emerging threats—whether they be terrorist states or rouge or desperate individuals—can be counted on to respond rationally to the threat of retaliation.

In the past, I have voted against cloture on the motion to proceed to this bill. However, two distinct events over the last few months have highlighted the changed nature of the threat and have led me to support this legislation. First, the release of the Rumsfeld Commission Report last July stated that the newer ballistic missile threats are developing from countries like Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. The report went on to state that these nations could be able to acquire the capability to inflict major destruction on the United States within about 5 years of a decision to acquire ballistic missiles. Furthermore, the Rumsfeld Report warmed that these emerging threats had more mature capabilities than previous assessments has thought possible.

Then, almost on cue, North Korea tested the Taepo Dong I missile on August 31, 1998. The details of this test have been widely reported in the media. But the real lesson of this missile test was that our intelligence community was surprised by the North Koreans' ability to launch a three-stage missile. We saw that North Korea may have the ability to hit parts of the United States with a missile with a small payload. We also know that the North Koreans continue to work on the Taepo Dong II; an intercontinental missile with the capability of reaching the United States mainland. In addition, North Korea's nuclear capability and nuclear ambitions turn these missile developments into a clear strategic warning.

Mr. President, aside from demonstrating the validity of the conclusions of the Rumsfeld Report, the North Korean missile test put a face on the emerging ballistic missile threat. There may not be a more unpredictable regime on earth than that of Kim Jong II. A government which continues to pour resources into weapons of mass destruction while its people undergo a famine is beyond our understanding. But I have no doubt of North Korea's willingness to use ballistic missiles—in an all-out desperate act of terror—against United States cities. Traditional threats of massive retaliation are unlikely to deter a man as unstable as Kim Jong II. They will not likely deter the Iranian or Libyan governments or other future rogue states. Instead, we must protect our nation through a limited missile defense. Time remains for us to counter this threat. But we must act now.

Mr. President, opponents of this legislation have valid concerns about how national missile defense will affect our relationship with Russia. I share these concerns. Our long-term global interests are best secured by maintaining a cooperative relationship with Russia. While a wide variety of Russian political leaders have expressed their opposition to United States national missile defense, I do not believe Russian opposition is insurmountable.

Just as our allies like Britain and France realize United States national missile defense is not directed against them, the Russians can be convinced the threats we seek to counter through missile defense come from unauthorized and rouge-nation launches. Furthermore, these are threats—given their proximity to countries like Iraq, Iran, and North Kora—Russia must also confront. Although Russia has deployed an ABM system around Moscow, there is nothing particular about Russia that will make it impervious to these threats. Mr. President, in their vulnerability I see a chance to engage Russia; to work cooperatively to confront the mutual threat of ballistic missile proliferation. By jointly developing national missile defense with Russia, we will make our citizens safer and improve our bilateral relationship. Similarly, the problems presented by the ABM Treaty may in fact present opportunities. There is no reason why we can't work with Russia to adapt the ABM Treaty to reflect the changes that have occurred in the world since the treaty was signed in 1972. At that time, we could not anticipate the proliferation of ballistic missile technology we face today. By changing the treaty to allow each side to develop a limited missile defense system to protect from unauthorized or rogue launches, we can address the threat, maintain the treaty, and not upset the strategic balance ABM sought to create.

Mr. President, I see further opportunity to reduce the threat of ballistic missiles and make significant strides in our relationship with Russia. In the past, and again today, I call on the President to seize this opportunity to make a bold gesture to reduce the danger posed by United States and Russian strategic nuclear weapons. More than 6 years after the end of the cold war, both the United States and Russia maintain thousands of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert. My fear, Mr. President, is our maintenance of more weapons than we need to defend our interests is prompting Russia to keep more weapons than she is able to control.

I have proposed that the President, acting in his capacity as Commander in Chief, order the immediate elimination of U.S. strategic nuclear forces in excess of proposed START III levels. Such a bold gesture would give the Russians the security to act reciprocally. Russia not only wants to follow our lead in such reductions, it must. Russia's own Defense Minister recently said, publicly, that Russia is thinking of its long-term nuclear arsenal in terms of hundreds, not thousands. To help Russia accomplish these reductions, Congress must be prepared to provide funding through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. We should spend whatever is necessary to help Russia dismantle and secure its nuclear arsenal. The best form of missile defense is helping Russia destroy its missiles.

Mr. President, my support for the bill before you comes from my belief that its passage will make Americans safer. The time to prepare for the emerging threat of ballistic missiles is today. The legislation before us sets us on the path to confront these threats in a real and manageable way. I strongly encourage my colleagues support for this legislation and I yield the floor.

Mr. COCHRAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, knowing of no other Senators seeking recognition on the bill, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Members permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, March 15, 1999, the federal debt stood at $5,634,976,613,497.51 (Five trillion, six hundred thirty-four billion, nine hundred seventy-six million, six hundred thirteen thousand, four hundred ninety-seven dollars and fifty-one cents).

Five years ago, March 15, 1994, the federal debt stood at $4,549,059,000,000 (Four trillion, five hundred forty-nine billion, fifty-nine million).

Ten years ago, March 15, 1989, the federal debt stood at $2,737,036,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred thirty-seven billion, thirty-six million).

Fifteen years ago, March 15, 1984, the federal debt stood at $1,465,029,000,000 (One trillion, four hundred sixty-five billion, twenty-nine million).

Twenty-five years ago, March 15, 1974, the federal debt stood at $471,094,000,000 (Four hundred seventy-one billion, ninety-four million) which reflects a debt increase of more than $5 trillion—$5,163,882,613,497.51 (Five trillion, one hundred sixty-three billion, eight hundred eighty-two million, six hundred thirteen thousand, four hundred ninety-seven dollars and fifty-one cents) during the past 25 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:47 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 808. An act to extend for 6 additional months the period for which chapter 12 of title 11, United States Code, is reenacted.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolutions, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate: