



Executive Memorandum

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INDIA'S NUCLEAR BLASTS: A REMINDER OF AMERICA'S VULNERABILITY

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India's five underground nuclear test explosions on May 11 and 13 were a startling reminder that America remains vulnerable to missile attack—a vulnerability that is increasing rapidly due to the growing proliferation of weapons in unsettled regions of the globe. India's nuclear tests were intended to help its efforts to build nuclear missiles, but they are likely to have initiated a serious arms race. President Bill Clinton should respond immediately by committing the United States to the development of an emergency missile defense program and to early deployment of a global missile defense system.

A New Nuclear Arms Race? India's new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government campaigned on the need to build nuclear weapons, both to demonstrate India's "great power" status and to deter China and Pakistan. Indian officials say the nuclear explosions in the Pokhran test range will provide data to assist with computer modeling for nuclear weapon design and testing. India is building about 100 Prithvi missiles, which could carry a small tactical nuclear weapon over a 90-mile to 150-mile range, and may build 20 Agni-II 1,300-mile-range missiles by the year 2000. Pakistan's nuclear weapons and nuclear missile programs received technical assistance from China and North Korea, and press reports suggest that the first Pakistani nuclear test is imminent. On April 6, Pakistan tested a 930-mile-range Ghuari missile, which it obtained from North Korea. Pakistan also has a number of 180-mile-range Chinese M-11

missiles and may be developing a 1,200-mile-range missile, the Ghaznavi.

Risks for America. India's nuclear missile program could cause China to build greater numbers of new nuclear missiles, which would pose a greater threat to the United States and its allies in Asia. China could resume its nuclear testing program, suspended in 1996 after tremendous international pressure. And by building nuclear missiles, India could prompt China to accelerate its missile programs. China is developing new ballistic missiles and seeking to put multiple warheads on its longer-range missiles, which may require testing to validate smaller nuclear warheads.

Nuclear weapons proliferation on the Indian subcontinent poses another risk: A Pakistani bomb could prompt rogue states with nuclear ambitions like Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea to follow suit. Proliferation increases the risk of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan, which have fought three wars since the 1940s, harbor deep suspicions, and have a potential flash point in a dispute over the province of Kashmir. A

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nuclear exchange in a battle over Kashmir risks great damage to both sides and unknown environmental danger to many other countries.

Needed Now: Effective Missile Defense and Diplomacy. The most important message for U.S. policymakers to take from India's nuclear tests is that arms control has failed to stem nuclear proliferation. Indeed, arms control alone is not enough to protect the United States from the growing nuclear threat; America needs *active defenses* against proliferation.

To deal with the problems raised by India's nuclear tests, the United States should:

1. **Build effective missile defenses.** India's nuclear tests highlight the need for the United States to build an effective global missile defense system. Administration blunders include its refusal to support the Senate's American Missile Protection Act of 1998, which would have mandated an early missile defense, and its decision to cancel the "Brilliant Pebbles" space-based missile interceptor system. Also wrong was the House National Security Committee decision to cut space-based laser funding. The \$93 million Administration request for space-based laser funding should be doubled. The fifth test failure for the THAAD anti-missile system on May 12 demonstrates the need for funds to ensure that the program's problems are corrected rapidly. The Administration should increase funding for the Navy's theater-wide missile defense systems intended for theater-level threats. Instead of implementing the Administration's plan for a small national missile defense based on old intercontinental ballistic missiles, the United States should build a system of space-based laser and missile interceptors to allow it to intervene and stop regional missile conflicts (for example, between India and Pakistan).
2. **Impose sanctions on India.** As required by the 1994 Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act, the United States should proceed with economic sanctions against India. This would send a strong signal to Pakistan that it should not test nuclear weapons. However, as sanctions are unlikely to reverse India's course, the United States also must consider new diplomatic approaches to help moderate Indo-Pakistani missile competition.
3. **Take new steps to encourage Indo-Pakistani confidence building.** The United States should devise a strategy to encourage India and Pakistan to control the building of their nuclear missile arsenals. If both sides can agree to moderate this competition, the United States should offer to provide satellite data to help verify the control agreements.
4. **Investigate the illegal transfer of U.S. missile technology to China.** The Administration's reported approval of missile technology transfers that could assist China's nuclear missile programs should be fully investigated by Congress. If true, these allegations represent a betrayal of U.S. security.
5. **Defer consideration of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).** President Clinton signed the CTBT on September 24, 1996. If brought into force, it will ban the type of nuclear tests undertaken by India. Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, stated in a January 21, 1998, letter to the President that he would defer Senate consideration of the CTBT, in part, because India's participation is needed to bring the treaty into force. India's nuclear tests make it clear that the test ban will remain unenforceable. Senator Helms is correct to defer Senate consideration of the CTBT.

In 1991, President George Bush proposed the Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) program, which would use a combination of ground- and space-based systems to provide a nearly assured defense against a limited strike on the United States and its allies. President Bill Clinton canceled this program. India's nuclear tests and the resulting dangers to the United States prove that Clinton made an historic error and that, despite the end of the Cold War, Americans should not lower their vigilance. Strong leadership is needed to ensure that effective missile defenses are put in place as soon as possible.

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