsin summit.

In addition, we have recommended to the President that he appoint a special envoy solely focused on oversight of this disposition program to whom is delegated authority to provide coordination across the multiple agencies involved in a final solution and to further coordinate G-7 actions on this issue. We believe that this problem is of sufficient national and global urgency to justify this appointment in the very near future.

Sincerely,

PETE V. DOMENICI.
FRED THOMPSON.
ROD GRAMS.

Mr. DOMENICI. Then, Mr. President, Senator GRAMS of Minnesota, Senator THOMPSON of Tennessee, and myself have written a letter to all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, whereby we have once again summa-

rized this situation that we find, this hope that we have that our President will pursue negotiations and quickly arrive at a bilateral agreement to give the world a gift, a present that says: We are now going to get rid of a huge portion of the dismantlement surpluses that can still be used in the future for nuclear bombs, ridding our world of that potential.

We ask that our colleagues read our suggestions, and that they, too, become interested in this proposal.

I ask unanimous consent that letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, July 15, 1998.

DEAR COLLEAGUE: The primary goal of our recent visit to Russia was to explore and develop options for rapid disposition of Russian weapons surplus plutonium. These materials represent a potential clear and present danger to the security of the United States and the world. The 50 tons that Russia has declared as surplus to their weapons program represent enough material for well over 5,000 nuclear weapons. Diversion of even small quantities of this material could fuel the nuclear weapons ambitions of may rogue states.

During our visit, we uncovered a critical window of opportunity during which the United States can address the proliferation risks of weapons-surplus plutonium. We have urged the Administration to seize the opportunity. No one can reliably predict how long this window will stay open. We must act while it is open.

Unclassified sources estimate that the United States and Russia currently have about 260 tons of such plutonium; 100 tons here and 160 tons in Russia. Much of this material is in classified weapons components, which could be readily rebuilt into weapons.

While we saw significant ongoing progress on control of nuclear materials in Russia, our visit confirmed the dire economic conditions in their closed cities. These conditions fuel concerns of serious magnitude.

We believe that the United States has an immediate interest in ensuring that all Russian weapons-grade plutonium, as well as their highly enriched uranium, is secure. Furthermore, as soon as possible, that material must be converted to unclassified forms that cannot be quickly re-assembled into nuclear weapons. We believe that conversion of that material and its placement in safeguarded storage, plus a reduction in Russia's nuclear weapons re-manufacturing capability to bring it more in line with our current capability, are necessary precursors to future arms control limits on nuclear warhead numbers.

The United States and Russia have each declared 50 tons of weapons-grade plutonium as surplus. Current Administration plans call for a U.S. program to use 3 tons per year as mixed oxide (or MOX) fuel for commercial nuclear reactors, while the Russians are focused on a program that would initially use only 1.3 tons per year as MOX.

To summarize our major concerns with the Russian efforts (while recognizing that bilateral progress is essential to enable progress):

No bilateral agreement is in place to control each country's rate of weapons dismantlement, conversion into unclassified shapes, and storage under international safeguards. We were told that Russia is moving faster than the U.S. in this regard, but we need adequate transparency to assure our citizens on this.

The rates of MOX use are not equal, and only exaggerate the larger Russian quantities.

The planned MOX use rate of Russian plutonium is so slow that it requires more than 30 years to dispose of the 50 tons they have declared to be surplus. The potential proliferation risk from this material exists as long as it is neither under international safeguards nor used in a reactor as MOX fuel. Thirty years is too long to wait for verifiable action on this material.

On our trip, we explored whether other European entities would help with MOX fabrication and use in order to assist with increasing the plutonium disposition rates. We did not find a receptive audience that would consider introduction of this weapons plutonium into the European nuclear economy, where it would upset their goal of balance within their civilian nuclear cycle between plutonium recovered from spent fuel and plutonium expended as MOX fuel.

We also discussed the French-German-Russian plan for relocation of a German MOX plant to Russia to provide their 1.3 ton capacity. While the equipment and expertise are available, funding for this move has not been identified within the G-7 to date.

As additional information, we learned from the Russian Minister of Atomic Energy Adamov that he would prefer not to use their surplus weapons plutonium as MOX. Instead, he favors saving it for use in future generations of advanced reactors. We learned that MOX fabrication and use in Russia will occur only with Western funding of their MOX plant and compensation to encourage their use of MOX in present reactors.

We believe, however, that he would support bilateral dismantlement of weapons, conversion from classified shapes to unclassified forms, and internationally verified storage (for Russia, at their Mayak facility). These steps must be accompanied by appropriate levels of transparency. These initial steps could and should occur rapidly, with a target goal of 10 tons per year. We also believe that Russia would support MOX disposition of their plutonium at the slow rate that is currently planned, leaving most of their plutonium in storage for their subsequent generations of reactors. We recognize that the United States, as well as other G-7 countries, may have to help Russia with resources.

The program we outline would rapidly reduce potential threats from Russian surplus plutonium in a transparent and verifiable way. It could move far faster than our current program that focuses on immediate use of converted material in MOX fuel, by shifting the program focus to the rates of material involved in the steps preceding MOX fabrication and use. And it would still proceed with MOX use, at a slower pace than the dismantlement, conversion, and safeguarded storage. The final move to MOX must remain part of an integrated disposition program. Minister Adamov strongly noted that, in his view, use of the plutonium as MOX in reactors is the only credible disposition route.

We believe that the United States has failed to fully appreciate the opportunity that exists to permanently reduce the threat posed by inventories of weapons-grade plutonium in Russia. We also believe that the United States should not proceed with any unilateral program for disposition of our own weapons-surplus plutonium.

We will aggressively pursue these initiatives within the Senate. Leadership from the White House will be essential to ensure success. We further recommend that these issues be prominently featured at the July Gore/Kiriyenko meeting and the September Clinton/Yeltsin summit.

We have recommended to the President that he designate a special envoy solely for

this vital task to provide the full-time focused oversight and interagency coordination that is vital to achieving success. Efforts to date towards plutonium disposition in this country have not been marked by a suitable level of commitment and attention within the Administration. Progress on this vital area of national security will not occur short of this action.

Finally, in our discussions within Russia, each Senator emphasized that many Russian actions are viewed in Congress as adding fuel to the fires of global weapons proliferation. We expressed serious reservations about Russian export of nuclear technologies to nations like India and Iran. In addition to nuclear reactor sales to Iran, serious questions have been raised as to whether or not Russia is complying with its commitments with regard to uranium enrichment technology transfers. Also, reports persist that Russian companies are supplying equipment and materials for the design and manufacture of ballistic missiles. In addition, Russia has rejected our export control assistance. We explained to our Russian hosts that Congressional concerns over their activities jeopardize the entire range of U.S.-Russian cooperative programs.

Our visits within Russia served to indicate the interest and concern of the Legislative Branch on these critical proliferation issues. We have urged the Administration to structure future interactions with Russia that built upon our efforts.

Sincerely,

PETE V. DOMENICI.
FRED THOMPSON.
ROD GRAMS.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I will follow this up next week, and perhaps my friend who occupies the Chair could join me that day, because the first part of our visit was a visit to France, ultimately to Germany, to talk about the nuclear power fuel cycle. I want, next week, to go into some detail as to how well the French people and the French Government are handling nuclear power, and how poorly we have handled that issue in America. Just to whet one's appetite about what we visited and what we will be talking about, let me just say the country of France gets 80 percent of its power from nuclear powerplants—80 percent. It is the cleanest country, in terms of emissions. It is the least contributor to atmospheric pollution, which many in our country and around the world are concerned is causing global warming, because they don't burn any coal, they don't burn any oil. They produce most of their electricity from nuclear power.

Isn't it interesting that they do not seem to be afraid? They have had no accidents of any consequence whatsoever. And we in America, who started this great technology, invented it, had the companies that were best at it—we sit idly by and claim we want to rid the atmosphere of the pollutants that might cause global warming and we essentially, through regulation and otherwise, have eliminated the prospect of nuclear power for some time in the United States. We will speak about that in more detail later.

Mr. President, with reference to completing the Senate's business and then letting my good friend Senator JEFFORDS proceed with his speech as in

morning business, I am going to proceed with the wrapup, which will include a privilege to the Senator to continue even after we have finished.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, July 16, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,531,079,562,651.15 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty-one billion, seventy-nine million, five hundred sixty-two thousand, six hundred fifty-one dollars and fifteen cents).

One year ago, July 16, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,357,954,000,000 (Five trillion, three hundred fifty-seven billion, nine hundred fifty-four million).

Five years ago, July 16, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,334,093,000,000 (Four trillion, three hundred thirty-four billion, ninety-three million).

Twenty-five years ago, July 16, 1973, the federal debt stood at \$455,344,000,000 (Four hundred fifty-five billion, three hundred forty-four million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,075,735,562,651.15 (Five trillion, seventy-five billion, seven hundred thirty-five million, five hundred sixty-two thousand, six hundred fifty-one dollars and fifteen cents) during the past 25 years.

DELAY IN SENATE ACTION ON JUDGE SOTOMAYOR AND OTHER JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I welcome the recent statement of the distinguished Senior Senator from New York on the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor last Friday, July 10. I have been concerned for several months that consideration of this nomination was being unnecessarily delayed. I am encouraged that Senator MOYNIHAN's evaluation of this judicial nomination for the longstanding vacancy in the Second Circuit is similar to mine.

I know that the Senator from New York support this nomination and recall his statement of support to the Judiciary Committee at her hearing back in September 1997, almost 10 months ago.

I appreciated his joining with me and all the Senators from States within the Second Circuit when we wrote to the Majority Leader on April 9, 1998 urging "prompt and favorable action on the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor." We noted then the extraordinary action that had to be taken by the Chief Judge of our Circuit due to the vacancies crisis plaguing the Circuit. Since March 23, he has had to cancel hearings and proceed with 3-judge appellate panel that contain only one Second Circuit judge. Indeed, Chief Judge Winter has had to issue such orders in connection with matters heard this week.

Judge Sonia Sotomayor is a well-qualified nominee. She was reportedly being held up by someone on the Republican side of the aisle because of speculation that she might be nomi-

nated this month by President Clinton to the United States Supreme Court. Last month a column in The Wall Street Journal discussed this secret basis for the Republican hold against this fine judge. The Journal revealed that this delay was intended to ensure that Sonia Sotomayor was not nominated to the Supreme Court. That was confirmed by a report in The New York Times on June 13.

How disturbing and how shameful. I am offended by this anonymous effort to oppose her prompt confirmation by stealth tactics. Here is a highly-qualified Hispanic woman judge who should have been confirmed to help end the crisis in the Second Circuit more than four months ago.

Judge Sotomayor rose from a housing project in the Bronx to Princeton, Yale and a federal court appointment by President Bush. She is strongly supported by the Senator from New York and has had bipartisan support.

The excuse that had been used to delay consideration of her nomination has been removed. Perhaps now that the Supreme Court term has ended and Justice Stevens has not resigned, the Senate will proceed to consider Judge Sotomayor's nomination to the Second Circuit on its merits and confirm her without additional, unnecessary delay. There is no vacancy on the Supreme Court. The nominee has been held hostage over four months on the Senate calendar. It is past time to consider and confirm this nomination to fill a judicial emergency vacancy on the Second Circuit.

Unfortunately, this past weekend the Republican Leader of the United States Senate indicated on television that he has decided to move all nominations to the "back burner." A spokesperson for the Republican Leader indicated that the Senate will not be considering any more nominations this year. That is wrong. I hope that the Republican leadership of the Senate will reverse itself and proceed to consider the nomination of Judge Sotomayor and those of all 10 judicial nominations now stalled on the Senate calendar.

In his annual report on the judiciary this year on New Year's Day, the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court observed: "Some current nominees have been waiting a considerable time for a Senate Judiciary Committee vote or a final floor vote. The Senate confirmed only 17 judges in 1996 and 36 in 1997, well under the 101 judges it confirmed in 1994." He went on to note: "The Senate is surely under no obligation to confirm any particular nominee, but after the necessary time for inquiry it should vote him up or vote him down." I would add vote her up or vote her down.

Acting to fill judicial vacancies is a constitutional duty that the Senate—and all of its members—are obligated to fulfill. In its unprecedented slowdown in the handling of nominees in the 104th and 105th Congresses, the Senate is shirking its duty. This is wrong and should end.