



Fact Sheet

Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation
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The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)

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What Is the Proliferation Security Initiative?

The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is a global effort that aims to stop trafficking of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems, and related materials to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern. Launched by President Bush on May 31, 2003, U.S. involvement in the PSI stems from the U.S. National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction issued in December 2002. That strategy recognizes the need for more robust tools to stop proliferation of WMD around the world, and specifically identifies interdiction as an area where greater focus will be placed. Today, more than 90 countries around the world support the PSI.

The PSI is an innovative and proactive approach to preventing proliferation that relies on voluntary actions by states that are consistent with national legal authorities and relevant international law and frameworks. PSI participants use existing authorities -- national and international -- to put an end to WMD-related trafficking and take steps to strengthen those authorities as necessary. UN Security Council Resolution 1540, adopted unanimously by the Security Council, called on all states to take cooperative action to prevent trafficking in WMD. The PSI is a positive way to take such cooperative action.

In September 2003, PSI participants agreed to the PSI Statement of Interdiction Principles that identifies specific steps participants can take to effectively interdict WMD-related shipments and prevent proliferation. The PSI Principles also recognize the value in cooperative action and encourage participating countries to work together to apply intelligence, diplomatic, law enforcement, military, and other capabilities to prevent WMD-related transfers to states and non-state actors of proliferation concern.

PSI partners encourage all states to endorse the PSI, and to take the steps outlined in the Principles. Support for the PSI is an acknowledgment of the need for stronger measures to defeat proliferators through cooperation with other countries.

What is the value of the PSI?

The PSI provides committed states with a framework for coordinating counterproliferation activities to thwart proliferators' increasingly sophisticated tactics. In recent years, in recent years we have seen the emergence of black-market operatives who, for the right price, are willing to use their knowledge, access to materials, and personal connections to provide WMD-related goods and services to terrorists and countries of proliferation concern. Five years ago, the world became aware that an international black market network, headed by Dr. A.Q. Khan, had for many years been supplying clandestine nuclear weapons programs. Seizure of the cargo ship BBC China exposed the network and ultimately led to Libya's decision to end its nuclear and missile programs. Most recently, the discovery of Syria's covert nuclear reactor—believed not to be for peaceful purposes—demonstrated that proliferators are capable of pursuing their dangerous objectives even as the world is watching. And today, Iran continues its pursuit of nuclear technology and missile systems that could deliver WMD in direct violation of the UN Security Council.

Proliferators and their facilitators continue to work aggressively to circumvent export controls, establish front companies to deceive legitimate firms into selling them WMD-related materials, ship WMD-related materials under false or incomplete manifests, and launder their financial transactions through established banking institutions. These proliferation activities undermine international peace and security and require an international response.

While states have cooperated for many years to combat WMD proliferation and prevent specific shipments of WMD, their delivery systems, and related materials, these efforts have largely been ad hoc. The PSI takes these efforts out of the ad hoc realm by facilitating information-sharing, building relationships between international counterparts at the political and operational levels, and providing a forum for experts to share best practices on organizing for and conducting interdictions.

Our deeper understanding of today's proliferation threat has increased international support, including widespread attention at senior levels of government, for more concerted efforts to halt WMD trafficking at all points along the proliferation supply chain. The PSI builds on our interdiction experience to date and uses the full range of counterproliferation tools -- diplomacy, intelligence, customs authorities, law enforcement, military, and financial -- to meet this pressing challenge.

How Does the PSI Work?

The PSI works in three primary ways. First, it channels international commitment to stopping WMD-related proliferation by focusing on interdiction as a key component of a global counterproliferation strategy. Endorsing the PSI Statement of Interdiction Principles provides a common view of the proliferation problem and a shared vision for addressing it.

Second, the PSI provides participating countries with opportunities to improve national capabilities and authorities to conduct interdictions. A robust PSI exercise program allows participants increase their interoperability, improve interdiction decision-making processes, and enhance the interdiction capacities and readiness of all participating states. In five years, PSI partners have sustained one of the only global, interagency, and multinational exercise programs, conducting over 30 operational air, maritime, and ground interdiction exercises involving over 70 nations. These exercises are hosted throughout the world by individual PSI participants and consist of air, maritime, and ground exercises executed by participants' interagency and ministries focusing on improving coordination mechanisms to support interdiction-related decision-making.

Furthermore, the PSI Operational Experts Group (OEG), a group of military, law enforcement, intelligence, legal, and diplomatic experts from twenty PSI participating states, meets regularly to develop operational concepts, organize the interdiction exercise program, share information about national legal authorities, and pursue cooperation with key industry sectors. The OEG works on behalf of all PSI partners and works enthusiastically to share its insights and experiences through bilateral and multilateral outreach efforts.

Third, and of the most immediate importance, the PSI provides a basis for cooperation among partners on specific actions when the need arises. Interdictions are information-driven and may involve one or several participating states, as geography and circumstances require. The PSI is not a formal treaty-based organization, so it does not obligate participating states to take specific actions at certain times. By working together, PSI partners combine their capabilities to deter and stop proliferation wherever and whenever it takes place.

How Can States Participate in the PSI?

States can become involved in the PSI in multiple ways.

- Formally committing to and publicly endorsing the PSI and the Statement of Interdiction Principles, and indicating willingness to take all steps available to support PSI efforts.
- Undertaking a review and providing information on current national legal authorities to undertake interdictions at sea, in the air, or on land, and indicating willingness to strengthen authorities, where appropriate.
- Identifying specific national "assets" that might contribute to PSI efforts (e.g., information sharing, military, and/or law enforcement assets).
- Providing points of contact for PSI assistance requests and other operational activities, and establishing appropriate internal government processes to coordinate PSI response efforts.
- Being willing to actively participate in PSI interdiction training exercises and actual operations as opportunities arise.
- Being willing to conclude relevant agreements (e.g., boarding arrangements) or otherwise to establish a concrete basis for cooperation with PSI efforts.

Cooperation by flag, coastal, or transshipment states, and states along major air shipment corridors is particularly essential to counterproliferation efforts involving cargoes in transit.

What Is the Future of the PSI?

The PSI is an enduring initiative that continues to establish a web of counterproliferation partnerships to prevent trade in WMD, their delivery systems and related materials.

By cooperating through PSI, states make it more difficult and costly for proliferators to engage in this deadly trade. Over time, proliferators and others involved in supporting proliferation activities will learn that there are countries determined to work together to take all possible steps to stop their efforts. PSI is an important contribution to global nonproliferation efforts and is a strong deterrent to proliferation-related trafficking. PSI also seeks enhanced export control, regulatory systems, and law enforcement cooperation to shut down proliferation-related networks and activities to bring down those involved to justice.

The United States will work to maintain and build on past PSI successes, including through further development of real-world partnerships, networks of expert contacts, and operational readiness to conduct cooperative interdictions of WMD-related shipments. We will seek to further develop international law enforcement cooperation and will increase our dialogue and cooperation with industry. The United States will also continue to cooperate with our PSI partners to put in place smooth, effective communications and operational procedures.

Rogue states, terrorist and criminal organization, and unscrupulous individuals who contemplate trafficking in WMD related materials must now contend with an international community united in detecting and interdicting such transfers by air, land, and sea.

The PSI participating states encourage endorsement of the Statement of Interdiction Principles and participation in the PSI by all states that are committed to preventing the proliferation of WMD, their means of delivery, and related materials.

For more information on the PSI, see <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/c10390.htm>.

