

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



"We live in a world of excess hazardous materials and abundant technological know-how, in which some terrorists clearly state their intention to inflict catastrophic casualties. Were such an attack to occur, it would not only cause widespread death and destruction, but would stagger the world economy and thrust tens of millions of people into dire poverty."

— Kofi Annan, Secretary General, United Nations (keynote address to the Closing Plenary of the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security – Madrid, March 2005). Photo Credit: United Nations

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 represented a watershed moment in history. The end of the Cold War brought to an end decades of East-West tension, and with it, the ever-present threat of a global military conflict in which weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—nuclear, chemical and biological weapons—might be employed. The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, also created new challenges, not the least of which stemmed from the formidable legacy associated with Soviet WMD programs—the weapons themselves, their manufacturing facilities and the highly skilled workforce that developed and produced them. Facilities across the former Soviet Union (FSU) were home to an estimated 600 tonnes of highly enriched uranium (HEU) and weapons-grade plutonium; this material was in addition to the significant quantities incorporated into nuclear weapons. Still other facilities contained the world's

largest declared stockpile of chemical weapons (CW), at some 40,000 tonnes. Apart from these materials, there were close to 200 retired and vulnerable nuclear-powered submarines (NPS) from Russia's Northern and Pacific fleets awaiting dismantlement. These submarines, many with spent nuclear fuel on board, posed not only nuclear and radiological threats but also environmental risks. Of no less concern were the many institutes that had once been involved in the Soviet Union's various weapons programs and the scientists that worked in them. The dissolution of the Soviet Union had a significant human impact on this group as tens of thousands of former weapons scientists were suddenly left unemployed or underemployed. This situation makes some of them vulnerable to offers made by groups and countries interested in acquiring knowledge and expertise related to WMD.



Victor I in floating dry dock just prior to dismantling