DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROLIFERATION SECURITY INITIATIVE (PSI)

In December 2002, two events occurred that led to development of the Proliferation Security Initiative: the case of the Cambodian-flagged M/V SOSAN and the publishing of the U.S. National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The Case of the Cambodian-flagged M/V SOSAN

On December 9, 2002, Spanish forces located 15 scud missiles, conventional warheads and rocket propellant under a cargo of cement after stopping in the Arabian Sea, this North Korean-owned vessel that had sought to conceal its true identity and nationality. Only the cement was manifested. The vessel was said to be headed for Socotra. After consultations at the highest levels, on December 11, the vessel was permitted to proceed to Yemen.1

U.S. National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction

In December 2002, the U.S. National Strategy to Combat WMD was published.2 It declared that combating WMD was a top national security priority for the United States. It called for enhanced interdiction capabilities. Interdiction was defined broadly, including military, law enforcement and diplomacy. Thereafter, President Bush launched the PSI on May 31, 2003, during a speech in Krakow, Poland as a cooperative framework to coordinate national actions supporting interdiction. He said:

The greatest threat to peace is the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. And we must work together to stop proliferation. . . . When weapons of mass

* JAGC, Captain USN (ret’d), Office of the Legal Adviser, U.S. Department of State.
destruction or their components are in transit, we must have the means and authority to seize them. So today I announce a new effort to fight proliferation called the Proliferation Security Initiative. The United States and a number of our close allies, including Poland, have begun working on new agreements to search planes and ships carrying suspect cargo and to seize illegal weapons or missile technologies. Over time, we will extend this partnership as broadly as possible to keep the world’s most destructive weapons away from our shores and out of the hands of our common enemies.3

PSI thus began with 11 like-minded states (Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States).4 Over the following three months these countries developed a Statement of Interdiction Principles to which they agreed on September 4, 2003, in Paris.5 One year later, on May 31, 2004, 61 nations joined together in Krakow to express broader political support for the Initiative.6

**STATEMENT OF INTERDICTION PRINCIPLES**

The Statement of Interdiction Principles represents a political commitment by states to strongly use their national capabilities to interdict shipments of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, related materials, and their means of delivery that are of proliferation concern. The Statement of Principles specifically says that all actions will be taken consistent with national legal authorities and international law and frameworks.7 While the Statement of Interdiction Principles does not list countries of proliferation concern, participants noted in a statement from the July 2003 meeting in Brisbane, Australia, that North Korea and Iran are of concern.8 For its part, the United States has indicated publicly that Syria is also a country of concern.9 Nevertheless, PSI efforts are not aimed at any one country, but at halting worldwide trafficking in WMD, delivery systems, and related materials.10