

Safety Board from 1994 to 2001. This article appeared in the New York Times the day before yesterday. Among other things, he said:

Secretary Abraham has said there is plenty of time to create a transportation plan before Yucca Mountain begins receiving nuclear waste eight years from now. But safety issues will almost certainly get short shrift if they are not addressed before the repository site is approved. Congress needs to force the Department of Energy to reassess the dangers of transporting high-level nuclear waste and develop a secure plan before proceeding with the Yucca Mountain project.

#### RUSSIAN URANIUM AGREEMENT

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, both the Department of Energy and the Department of State have made important announcements this week relating to the so-called "Russian HEU Agreement." This agreement is not widely known, but it is enormously important to our national security, and I would like to take this opportunity to call it to the attention of the Senate.

Under the HEU Agreement, the Russian Federation is converting 500 metric tons of highly enriched uranium from dismantled nuclear weapons into low-enriched uranium fuel for nuclear power plants. The United States then buys the low-enriched uranium for nuclear power plants in this country to use to generate electricity.

The benefits of this program, which is sometimes called the "megatons to megawatts program," are obvious. Nuclear weapons scrapped under the program can never be used against us. Weapons-grade uranium blended down and consumed in power plants can never fall into the hands of terrorists or rogue states.

The United States and Russia entered into the HEU Agreement in 1993. The program will neutralize the equivalent of 20,000 nuclear warheads over its 20-year life. More than 150 metric tons of highly enriched uranium, the equivalent of nearly 6,000 nuclear warheads, have already been converted into low-enriched reactor fuel. Another 350 metric tons, the equivalent of 14,000 more warheads, are slated to be converted over the remaining 12 years.

Although the Russian HEU Agreement is a government-to-government agreement, it is being implemented for the Russian Federation by Tenex and for the United States by USEC Inc. USEC was originally established by the Energy Policy Act of 1992 to run the Department of Energy's uranium enrichment plants as a business. When the Russian HEU Agreement was first executed, USEC was wholly owned by the United States Government and it was tapped to implement the agreement as the Government's "executive agent." In 1998, the Government sold USEC to private investors pursuant to the USEC Privatization Act, but retained the private company as its executive agent for the Russian HEU program.

Remarkably, USEC is able to conduct the Russian HEU program without cost

to the Government. USEC pays the Russians for the uranium, and recovers its costs when it resells the uranium to nuclear utilities. The price paid by USEC was originally set in the HEU Agreement and has since been subject to negotiation between the parties.

Some time ago, USEC and Tenex reached an agreement on a new market-based mechanism for determining the price USEC will pay Russia for future deliveries. Yesterday, the State Department announced that the Governments of the United States and the Russian Federation have approved the new pricing mechanism.

The new pricing mechanism puts the program on a more commercial basis. It does away with the need for the two governments to renegotiate the price periodically. By basing the price on market conditions, the new mechanism provides a more stable and predictable procedure for determining future prices and should help ensure the long-term success of the program.

In addition, this past Tuesday, the Department of Energy announced that it had signed an agreement with USEC that resolves a number of issues between them. Earlier, there had been talk of the Government replacing USEC as its executive agent under the Russian HEU deal or appointing multiple agents. Under the accord announced on Tuesday, the Department of Energy agreed to recommend that USEC continue to serve as the Government's sole executive agent, and USEC committed to meeting the annual delivery schedules in the Russian HEU agreement over the remaining years of the agreement.

The Russian HEU Agreement serves us well. Each Russian warhead that is dismantled and each ton of weapons-grade uranium that is converted to commercial reactor fuel reduces the risk of nuclear proliferation and enhances our security. USEC has made great progress implementing the program over the past 8 years. The two announcements made this week give us hope for further progress in the years ahead.

#### THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN COLOMBIA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, I wish to take this opportunity to express my support for the Colombian people following the Presidential election in Colombia on May 26. I was pleased to cosponsor a resolution last week welcoming the successful completion of democratic elections in Colombia. It is a tribute to the Colombian people that despite significant threats and violence, both international and national election observers found the elections to be free and fair.

I am also pleased that the President-elect of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe Velez, has been in Washington this week to discuss U.S. support for counter-narcotics operations. The United States has already invested heavily in

a unified effort to reduce the flow of drugs from Colombia, while simultaneously promoting human rights and economic development throughout the country. It is essential that we build on that investment during the new administration of President-elect Uribe. Indeed, I am pleased that President-elect Uribe has said that he looks forward to the day when Colombia is not sending a single kilogram of cocaine to the United States. To make that a reality, we must ensure that coca growers in the poor regions of Colombia have access to alternative economic opportunities, and that they take advantage of those opportunities to get out of the coca business for good. We must also promote human rights and the rule of law in Colombia; otherwise, the cycle of violence and narco-trafficking that is draining the livelihood of the country will ultimately lead to total state collapse, and to even more narco-trafficking and perhaps support for terrorism in the ruins of such a failed state.

With the visit to Washington this week of a new President-elect, this is an opportune time to reflect on some of the new directions in our bilateral relationship with Colombia. In particular, this provides an appropriate opportunity to step back and evaluate the effectiveness to date of our various policy objectives in Colombia. We must consider, for example, whether our initiatives have been effective in reducing the levels of violence in the country, in seeking accountability for grave human rights violations, and in cutting off the narco-traffickers who provide both financing and incentives for insurgent forces. We must also ask whether our policy in Colombia provides an effective balance of military assistance and well-managed development support. And we have an obligation to the people of Colombia to consider the human and environmental effects of our ongoing fumigation campaign.

In reflecting on the situation in Colombia today, one thing remains absolutely clear: The status quo in Colombia cannot be justified. The prolonged civil war, which is fueled by lucrative narco-trafficking, has created a volatile society, with untold suffering and a seemingly endless cycle of grave human rights abuses. The narco-traffickers have prospered, the guerrillas, and increasingly the paramilitaries, have offered the narco-traffickers hired protection, and they, too, are prospering from this deadly relationship. It is the people of Colombia, the average farmers and the honest citizens, who must pay the price of the war. That price can be counted in the number of lives lost or displaced in Colombia. But we must also count the lives lost to drugs and violence on our own streets in the United States. Such vast costs are wholly unacceptable.

So, where do we go from here? First and foremost, we must continue to scrutinize the relationship between the