Unfortunately, that agreement is a full year behind with shipments from Russia for 1993 through 1999 representing only 80 tons of highly enriched uranium—30 tons short of the minimum goal by the end of its seventh year in force. Moreover, even if the agreement were moving ahead at full speed, it would still cover only a fraction of Russia’s excess weapon-grade uranium (500 of 1,200 tons). The plutonium-239, meanwhile, is protected only by $5 combination locks and soldiers who occasionally desert their posts in search of food. Small caches of these nuclear materials have already begun leaking out of Russia. It would only take 20 or 30 pounds of highly enriched uranium to arm a device capable of leveling a city the size of Moscow.

In February 1993 Presidents Clinton and Boris Yeltsin signed an agreement for Russia to sell the U.S. highly enriched uranium extracted from its dismantled nuclear warheads in exchange for hard currency. Russia is currently dismantling thousands of warheads, so this offer is an unexpected opportunity to advance U.S. and international security. The agreement has fallen behind schedule at nearly every turn, primarily because Washington is constantly distracted by less important issues. So far Russia has shipped only 50.5 tons of highly enriched uranium—almost 30 tons short of the agreement’s stated goal by this point.

One major holdup has been the U.S. enrichment Corp., a recently privatized company selected by the U.S. government to implement the agreement. It has resisted accepting delivery of Russia’s enriched uranium because, among other reasons, it claims that the materials are not pure enough. But Russia insists the enrichment Corp. has a fundamental conflict of interest. Since it also produces enriched uranium, it wants to limit Russian competition in the international market.

The question is: How long do we have before we run out of luck? How long before some of Russia’s uranium winds up in the hands of terrorists like Osama bin Laden or regimes like Saddam Hussein’s?

Washington should switch the power of executive agent from the U.S. Enrichment Corp. to the Department of Energy. Given that most of the delays in implementing the agreement have stemmed from America’s insistence that the highly enriched uranium be blended down into nuclear fuel in Russia, Washington should reverse this policy and accept Moscow’s offer to ship its unenriched uranium directly to the U.S.

As soon as the agreement gets back on track, Washington should ask Moscow to expand its offer to include all of Russia’s excess weapon-grade uranium, not to mention its excess plutonium. For example, to purchase one stockpile of unsecured fissile material while leaving others in jeopardy.

The price tag for such a deal would be remarkably low. The cost of purchasing 500 tons of Russia’s highly enriched uranium, the quantity covered in the agreement, is approximately $3 billion. Beyond what the agreement covers, Moscow has some 700 tons of additional weapons-grade uranium it has deemed “excess.” That would increase the price to around $19 billion. And for an additional $1 billion to $2 billion, Moscow would probably throw in its excess weapon-grade plutonium, which has also being trying to sell for use as nuclear fuel.

With Russian parliamentary elections scheduled for later this year and a presidential election next June—which may well bring in a government less friendly to the West that Mr. Yeltsin—in the offing, the time to act is now rather than later.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MURkowski. I ask consent that there be a period for the transaction of routine morning business, with any Senator permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL SALVAGE MOTOR VEHICLE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I am proud to add the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the California DMV to the long list of organizations that support S. 655, the National Salvage Motor Vehicle Consumer Protection Act that I introduced during this session to protect consumers from title fraud.


I also think it is worth recognizing 23 of our colleagues who have actively signaled their intention to protect motorists in their state and throughout the nation by formally supporting S. 655. Senators McCaIN, Breaux, Stevens, Conrad, Burns, Hutchinson, Frist, Abraham, Mack, Warner, Bennett, Sessions, Murkowski, Shelby, Inhofe, Grams, Thomas, Roberts, Hatch, Thompson, Enz, Kyl, and Hutchinson are to be commended for cosponsoring this important consumer protection measure.

The American Automobile Association represents over 40 million drivers. It is a nonpartisan organization that champions the interests of the driving public in virtually every city, county, and state across this great land. AAA supports S. 655 because it shares my belief that national standards for titling salvage, rebuilt vehicles, non-repairable and flood damaged vehicles will help prevent the fraudulent sale of damaged vehicles and protect consumers from unknowingly purchasing them. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to