

**Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs**

**“The July Summit and Beyond:
Prospects for U.S.-Russia Nuclear Arms Reductions”**

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June 24, 2009

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U.S.-Russian Strategic Arms Control

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It is a great honor and privilege to testify today before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on prospects for U.S-Russian nuclear arms reductions. Thank you for the invitation to do so.

President Obama has announced that the United States will seek, “a new [post-START] agreement by the end of this year that is legally binding and sufficiently bold.” Based on public statements by Russian and U.S. leaders, the basic parameters of an agreement appear to be emerging. I would like to make six short points about the apparent direction of this engagement because some of the early indications are troubling.

First, the discussion of the specific numeric limitations of an agreement should only follow the conclusions of the Nuclear Posture Review just underway at the Pentagon. That review is intended to assess U.S. strategic force requirements. Identifying specific arms control ceilings for agreement prior to its conclusions would be putting the cart before the horse. Our military leaders frequently note that arms control numbers should not drive strategy requirements; rather strategy requirements should drive the numbers. The Obama Administration has assembled a first-rate team in the Pentagon with responsibility to conduct the current Nuclear Posture Review. I have considerable personal experience in conducting a Nuclear Posture Review; my hope is that before specific arms control numbers are set this team will be allowed to complete the time consuming and complex set of analyses necessary to reach even preliminary conclusions about the force requirements of strategy and how to meet those requirements. This would be in keeping with having our strategy drive numbers, and not allowing arms control numbers to drive strategy.

Second, the Russian and U.S. sides have agreed that the post-START treaty will not reduce only the number of nuclear warheads; it will include reductions in the number of strategic force launchers, i.e., the number of deployed ICBM, SLBMs, and strategic bombers. Russian President Medvedev has said that Russia would like the number of these strategic launchers to be reduced several times below the 1600 launchers permitted now under START. We should be very careful about moving toward low launcher numbers because it would provide significant advantages for the Russian Federation, but significant disadvantages for U.S. strategy. It is a smart position for Russia, but bad for us.

Why so? Because Russian strategic systems have not been designed for long service lives and the number of deployed Russian strategic ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers will drop dramatically with or without a new arms control agreement. Based solely on Russian sources, it is likely that

within 8-9 years the number of Russian strategic launchers will have dropped from approximately 680 launchers today (some of which already are not operational) to approximately 270 launchers simply as a result of the aging of their systems and the pace of their modernization program. In contrast, the service life of existing U.S. systems extends several decades. Russia confronts the dilemma of how to maintain parity with the United States while withdrawing its many aged strategic force launchers. President Medvedev's answer, of course, is to gain comparable reductions in serviceable U.S. systems via arms control negotiations.

In short, the Russians would like to make lemonade out of the lemon of their aging launchers by getting reductions in real U.S. systems without eliminating anything that they would not withdraw in any event. This is not simply my conclusion; it is the conclusion of Russian officials and commentators as expressed in Russian publications. General Nikolay Solovtsov commander of the Strategic Missile Troops has recently stated that no Russian missile launchers will be withdrawn "if they have remaining service life. This approach will remain under the new treaty that will be signed with the USA to replace START-1..." Aleksandr Khranchikhin, department chief at the Institute of Political and Military Analysis puts it simply: "America, in proposing radical reduction in the strategic nuclear forces, is doing us a favor. It may allow itself to reduce nothing, while watching with interest as we make cuts without benefit of any treaties."

Gen. Solovtsov has also stated that Russia's Cold War ICBMs will be largely gone by 2016 and completely gone, with the possible exception of 30 SS-19 missiles, by 2017-2019. The Russian SLBM force is in almost as bad a shape. *RIA Novosti*, an official Russian information agency, reports that four of Russian missile submarines are not combat ready even today. The announced ballistic missile submarine force is six-to-eight new Borey class submarines by 2015—eight being very unlikely since only three are being built today. The announced Russian bomber program will involve the retention of 50 Bear H and Blackjack bombers (a few new ones will be produced). Despite spending up to 25% of the Russian military budget on the strategic forces, Russia strategic nuclear forces will decline steeply with or without arms control.

Beyond the bad negotiating principle of giving up something for nothing, there would serious downsides for the United States in moving to low numbers of strategic launchers, including:

- It would encourage placing more warheads on the remaining launchers, i.e., "MIRVing"—which is precisely what the Russians are doing. Moving away from heavily MIRVed strategic launchers has long been considered a highly stabilizing approach to the deployment of strategic forces and a key U.S. START goal.
- It would likely reduce the survivability and flexibility of our forces—*which is exactly the wrong direction to be taking in the post-Cold War environment*. The report by the bipartisan Congressional Strategic Posture Commission concluded that the United States could make reductions, "if this were done while also preserving the resilience and survivability of U.S. forces." Moving toward very low launcher numbers would violate that good advice.
- It could cause some allies serious concerns. A key ally has strongly stated its view that the United States must not reduce its strategic force levels to numbers so low that they call into question the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella or encourage China to see

an opportunity to achieve strategic parity with the United States. Moving toward the very low launcher numbers desired by Russia could contribute to both problems.

- Finally, if the destruction of strategic launchers is required, as reportedly is called for by the Russian side, moving toward low launcher limits could also cut considerably into U.S. conventional force capabilities by requiring the destruction of our multipurpose bombers.

Third, the forthcoming negotiations appear to exclude the entire arena of non-strategic nuclear weapons. Excluding so-called tactical nuclear weapons entirely is an understandable Russian negotiating ploy; it is in this category of weaponry that Russia maintains *most* of its nuclear arsenal. According to Russian sources, Russia has approximately 4,000 deployed tactical nuclear weapons and many thousands more in reserve. These reportedly include nuclear artillery, tactical missile warheads, air-delivered weapons, naval weapons, air defense weapons and possibly the retention of so-called nuclear suitcases. Russia apparently has an astounding 10:1 numeric advantage over the United States in tactical nuclear weapons. The Russians have little incentive to negotiate when the numbers are so asymmetrical.

Yet, these Russian tactical nuclear weapons are of greatest concern with regard to the potential for nuclear war and proliferation; they should be our focus. Russia is engaged in troubling advanced developments of its tactical nuclear arsenal and Russian doctrine highlights war-fighting roles for these weapons. Understandably, some of our key allies have expressed considerable concern about these Russian tactical nuclear capabilities. The Congressional Strategic Posture Commission report identified the Russian tactical nuclear arsenal as an “urgent” problem. Yet, the Obama Administration appears to have agreed to negotiate *only* on strategic forces at this point, and to have excluded Russian tactical nuclear weapons entirely. If this position holds, it will be a serious mistake.

The administration’s hope may be that we can negotiate a quick new agreement on strategic forces now, and achieve reductions in Russian tactical nuclear weapons later. If so, it is a vain hope. Russia has repeatedly rejected limitations on tactical nuclear weapons. If we cannot get the Russians to agree to the reduction of tactical nuclear weapons now, what hope can there possibly be for doing so later *after* we have expended negotiating leverage that resides in our serviceable strategic forces? As Russian General Vladimir Dvorkin of the Russian Academy of Sciences said on this subject recently, “A treaty on the limitation and reduction of tactical nuclear weapons looks absolutely unrealistic.”

The notion that the U.S. can succeed in getting tactical nuclear reductions in a second phase of negotiations reminds me of the unmet promise of the Nixon Administration in SALT I to negotiate useful limits on Soviet countersilo offensive forces in a follow-on SALT II agreement. Despite nearly two decades of effort following SALT I, the United States was unsuccessful in securing useful limits on Soviet countersilo offensive forces because the Soviets did not want such limits and the U.S. had expended its major negotiating leverage in SALT I.

Fourth, the Russian side has demanded numerous additional limits on other U.S. capabilities as the price to be paid for an early agreement on strategic nuclear forces. For example, President

Medvedev recently said that strategic reductions are only possible if the U.S. alleviates Russian concerns about, “U.S. plans to create a global missile defense.”

In fact, no limits on U.S. missile defenses are necessary for significant reductions in Russian strategic force launchers and warheads because, as noted above, the number of Russian strategic launchers will plummet with or without an arms control treaty. The need for U.S. BMD capabilities could not be clearer given recent North Korean nuclear missile rattling and Iranian political upheaval. U.S. BMD is not about Russia. Yet, the Russians are demanding this linkage. It would seem self-evidently a mistake to include any limits on U.S. BMD as a price to be paid for an agreement that requires nothing of the Russians beyond discarding the aged systems they plan to eliminate in any event and will not touch the real problem of Russian tactical nuclear weapons.

The same caveat is appropriate for the additional Russian demand that the United States meet Russian concerns about U.S. plans to create *non-nuclear* strategic capabilities. Senior U.S. military officials have long emphasized the U.S. need for non-nuclear strategic capabilities for prompt global strike as a way of reducing reliance on nuclear capabilities. The Russians would like to derail such U.S. capabilities and thus now link them to a post-START agreement. One is forced to wonder how many elements of U.S. military power Russian leaders hope to control or eliminate in exchange for the same strategic force reductions that they will have to make without any agreement. We should not agree to pay Russia many times over with important U.S. capabilities for essentially an empty box.

Fifth, before establishing new nuclear arms control limits, it would seem reasonable to resolve Russian violations of its existing arms control commitments. The entire arms control process is devalued if violations are downplayed or go unchecked. Arms control proponents should be the first to insist on strict compliance with existing agreements. In this regard, the August 2005 State Department Compliance report on *Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments* reported multiple Russian violations of START verification provisions. Russia also is in violation of other START provisions and other nuclear arms control commitments.

In my opinion, the most important of these violations has been discussed openly in Russian publications. It is the Russian testing of the SS-27 ICBM with MIRVs in direct violation of START. The SS-27 is listed as a single-warhead ICBM and can only be tested and deployed with a single warhead under START. Russian sources place the number of MIRVs on this forthcoming missile at 4 or more. As the Congressional Strategic Posture Commission notes, the Russians also are in violation of their commitments concerning tactical nuclear weapons under the 1990-1991 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. This is not speculation; Russian officials have openly reported the activities that make up these outstanding arms control violations. Russian noncompliance with existing commitments is not a trivial issue; confidence in Russian compliance should be established prior to or as part of any effort to establish new limitations.

Sixth and finally, President Obama has endorsed the goal of nuclear disarmament and some U.S. senior statesmen have suggested that the post-START re-engagement with Russia should be seen

as a useful step toward “nuclear zero.” Any new agreement, however, should be judged on its own merit, not on the hope that it constitutes a step toward nuclear zero.

The Congressional Strategic Posture Commission rightly concluded that for nuclear zero to be plausible there would have to be a fundamental transformation of the world order. The transformation required is in the basic nature of states: from a system of self-seeking and competitive sovereign actors with autonomous power and authority to an essentially cooperative world order, or to an international system in which great power and authority are held by a universally trusted international institution. The realization of either system would represent a more dramatic change in the world than the decline and eventual fall of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476.

That such a dramatic transformation would be necessary for nuclear zero to be plausible does not mean that the goal is impossible. It does suggest that taking any steps now ought *not* be predicated on such an elusive goal. Indeed, the unintended consequences of steps taken now in the hopes of fostering nuclear zero are largely unpredictable and as likely to endanger U.S. and allied security as to promote it. It is useful to recall the physician’s goal of first doing no harm—in this case harm to the hard-earned conditions and U.S. capabilities that have helped keep the peace.

The burden of proof is on advocates not only to describe the requirements for nuclear zero, which they have done to some extent, but also to explain how and why the fundamental transformation of the world should be considered practicable on any timeline. Proponents have provided no such explanation; instead they use the metaphor of climbing a “mountain top.” The route to nuclear disarmament, however, is not akin to climbing a mountain because there is no basis for anticipating that this particular “mountain top” can ever exist or what steps now might be helpful if it ever does exist. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once noted along these lines, “Be careful above all things not to let go of the atomic weapon until you are sure and more than sure that other means of preserving peace are in your hands.” There is no basis whatsoever for that confidence, and we should not pursue arms control measures as if anyone knows how to get there.

These are the six major concerns I have with regard to the apparent early direction of the administration’s efforts to re-establish strategic arms control as a centerpiece of U.S.-Russian engagement. It is important to establish the right agenda at the beginning of negotiations. If not, the results can be unacceptable no matter how well our team negotiates. My concern is that the administration may be in the process of agreeing to an agenda with serious potential problems. I appreciate the opportunity to share the reasons for my concern with you. Thank you.