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FACT SHEET: President Biden Signs National Security Memorandum to Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism and Advance Nuclear and Radioactive Material Security

Today, President Biden signed National Security Memorandum (NSM) 19 to Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Terrorism and Advance Nuclear and Radioactive Material Security worldwide. This comprehensive new strategy advances several of President Biden's most enduring national security priorities: protecting our nation and the international community from the existential threats posed by WMD terrorism and preventing non-state actors from using chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons.

Although significant progress has been made in the reduction and elimination of WMDs, and weapons usable materials around the world, we must remain vigilant and drive further progress to mitigate the range of challenges posed by WMD terrorism at home and abroad, including those posed by new and emerging technologies. Reducing, eliminating, and securing radioactive and nuclear materials are the most effective means to prevent their acquisition and use, and through the implementation of policies and priorities detailed in this NSM, the United States will advance efforts to prevent WMD terrorism.

This NSM integrates, in a systematic way, U.S. policies to counter the use of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons by non-state actors, sets out unified priorities for Departments and Agencies across the Federal government, and affirms the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to work with state, local, tribal, international, and private sector partners on preventing, mitigating, and responding to WMD terrorism threats. It establishes the first comprehensive policy for securing radioactive materials, which present continuing domestic and global risk, along with new domestic guidelines for the management and security of nuclear material by prioritizing efforts to protect and permanently dispose of weapons-usable materials of greatest concern and transition from high-activity radioactive sources to alternative technologies when technically and economically feasible.

In addition to addressing risks posed by existing weapons useable materials, the policies in this

NSM anticipate and proactively address the emerging nature of threats and implications of on and-over-the-horizon technologies that could be used to develop, acquire, or employ WMD. The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to managing the benefits of emerging technology for future peaceful applications with the proliferation risks of these technologies, and has established forward-looking U.S. policies that support enduring clean energy and nuclear material security goals while aggressively seeking to reduce the future production and accumulation of weapons usable materials worldwide.

This policy outlines goals in three ambitious lines of effort:

Counter WMD Terrorism: Combatting all stages of WMD terrorism requires constant vigilance against an ever-changing threat landscape. This NSM sets out a comprehensive plan for Departments and Agencies across the Federal government to ensure that the U.S. Government is able to prevent, mitigate, and respond to WMD terrorist attacks. This is one of the most enduring challenges to our national security, and we cannot take on this fight alone. To counter the use of chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons by non-state actors at home and abroad, it is necessary to involve the broadest range of partners—including state, local, tribal, and territorial counterparts; private sector partners; and foreign governments—in our work to defeat the threat of WMD terrorism. This NSM also serves as our call to action to disrupt and hold accountable those who provide material, financial, or other support to non-state actors seeking WMD capabilities.

To counter WMD terrorism in the United States and around the world, it is the policy of the United States to:

1. Prevent non-state actors from acquiring WMD and related materials;
2. Detect and disrupt WMD terrorism threats;
3. Deter and prevent actors from supporting WMD terrorism;
4. Degrade and eliminate WMD-related capabilities of non-state actors;
5. Enhance resilience and recovery from WMD terrorism events;
6. Enhance capabilities to anticipate and manage emerging technology that could enable WMD terrorism threats;
7. Build domestic partner capabilities to counter WMD terrorism; and
8. Enhance international collaboration to counter WMD terrorism.

Advance Nuclear Material Security: The peaceful uses of nuclear technology provide considerable economic, medical, and environmental benefits. However, the storage, transportation, processing, and use of highly enriched uranium, separated plutonium, and other weapons-usable nuclear material globally present persistent national security risks to the United States. Successful mitigation of nuclear risks requires an integrated approach that combines efforts to eliminate weapons-usable nuclear material through removal or disposition, the maintenance of robust physical security and nuclear material accountancy for existing materials, efforts to counter the theft, diversion, smuggling, and other illicit use of nuclear materials, and an urgent focus on addressing the challenges posed by emerging technologies that may add to the accumulation of weapons usable nuclear materials globally.

To improve nuclear material security and prevent any act of nuclear terrorism, it is the policy of the United States to:

1. Minimize the production and retention of weapons-usable nuclear materials to only those quantities required to support vital national security interests;
2. Refrain from the use of weapons-usable nuclear material in new civil reactors or for other civil purposes unless that use supports vital U.S. national interests;
3. Focus civil nuclear research and development on approaches that avoid producing and accumulating weapons-usable nuclear material and enable viable technologies to replace current civil uses of these materials;
4. Dispose of nuclear material that is in excess to national security or civil needs in a safe and secure manner;
5. Promote safe nuclear material management policies and best practices internationally and encourage adoption of analogous policies with international partners and organizations;
6. Enable multilateral institutions' nuclear material security activities so they are adequately supported and responsive; and
7. Ensure national and international capabilities to identify, mitigate, and respond to nuclear material security threats.

Advance Radioactive Material Security: As with nuclear materials and technology, the peaceful uses of radioactive materials provide considerable benefits, although the storage, transportation, processing, and use of radioactive materials globally present a security risk that must be addressed through collective and continuous efforts. Millions of sources are in use worldwide every day, with thousands also disused and in storage, many of which lack

disposition options (including final disposal, and other management options such as reuse, recycle, or return to supplier) for disused sources, or lack safe and secure long-term storage. Minimizing the use of these materials where technically and economically feasible alternatives exist reduces risk in our collective national security, health, and economic interest.

In order to reduce the threat of radiological terrorism, it is the policy of the United States to:

1. Maintain robust security for all high-activity radioactive sources during their lifecycle for all sources that cannot be replaced;
2. Encourage the replacement of source-based devices with non-radioisotopic alternative technologies, where technically and economically feasible, and continue support for research and development of alternative technologies;
3. Permanently dispose of or recycle disused and unwanted high-activity radioactive sources;
4. Maintain consistent standards for the transportation security of radioactive materials;
5. In keeping with regulatory requirements, apply mitigation measures in case of physical security failures;
6. Support and coordinate efforts to locate and secure lost or stolen radioactive materials and return them to regulatory control;
7. Support improvements to state-level and end-user capacities for, commitment to, and implementation of long-term stewardship approaches that ensure these materials will be tracked and secured from theft or diversion; and
8. Promote U.S. radioactive materials management policies and best practices internationally and encourage adoption of analogous policies, both with individual partner states and through multilateral organizations.

Together with our domestic and international partnerships, these policies will continue to advance longstanding efforts to prevent proliferation and to counter and reduce threats of WMD terrorism at home and abroad.

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