

## DESTROYING WMD

# Russia, U.S. must team up

By **BERNARD MARCUS**  
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As Democrats and Republicans gather for their national conventions in Boston and New York, security officials are on alert against a terrorist attack. But American cities should be the last line of defense against terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction. One of the first — and most effective — lines of defense begins 5,000 miles away in the Russian town of Shchuchye.

Deep in the Ural Mountains, Shchuchye holds perhaps the most dangerous and vulnerable stockpile of weapons of mass destruction in the world — nearly 2 million poorly guarded Soviet-era shells containing 5,400 metric tons of deadly VX and sarin gas. Just one, hidden in a suitcase, could kill 85,000 people if unleashed inside a stadium.

Since 1992, the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, created by former U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), has worked to end such threats. The program has deactivated or destroyed more than 7,000 Russian nuclear warheads, missiles, bombers and submarines.

Yet — thanks as much to congressional restrictions as to Russian resistance — construction of a chemical weapons destruction facility at Shchuchye has proceeded in fits and starts and even now is threatened annually by arcane bureaucratic obstacles.

Congress now has a fresh opportunity to strengthen U.S. nonproliferation efforts. As leaders of an organization devoted to bringing the best business practices to national security, we recommend a number of business-style reforms to enhance these critical programs.

► **Ensuring continuity.** Russia has so far met four of six congressional conditions on U.S. funding for chemical weapons destruction. In the meantime, that money remains contingent on an annual presidential waiver that expires Sept. 30. Past failures to extend waivers have caused work at Shchuchye to grind to a halt for months at a time.

Rather than subject Shchuchye to the annual vagaries of the legislative process, Congress should grant permanent waiver authority to keep operations running smoothly year-to-year while still holding Russia to its obligations.

► **Invest where it counts.** Investing our defense dollars in programs such as CTR makes both common



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sense and business sense. CTR's \$409 million in funding is less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the total \$447 billion defense budget. Eliminating all the weapons at Shchuchye will cost each American roughly the same as a large latte.

Likewise, the Energy Department's proposed Global Threat Reduction Initiative will be a bargain by any measure. At a cost of \$450 million over the next decade, the initiative will secure at-risk fissile and radiological materials worldwide, depriving terrorists of the building blocks of atomic and "dirty" bombs that could devastate a major metropolitan area. Congress needs to do its part by passing legislation now under consideration to jump-start the initiative.

► **Leadership at the top.** Finally, the direct involvement of a CEO can mean the difference between success and failure. In this case, a triad of access, tax and liability issues — including the Russian Duma's failure to ratify a broad umbrella agreement governing CTR — has stalled disarmament projects.

Destroying Russia's stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction before they can be stolen by or sold to terrorists is too important a task to flounder over these technicalities. Repeated entreaties by senior administration officials have been rebuffed by Moscow. The time has come for President Bush to engage directly with President Vladimir Putin to break the political logjam over these critical programs.

Nuclear materials, deadly germs and nearly 2 million Russian chemical weapons are at risk of theft or diversion. The race is on between Americans and Russians who want to destroy them and terrorists who would use them against both our nations. This is a race we know how to win. The consequences of failure are unthinkable.