

**Illicit Trafficking, Transnational Threats, and
Nuclear Terrorism:
Addressing vulnerabilities in fragile environments**

Prepared for “UNSCR 1540 at a Cross Roads: The Challenges of Implementation,”
United Nations, 1 October 2009

Rita Grossman-Vermaas
Director, Center for the Study of Threat Convergence
The Fund for Peace

Overview

The conditions in fragile environments may facilitate nuclear proliferation or nuclear terrorism. These include, *inter alia*, weak governance and law enforcement capacities, border insecurity, organized crime, corruption, and the presence and intertwining of both illicit and licit economies. Although there are initiatives to deal with these conditions, they are rarely coordinated with WMD proliferation and terrorism prevention efforts, particularly at the intra-state level. UNSCR 1540 offers a framework in which these efforts should be coordinated holistically, and stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels should leverage it accordingly.

The Cold War debate about WMD proliferation has traditionally focused on disarmament, arms control regimes and agreements, and deterrence strategies. As the Cold War drew to a close, the threat of nuclear terrorism began to loom larger on the minds of arms controllers, proliferation specialists and policymakers. However, to date, there is neither a coherent nor comprehensive approach to the challenges of nuclear terrorism.

This presentation will examine the vulnerabilities of three regions that non-state entities might exploit to acquire, proliferate or traffic in nuclear materials. In addition to independent scholarly and policy analysis, the presentation will draw on research The Center for the Study of Threat Convergence at The Fund for Peace has conducted, and is

currently undertaking, in zones of conflict or instability, disputed territories and along insecure borders around the world, including East Africa, the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America, and the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions. The primary objectives of this research are to:

1. Elevate the profile of fragile environments in the nonproliferation agenda;
2. Expand the line of inquiry into the relationship between nuclear terrorism and the sources/enablers of such terrorism;
3. Help create a coherent and sustainable approach to address the threat of nuclear terrorism, one that leverages existing strategies to deal with proliferation, terrorism, and fragile states.

The presentation will highlight ways to strengthen legislative, law enforcement and governance capacities in fragile environments that would satisfy states' obligations under UNSCR 1540 and help mitigate the potential for a catastrophic incident. Improving these capacities is imperative to deal effectively with the vulnerabilities to proliferation, terrorism, and instability—three of the greatest global security challenges today—that exist in fragile environments.