

Arms Control Update

*Arms Control and Disarmament News from
the U.S. Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament*



As prepared for delivery

Statement by

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General Debate of the United Nation's First Committee**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States Delegation congratulates you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We look forward to working with you, and we pledge our support for your efforts to ensure that this session of the First Committee is productive.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is a leader in disarmament and fighting proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The United States remains committed to the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament, but we realize that this can only happen when the security environment permits it. Until that day comes, we will continue to reduce our nuclear stockpile as much as our security and that of our allies permits. I would like to highlight a number of the key accomplishments we have made in the past few years.

The U.S. has taken and continues to take unprecedented steps to reduce its nuclear stockpile. The scale of disarmament by the United States and the former Soviet Union since the end of the Cold War is unparalleled. The United States continues to work diligently in the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty. We believe that a ban on production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices would enhance global nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. We introduced a draft treaty text in 2006 and call upon all nations to join us in observing a moratorium on the production of fissile material for these purposes.

While reducing our nuclear stockpile, we have introduced concrete changes to our national nuclear posture that have reduced our reliance on nuclear weapons. During the Cold War, the greatest security concern of the United States was the military capabilities of the Soviet Union. The current global security environment is very different. Early in his first term President Bush recognized this and called for a fundamental reorientation of the United States' strategic force posture. The result, The U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, established a new policy framework that put less emphasis on the role of nuclear forces as a means of deterrence and greater emphasis on conventional capabilities and a robust industrial base. This important change provides U.S. Presidents with

more information, more options, both offensive and defensive, and more time to make critical decisions.

Mr. Chairman, the primary security challenge now facing the world stems from attempts by violent extremists and states of concern to obtain weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Some governments have demonstrated a willingness to transfer advanced weapons or sensitive weapon technologies to other states or to support terrorist groups. Some are conducting activities that give rise to grave concerns about their compliance with their obligations not to research, develop, produce, stockpile or potentially use chemical or biological weapons. Still others are modernizing and expanding their nuclear forces. Against this backdrop it is prudent for the United States to maintain its nuclear capabilities, while at the same time working closely with the international community to combat proliferation by strengthening the security of WMD-associated materials and technologies.

Nuclear forces continue to represent a critical deterrent capability and extended deterrence is key to U.S. alliances, both in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and in Asia. Nevertheless, we recognize that we can maintain these security commitments while making significant reductions in our nuclear arsenal. In 2001 the United States finished implementing all reductions in strategic offensive arms required by the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). The United States and the Russian Federation continue discussions on a legally binding Post-START arrangement.

Under the [Moscow Treaty](#) of 2002 between the United States and Russia, the United States agreed to reduce the size of its operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons to between 1,700 to 2,200 by 2012. In addition to this treaty, President Bush directed in 2004 that in eight years the size of the overall U.S nuclear weapons [stockpile](#) (both reserve and operationally deployed) be reduced nearly 50 percent from the time he entered office. That goal was [met five years early](#), so he directed that the stockpile be reduced further by almost 15 percent more by 2012. By 2012 the total stockpile of strategic nuclear warheads will be at its lowest level since the 1950s and 80 per cent lower than its level in 1990.

Chemical and biological weapons remain a threat from state programs, terrorist groups, and dedicated lone actors. No country is safe from an emerging disease threat or intentional employment of a biological agent. Scientific advances have blurred the line between what is and is not a weapon, and expanded the availability of chemicals usable as weapons. We must keep a keen eye on developments that could misuse these advances for malevolent purposes. The United States encourages all states parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention to work with us to meet the evolving threat.

Mr. Chairman, these new security challenges point to the continued and increasing importance of compliance with non-proliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements. Today there is broad consensus that strict compliance with such agreements is critical to international peace and stability. The United States has been working with interested UN Member States to reflect and strengthen that consensus by introducing in this year's First Committee a resolution, based on Resolution 60/55, adopted in 2005, on the importance of compliance. We hope that the international consensus on this issue will be reflected in widespread support for this resolution.

Mr. Chairman, the United States has consistently opposed space arms control proposals as the existing outer space regime is sufficient to guarantee all nations unfettered access to, and operations in, space. The United States is, however, willing to consider initiatives based on voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures to solve concrete problems related to the use of space. In this spirit, we have begun a trans-Atlantic dialogue with the European Union on measures that focus on a pragmatic and incremental approach to space safety.

It is therefore with regret, Mr. Chairman, that I must note our disappointment that we were unable to reach agreement this year with Russia and China on a draft General Assembly resolution to examine the feasibility of new voluntary TCBMs. Unfortunately, we could not reach agreement on a resolution that removes what the United States believes is a false and unacceptable linkage between expert assessments of pragmatic TCBMs and efforts to begin pointless negotiations on unverifiable space arms control agreements.

Mr. Chairman, the Non-Proliferation Treaty is the foundation for our nuclear nonproliferation efforts and remains the most universal tool available. The NPT, however, confronts tremendous challenges today, the most fundamental being the crisis of noncompliance with its core nonproliferation provisions.

To address this problem, the United States has worked diligently with the international community to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, encourage states not in compliance with their nonproliferation obligations to come back into compliance, and strengthen international non-proliferation. For example:

The A.Q. Khan network, an especially dangerous organization because of its “black market” character, has been identified and dismantled. Not only did we take it down, but working closely with our allies and partners, we used the information gained to help ourselves and others make better decisions about safeguarding nuclear weapons and infrastructure in the future.

We launched the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), an unprecedented multi-nation partnership to combat the illicit trafficking of weapons of mass destruction. PSI seeks to address the core issue of preventing proliferators from transferring weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, and related materials using the avenues of global commerce. Launched five years ago, today more than 90 countries have endorsed its principles.

As recognized in a recent IAEA Board of Governors resolution, Libya’s strategic decision to give up its weapons of mass destruction and to renounce terrorism represents another major breakthrough in strengthening nonproliferation efforts. This decision enabled Libya to resume its position in the international community.

Our efforts with our partner nations in the Six-Party Talks have had their “ups and downs,” but we believe we have found a way for North Korea to end its nuclear program completely and verifiably. The cooperation among the United States, China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea on this issue shows how multilateral approaches can be applied to even the most complex international problems.

In the case of Iran, too, we have put together an international coalition of states to address a problem with implications for all UN member states. Three Security Council sanctions resolutions have made clear to the Iranians that they must abandon their ambitions for technologies that can lead to nuclear weapons and accept the generous offer of the international community to assist them in developing a strictly peaceful civilian nuclear program.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 is another excellent example of international cooperation to create effective tools to combat proliferation. Full and effective implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540 will enhance international security and build capacities applicable to other national priorities, such as augmenting trade and export controls and mitigating threats to public health and security.

The United States will continue to lead in promoting and defending international regimes for non-proliferation and combating efforts which undermine them. We also will continue to take actions to make the international

community safer from the risk of nuclear war. However, as we all know, challenges remain and we must maintain our resolve as an international community to meet them. Our delegation is encouraged by the work done this year, and we will do our best to continue this momentum.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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