

**STATEMENT OF DR. WILLIAM J. PERRY
CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSION ON THE STRATEGIC POSTURE
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

“AMERICA’S STRATEGIC POSTURE”

Wednesday, May 6, 2009

Washington, D.C.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member McHugh, and Members of the Armed Services Committee, it is a pleasure to be here today with my colleague Dr. Schlesinger to present to you the findings and results of the work of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States.

Last year, Congress appointed our 12-person bipartisan group to conduct this review of U.S. strategic posture, and asked me to serve as Chairman with Jim Schlesinger as Vice-Chairman. This Commission has deliberated for the last eleven months and is now prepared to report to the Administration, to the Congress, and to the American people, and we are here today to do so. We all applaud the wisdom of Congress in setting up this Commission. For too long, there have been unanswered, even unasked, questions about the strategic posture of the United States, especially the nuclear dimensions of that posture. This “strategic silence” has not served America well. Continuing questions about our broader strategic posture have gone unaddressed, while the military, geopolitical, and technical needs that underlie these questions have grown ever more insistent. We understood from the outset that the lack of consensus about the future of the U.S. nuclear deterrent was a key motivator in Congress’s charge to the Commission. So your tasking last year to the Commission was timely. We hope that our report will be a useful input to the new administration as it prepares to undertake a new nuclear posture review.

The Commission has greatly benefited from the input of a number of members of Congress, outside groups and individuals of every stripe that care deeply about these issues and their country. Likewise we have been enriched in our understanding of these issues by the thoughtful perspectives and advice of nations that are U.S. allies, friends, or fellow nuclear powers. We received unstinting assistance from the Executive Branch, which has been individually and collectively supportive of the Commission. The United States Institute of Peace, its employees and contractors have provided outstanding support to the Commission, and I thank them. I also want to make special mention of and praise the members of our five Expert Working Groups and their leaders, who have volunteered countless hours of their time in supporting the Commission and its work and provided us with strong intellectual assistance of the highest caliber.

While each Commissioner would have written a report that would be worded somewhat differently than our final report, it is most significant that with the exception of parts of the chapter on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), this is a consensus document. And even with CTBT, while we could not agree on common language overall, we did agree on recommendations that would prepare the way for Senate reconsideration of the Treaty. We strove to ensure that the essence of our disagreement was presented as clearly and succinctly as possible so that interested individuals and groups can review the arguments, weigh them carefully, and reach their own conclusions.

At the beginning of the Commission's work, I did not imagine that such an ideologically disparate group of senior experts would find so much common ground. And the trail we followed to arrive at this document was not always easy for us, logistically, intellectually, or emotionally. But the seriousness of the issues, and the stakes involved for America and the world, called forth the "better angels" in all of us Commissioners, producing the largely consensus document you have before you today. We hope that the Executive Branch and Congress will also face these critical security policy issues in a similar nonpartisan spirit.

In conducting its work, the Commission has adopted a broad definition of strategic posture. We defined the scope of our work to include all dimensions of nuclear weapons, including the key infrastructures that support them, and all the major tools to counter the nuclear threat to the United States and its allies, including arms control, missile defense, and countering nuclear proliferation. But we also defined some limits to our inquiry. For example, we chose not to expand our scope of work to address issues associated with all weapons of mass destruction, though we did address the question of whether and how nuclear weapons have a role in deterring attacks with biological weapons. Neither did we examine threats such as cyber attacks and space conflict, though this does not mean we consider them unimportant, and believe they merit serious examination in the near future. Also, our pre-eminent conventional military capabilities are themselves a major strategic force, but we understood Congress was not seeking our advice on these matters.

When one considers the destructive power of the nuclear weapons within our strategic posture, which generated important disagreements throughout the Cold War and after, it is not surprising the American nuclear posture has been, and will continue to be, highly controversial on key issues. What was surprising is the extent to which our commission did reach agreement on numerous issues related to our deterrent capabilities, nonproliferation initiatives and arms control strategies – what I believe are the three key components of U.S. strategic posture in the years ahead. The Commission agreed that the nation must continue to safeguard itself by maintaining a nuclear deterrent appropriate to existing threats until such time as verifiable international agreements are in place that could set the conditions for the final abolition of nuclear weapons. That is, we seek to safeguard our security by supporting military and intelligence programs that maintain our deterrence force. At the same time, we also seek to safeguard our security by supporting largely non-military programs that prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons to other states, that reduce the number of nuclear weapons worldwide, and that provide better protection for the residual nuclear forces and fissile material. Both approaches are

necessary for America's future; each can and should reinforce the other; and neither by itself is sufficient as long as nuclear weapons still exist in the world.

Nuclear weapons safeguarded our security for decades during the Cold War by deterring an attack on the U.S. and its allies. We will need them to continue to perform this deterrence role as long as others possess them as well. On the other hand, if nuclear weapons were to fall into the hands of a terror organization, they could pose an extremely serious threat to our security, and one for which traditional forms of deterrence would not be applicable, given the terrorist mindset. We must be mindful that Al Qaeda, for example, has declared that obtaining a nuclear weapon is a "holy duty" for its members. Preventing nuclear terrorism is closely tied to stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and recent developments in North Korea and Iran suggest that we may be at or near a tipping point in nuclear proliferation. (The urgency of stopping proliferation is articulated compellingly in the recent WMD Commission report: "World at Risk.")

While the programs that maintain our deterrence force are national, the programs that prevent proliferation and safeguard nuclear weapons and fissile material are both national and international. Indeed, it is clear that we cannot meet our goal of reducing the proliferation threat without substantial international cooperation. We cannot "go it alone" on this crucial security issue, nor need we, given that other nations are at risk from nuclear proliferation as much as we. But the international programs that are most effective in containing and rolling back proliferation can sometimes be in conflict with the national programs designed to maintain deterrence. Thus a strategic posture for the U.S. that meets both of these security requirements will necessarily have to make some tradeoffs between these two important security goals when they are in conflict. Some commissioners give a priority to dealing with one threat while others give a priority to dealing with the other threat. But throughout the deliberations of the commission, there was unswerving member loyalty to the importance of assuring U.S. security in the years ahead, and all of our members sought to strike a balance that supports, to reasonable levels, both of these security needs. To a large extent, I am pleased to say, we were able to meet that objective.

The need to strike such a balance has been with us at least since the ending of the Cold War. President Clinton's policy on nuclear posture spoke of the need to "lead but hedge". That policy called for the U.S. to lead the world in mutual nuclear arms reductions and to lead in programs to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, while at the same time maintaining a nuclear deterrent force that hedged against adverse geopolitical developments. The leadership aspect of this policy was demonstrated most vividly by a cooperative program with Russia, established under the Nunn-Lugar Program that dismantled more than 4,000 Russian nuclear weapons and assisted Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan in removing all of their nuclear weapons, a signal contribution to a safer world. U.S. leadership was also demonstrated by signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which seeks a permanent end to all nuclear testing, and negotiating with Russia a new arms control treaty for further reductions in nuclear weapons. However neither treaty was ratified by the Senate. The Bush Administration initially took a different view on U.S. strategic posture, but last year Defense Secretary Gates

explicitly reaffirmed that the American nuclear posture would be based on the time-tested “lead but hedge” strategy.

President Obama has moved this strategy forward, stating that the U.S. should work towards the goal of eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons. But he has also said that until that goal is reached, he is committed to maintain a U.S. nuclear deterrent that is safe, secure and reliable. This is, in a sense, the most recent formulation of the “lead but hedge” policy. The Commission believes that reaching the ultimate goal of global nuclear elimination would require a fundamental change in the world geopolitical situation, something that none of us believe is imminent. Senator Sam Nunn, former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, who has espoused the vision of nuclear elimination, has described this vision as the “top of the mountain,” which cannot be seen at this time, and the exact path to which is not yet visible. But he argues that we should be heading up the mountain to a “base camp” that would be safer than where we are today, and from which the path to the mountaintop becomes clearer. In Nunn’s view, getting the international political support to move to this “base camp” requires the United States to affirm the vision of global elimination of nuclear weapons. When we reach the base camp, it would:

- provide for U.S. nuclear forces that are safe, secure and can reliably deter attacks against the U.S. and our allies;
- be headed in the direction of the global elimination of nuclear weapons; and
- be stable -- that is, it should be sustainable even under typical fluctuations in geopolitical conditions.

This base camp concept serves as an organizing principle for my own thinking about our strategic posture, since it allows the United States to both lead in the struggle to reduce and ultimately eliminate the nuclear danger; and hedge against a reversal in this struggle, providing an important safety net for U.S. security. While some of the commissioners do not accept this view of the base camp as an organizing principle, all commissioners accept the view that the U.S. must support programs that both lead and hedge; that is, programs that move in two parallel paths --- one path which protects our security by maintaining deterrence, and the other which protects our security by reducing the danger of nuclear weapons.

The first path, “Deterrence,” would include the following components:

- Clarify our policy on use of nuclear weapons to include a statement that our nuclear forces are intended to deter an attack against the U.S. or its allies (extending this security guarantee to our allies is often referred to as “extended deterrence”) and would be used only as a defensive last resort; at the same time, our policy would reaffirm the security assurances we have made to non-nuclear states that signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- Back up our deterrent and extended deterrent policy by assuring that our nuclear forces – including the weapons themselves, their delivery platforms, and the surveillance, detection, and command/control/communications/ intelligence

infrastructures that support them and the National Command Authority -- are safe, secure, and reliable, and in sufficient quantities to perform their deterrent tasks;

- Maintain the safety, security, reliability and effectiveness of our nuclear weapons stockpile by an enhanced nuclear weapons life extension program as long as it is feasible; but ensure the nuclear weapons laboratories maintain their capability to design a new weapon should that ever become necessary;
- Provide robust support for the Stockpile Stewardship Program, DOE's highly successful program to ensure the safety, security and reliability of the nation's nuclear stockpile without testing. This program seeks a comprehensive, science-based understanding of nuclear weapon systems, and entails pushing the frontiers of computing and simulation along with ensuring robust laboratory experimental capabilities. The weapons labs have achieved remarkable success with stockpile stewardship, but continued success is endangered by recent personnel and funding cuts.
- Maintain all three weapon laboratories with programs that fully support the nuclear weapons programs and maintain their scientific and design vitality. Besides weapons programs, their program mix should include fundamental research and energy technologies as well as an expanded national security role, which will benefit other dimensions of the security challenges we face.
- Transform our weapons production capability by reducing and modernizing it, giving first priority to the Los Alamos plutonium facility, followed by the Y-12 site Uranium Processing Facility site after the plutonium facilities are under construction. The goal would be to have a capability to produce small numbers of nuclear weapons as needed to maintain nuclear stockpile reliability.
- Provide proven strategic missile defenses sufficient to limit damage from and defend against a limited nuclear threat such as posed by North Korea or Iran, as long as the defenses are effective enough to at least sow doubts in the minds of such countries that an attack would succeed. These defenses should not be so sizable or capable as to sow such doubts in the minds of Russia or China, which could well lead them to take countering actions, increasing the nuclear threat to the U.S. and its allies and friends and undermining efforts to reduce nuclear numbers, and nuclear dangers.
- Reprogram funding to initiate F-35 fighter aircraft contractor participation with NNSA to assure that the U.S. would maintain current capabilities available to support U.S. allies.

The Commission recognizes the tension between modernization and nonproliferation. But so long as modernization proceeds within the framework of existing U.S. policy, it should minimize political difficulties. As a matter of policy, the United States does not produce fissile materials and does not conduct nuclear explosive tests, and does not currently seek new weapons with new military characteristics. Within this framework,

the United States should seek all of the possible benefits of improved safety, security, and reliability.

The second path, “Reducing the Danger,” includes the following components:

- Re-energize efforts to reverse the nuclear proliferation of North Korea and prevent the nuclear proliferation of Iran. Seek global cooperation to deal with other potential proliferation concerns arising from the anticipated global expansion of civilian nuclear power.
- Negotiate arms reduction treaties with Russia that make significant reductions in the nuclear stockpiles of Russia and the United States. The treaties should include verification procedures and should entail real reductions, not just a transfer of weapons from deployed to reserve forces. The first treaty could decrease deployed strategic warheads to numbers lower than the lower SORT limit (Moscow Treaty of 2002), but the actual numbers are probably less important than the “counting and attribution rules” of preceding agreements. I am quite encouraged by President Obama’s announcement that he will seek a replacement strategic arms agreement before START I expires this December, and the positive Russian response. Follow-on treaties should seek deeper reductions, which would require finding ways to deal with difficult problems such as addressing “tactical” nuclear forces, reserve weapons and engaging other nuclear powers.
- Seek a deeper strategic dialogue with Russia that is broader than nuclear treaties, to include civilian nuclear energy, ballistic missile defenses, space systems, nuclear nonproliferation steps, and ways of improving warning systems and increasing decision time.
- Renew and strengthen strategic dialogue with a broad set of states interested in strategic stability, including not just Russia and our NATO allies but also China and U.S. allies and friends in Asia.
- Augment funding for threat reduction activities that strengthen controls at vulnerable nuclear sites. The surest way to prevent nuclear terrorism is to deny terrorist acquisitions of nuclear weapons or fissile materials. An accelerated campaign to close or secure the world’s most vulnerable nuclear sites as quickly as possible should be a top national priority. This would build on and expand the important foundation of work begun under the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Commitment to the investment is necessary to remove or secure all fissile material at vulnerable sites worldwide in four years. This relatively small investment could dramatically decrease the prospects of terrorist nuclear acquisition.
- Seek Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and encourage other hold-outs to do likewise. I strongly support Senate ratification of the CTBT, but I want to be clear that my view is not shared by all commissioners. I believe that the Stockpile Stewardship Program, established as a safeguard when the U.S. signed the CTBT, has been an outstanding success, and, with sufficient funding support, can continue to be. The United States has refrained from testing nuclear weapons for 17

years already and has no plans to resume such testing in the future. Prior to seeking ratification, the Administration should obtain an explicit understanding with the P-5 states as to what tests are permitted by the treaty, and conduct a careful analysis of the issues that prevented ratification a decade ago. (All commissioners agree that these preceding steps should be taken, but not all commissioners support ratifying the CTBT.)

- While the Senate has the responsibility for considering the CTBT for ratification, both the Senate and the House should support funding for any Treaty safeguards the Obama Administration may propose, which will be essential to the ratification process.
- Prepare carefully for the NPT review conference in 2010. If we are able to make progress in a new arms reduction treaty and CTBT ratification, this will reassert U.S. leadership and create favorable conditions for a successful conference.
- Seek an international Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, as President Obama has called for, that includes verification procedures, and redouble domestic and international efforts to secure all stocks of fissile material, steps that would discourage both nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism.
- Seek to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in its task to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons to other nations and control access to fissile material. In particular, work with the IAEA to promote universal adoption of the Additional Protocol to the NPT, which would allow extra inspections of suspected nuclear facilities as well as declared facilities.
- Develop and pursue options for advancing U.S. interests in stability in outer space and in increasing warning and decision-time. The options could include the possibility of negotiated measures.
- Renew the practice and spirit of executive-legislative dialogue on nuclear strategy that helped pave the way for bipartisanship and continuity in policy in past years. To this end, we urge the Senate to consider reviving the Arms Control Observer Group, which served the country well in the past.

In surveying six-plus decades of nuclear history, the Commission notes that nuclear weapons have not been used since 1945. It is clear that a tradition against the use of nuclear weapons has taken hold, which we must strive to maintain, and urge all nuclear-armed nations to adhere to it.

In sum, this is a moment of opportunity but also of urgency. The opportunity arises from the arrival of the new administration in Washington and the top-down reassessment that must now begin of national security strategy and of the purposes of U.S. nuclear weapons. The opportunity also arises because the Russian government has indicated a readiness to undertake a serious dialogue with the U.S. on strategic issues. The urgency arises because of the imminent danger of nuclear terrorism if we pass a tipping point in nuclear proliferation. The urgency also arises because of an accumulation of difficult decisions affecting our nuclear posture.

The commissioners know and agree on what direction they want to see the world take. We reject the vision of a future world defined by a collapse of the nonproliferation regime, a cascade of nuclear proliferation to new states, a resulting dramatic rise in the risks of nuclear terrorism, and renewed fruitless competition for nuclear advantage among major powers.

As pragmatic experts, we embrace a different vision. We see a world where the occasional nonproliferation failure is counter-balanced by the occasional rollback of some and continued restraint by the many. We see a world in which nuclear terrorism risks are steadily reduced through stronger cooperative measures to control terrorist access to materials, technology, and expertise. And we see a world of cooperation among the major powers that ensures strategic stability and order, and steadily diminishes reliance on nuclear weapons to preserve world peace, not as a favor to others, but because it is in the best interests of the United States, and the world. We commissioners believe that implementing the strategy our report recommends will help the United States lead the global effort to give fruitful birth to this new world.

###