

INDIA'S STAKE IN THE NUCLEAR SECURITY SUMMIT-2016

AUTHOR BY | G D SHARMA

4Th Nuclear Security Summit. The 4th Nuclear Security Summit was held in the backdrop of perceived threat of nuclear terrorism. It is an initiative of President Obama who has put this issue on global agenda after his address at Prague in 2009. The first such summit was held at Washington in 2010. Thereafter, the summits have been held every two years with second summit at Seoul in 2012, third in 2014 at Hague and 4th summit at Washington has just been concluded.

Aim of Nuclear Summit.

The summit brought in focus the issue of nuclear terrorism. It sought to deny the access of radioactive materials to the terrorists by bolstering security at nuclear facilities throughout the world. The process involves enactment of national regulations and implementation of best practices, instituting measures to detect and prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive materials, minimizing the use of highly enriched uranium and plutonium and by establishing "Centre of Excellence" to build capacity, develop technology and coordinate assistance on nuclear Security. It also seeks enhanced membership in international instruments such as Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Is Nuclear Threat from terrorists real?

Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), a private group in Washington that tracks nuclear weapons and materials in its recent report, warned that many radioactive sources in the world were "poorly secured and vulnerable to theft." As per its assessment, the probability of a terrorist's detonating a dirty bomb is much higher than that of an improvised nuclear device.¹ The reason for this that it is far more difficult to produce Improvised Nuclear Device (IND) than a dirty bomb which essentially uses conventional explosive to spew radioactive material. In fact, vulnerable nuclear stockpiles have shrunk across the globe, but not the risk of nuclear

terrorism because the radioactive elements are available in most hospitals and industries around the world including in states which do not possess nuclear arsenal. These are used for variety of functions from examination to the treatment. For example radiation from cobalt and powdered cesium is used sterilize the blood and medical equipment and to kill the cancerous cells.² Then there is a problem of managing the radioactive wastes without proper disposal plans. These could fall in hands of the terror groups.

The interest of terror groups in the nuclear material can be gauged by the fact that Belgian police discovery last year that Islamic State operatives had kept a senior official of a large nuclear site in Mol which holds large stocks of highly enriched uranium under surveillance in 2014.³ On 13 Dec 2001, in a similar report published by the Guardian disclosed that a month before the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S, Osama Bin laden held long discussions with two retired Pakistani scientists Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majid about making of weapons of mass destructions. Pakistani intelligence described the talks as “academic.” Fortunately, in this case, the scientists had worked only in civil nuclear establishments. They described that Bin laden was interested not only in nuclear weapons but also about other weapons of mass destruction such as chemical and biological weapons.⁴

Despite the nuclear threat from the terror groups being so real, only 52 countries which in turn represent nearly 33 percent of the 168 nations belonging to the International Atomic Energy Agency, actually participated in the Nuclear Security Summit.

India’s Stake in the Nuclear Security Summits

In the Global Terrorism Index 2015, India is ranked sixth out of 162 countries which were affected by terrorism in 2014. In overall terms however, the percentage of terror incidents in India indicate a drop from 8.15 in 2012 to 7.76 in 2014. This is not due reduction in the terror incidents in India but, because terror has spread and has become worldwide phenomenon. In actual terms, the number of terror related death in India has increased by 1.2% in 2014 to a total of 416, the highest number of incidents and death since 2010.⁵

Apart from some violent incidents by insurgents of North east and Maoists of Central India, we are facing deadliest terror network sponsored by the Pakistan mainly Northern India. In that, Lashkar-e-Teiba, Hizbul Mujahedeen and Jaish-e-Mohammed are the prominent groups. Pakistan pursues sub conventional war against India by sponsoring terrorism in Kashmir since 26 years. Keeping Kashmir issue alive helps Pakistan in two ways. First, it creates a

diversion from frustration at home where successive military and civilian governments have failed to deliver. Second, Kashmir issue allows Pakistan to rally the support of the Organization of Islamic countries (OIC), Islamic parties and military/ ISI. No wonder therefore, Pakistan is always interested for Jihad in Kashmir.

We have two broad categories of radioactive material:-

(a) Nuclear Material at the nuclear establishments.(military sites and nuclear power plants).

(b) Industry, medical and other applications.

The security of the materials at the nuclear establishments is stringent and is reported to have layered defences but, same cannot be claimed for the radioactive materials in scores of hospitals and industry scattered across India. These are likely to be under limited control with variable standards during their use and disposal. The incident of Mayapuri, Delhi illustrates the poor disposal of the radioactive scrap from the hospital. In this case, a scrap dealer inadvertently got hold of radioactive cobalt pencils from the disposed old X-ray machine. Subsequently, this resulted in death of the scrap dealer. This is not an isolated case. Similar incidents have occurred across the world.

In our context, the Radioactive Disposal Device (RDD) threat from the terror group is more probable than the Improvised Nuclear Device (IND) the nuclear material is more difficult to handle and greater expertise. Nuclear Security Summits provide a forum to discuss steps to work out common strategies for nuclear security and build consensus on handling terrorism.

India's Stance at the summit.

The importance of the summit to India can be gauged from the fact that the Summit was attended by the Prime Minister Narender Modi himself. India pledged contribution of \$1 million to the IAEA nuclear security fund. This was in addition to the earlier contribution of \$ 1 million. PM drew the attention of the foreign delegates in the summit to the following realities of the terror:-

(a) The terrorists have evolved and are using modern technology and devices but, the governments haven't and national and international efforts to counter them are still outdated and lack coordination. The recent terror strikes in Brussels and France showed that the threat from terrorism is real and immediate.

(b) Countries have different perception of terror such as good terrorists and bad terrorist. One man terrorist is another's freedom fighter. This is which is detrimental to the cause.

(b) The emerging Tactical Nuclear Weapon threat in South Asia.

© India continues to face nuclear apartheid despite having established itself as a responsible nuclear power.

(d) As a responsible nuclear state India's entry in Nuclear Supplier Group is a logical step.

(f) India has focused attention on the issue of nuclear, biological and chemical materials smuggling. In near future, India will host a conference with INTERPOL to prevent smuggling.

(g) India apprised the participants about various steps it has taken on nuclear security which essentially relate to updating of export controls for companies manufacturing nuclear technology, setting up of inter-ministerial counter smuggling team, using low enriched uranium in place of high enriched uranium, setting up 23 response centers across the country to take care of nuclear radiological emergency.

Gains of the Previous Nuclear Security Summits

As per white house press brief, collectively, summit participants have made over 260 national security commitments in the first three Summits, and of these, nearly three-quarters have been implemented.⁶ As result it has become for more difficult for any interested terror group to get hold of the nuclear material.

The most tangible achievements are related to removal and/or disposition of vulnerable HEU and plutonium material, shutdown or successful conversion of use from HEU to low enriched uranium (LEU) fuel, enhancing physical security upgrades at buildings storing weapons-usable fissile materials and installation of radiation detection equipment at international border crossings, airports, and seaports to combat illicit trafficking in nuclear materials.

The major fallout of the summit is countries are enhancing nuclear security practices and committing to increase cooperation to counter nuclear smuggling efforts by taking several steps.

The Emerging Fault Lines

To fight the nuclear terrorism we have to first fight the terror groups but, often the geo-politics often take precedent rather than common cause. This was seen when Indian proposal to get Pakistan based Jaish-e- Mohammad leader, and convicted terrorist Masood Azhar proscribed by the United Nation was stymied by China on technical ground. This was the fifth instant use of veto which sought action against a terror group from Pakistan.

The summit discussed the vulnerability of the tactical nuclear weapons to theft and misuse. Anticipating criticism of Pakistan's Tactical Nuclear Weapons in the summit, Pakistan's former SPD chief, Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai justified Pakistan tactical nuclear programme and rebutted misgiving on its security in a speech at Pakistanis Institute of Strategic Studies.⁷ This was another example of duplicity of approach to the common cause.

The lax handling of radioactive material is a serious issue. Even countries with already high regulatory standards, hospitals and industrial facilities still need to introduce improvements for radioactive sources security.⁸

NSS should have sought universal participation instead of just by 40-50 states since all countries are susceptible to this threat and handle radioactive materials in hospitals and Industry and in other applications

After engaging each other in arms reduction Both United States and Russia are modernizing their nuclear weapons. They would need to lead by own example. President Obama in his concluding speech admitted this as a major obstacle in disarmament. Paradoxically, Russia decided to stay away from the conference from the fear of that the entire conference would be dominated by its proverbial adversary America. Similarly, Iran and North Korea stayed away from the conference. The lack of universal acceptance of the issues and their implementation is discouraging.

The success in stopping use of HEU is also negligible since as per International panel on Fissile Material (IPFM) an Independent group in most recent assessment has pointed out that there is 1370 tons of HEU in the world enough for more than 76000 simple first generation fission implosion weapons with 99% material held by nuclear weapon states mostly United States and Russia. There is also 505 tons of plutonium enough for 130000 weapons. About 98% of this stored by nuclear weapons states. Taken together it conforms to 1900 tons of fissile material.⁹ This was referred to by President Obama in his concluding speech but, paradoxically it related most to United States and Russia. His other point about India and

Pakistan to develop nuclear doctrines is partially correct for India has already articulated its nuclear doctrine but, Pakistan on the other hand continues to build Tactical Nuclear Weapons without any clear cut policy /doctrine.

Conclusion

India should take note of the hyphenation with Pakistan and institute measures at the politico – diplomatic level to de-hyphenate India with Pakistan. India as a responsible and risen Power should take objection to being hyphenated with Pakistan which is the epicenter of terrorism.

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

1. <http://www.nti.org/analysis/reports/2016-nti-nuclear-security-index-report/t>
2. http://www.naturalnews.com/025711_waste_hospitals_store.html#
3. Report by Davis E Sanger and William J Broad. Published in New York Times on 29 March 2016
4. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/dec/13/afghanistan.pakistan>
5. Global Terrorism Index 2015
6. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/29/fact-sheet-nuclear-security-summits-securing-world-nuclear-terrorism>
7. An article written by Gen Talat Masood in the Express Tribune on 30 Mar 16 accessed at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1075131/the-nuclear-security-summit-and-pakistans-perspective> Gen. Talat Masood argues that the answer lies wherein, India abandons its Cold Start doctrine and in response Pakistan sets aside use of Tactical nuclear weapons.
8. <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/new-rule-will-not-secure-radiological-material-hospitals-investigator-says/>
9. <http://fissilematerials.org/>