

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Chairman John F. Kerry
Opening Statement
May 18, 2010

**Chairman Kerry Opening Statement At Hearing:
“The New START Treaty: The Policy Makers’ View”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) today released the following statement at a hearing titled, “The New START Treaty: The Policy Makers’ View”.

The full text of his statement as prepared for delivery is below:

This is a terrific lineup for a hearing: America’s top diplomat, top defense official, and top military officer—and it’s a lineup that underscores the Obama Administration’s commitment not just to ratification of New START, but to having an open and honest debate that moves beyond partisanship and sound bites.

The Administration’s commitment is well-placed—at stake is the future of over 90 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons and our credibility in the eyes of the more than 180 states that are party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

As the panel knows, I believe that New START will make America safer because the day this treaty enters into force, the United States will strengthen its fight against nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation, gain a fuller understanding of Russia’s nuclear forces, and revitalize its relations with Moscow. What’s more, I have no doubt that the administration’s plan to maintain and modernize our nuclear weapons infrastructure demonstrates a firm commitment to keeping our nuclear deterrent safe and effective for as long as it is needed.

This committee will continue to give the New START Treaty the full and careful consideration it deserves. We have already heard from Secretaries Perry and Schlesinger, and in the coming days we will hear from Secretaries Baker and Kissinger as well. When our review is complete, I am confident that we can reach a strong bipartisan consensus on advice and consent to ratification, just as we did on START One and the Moscow Treaty.

I believe the case for the treaty is powerful.

Most immediately, New START significantly reduces the number of warheads, missiles, and launchers that the United States and Russia can deploy, eliminating surplus Cold War armaments as we turn to face the threats of the twenty-first century.

It eliminates those weapons in a transparent manner. The original START Treaty had verification mechanisms that enabled us to see what the Russians were doing with their missiles and bombers. But that treaty expired on December 5th of last year. Since then, we have been losing visibility into Russia’s nuclear activities. The New START Treaty restores that visibility, providing valuable information about Russian weapons and allowing us to inspect Russian military facilities.

By verifiably reducing the number of U.S. and Russian weapons, we are strengthening the stability and predictability of our nuclear relationship. More than that, we are strengthening our diplomatic relationship, making it more likely that we can secure Moscow’s cooperation on key priorities like stopping Iran’s nuclear program.

But the implications of this treaty extend far beyond U.S.-Russian relations. As we hold this hearing, diplomats from dozens of nations are meeting in New York to review implementation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, a crucial barrier against the spread of nuclear weapons to rogue states and terrorists. Today, far more than in recent years, those nations are rallying behind the United States and its efforts to lessen the nuclear threat. New START has already helped us to isolate Iran and deflect its efforts to cast the United States as the threat to the NPT.

For all that it accomplishes, this treaty is only the first step in a more far-reaching effort. In announcing the negotiation of New START, Presidents Obama and Medvedev said that they were trying to move beyond “Cold War mentalities.” By giving its advice and consent to ratification, the Senate will speed up that evolution and lay the groundwork for further arms control efforts. Likewise, the original START Treaty provided a foundation for the Nunn-Lugar program—a

signature effort led by my friend Dick Lugar—which has dismantled and secured strategic nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union. New START builds on that foundation so that we may continue to cooperatively secure nuclear materials in Russia and beyond.

If we do not approve New START, there will be serious consequences for America’s vital nonproliferation efforts. As James Schlesinger testified to this committee, “For the United States at this juncture to fail to ratify the treaty in the due course of the Senate’s deliberation would have a detrimental effect on our ability to influence others with regard to particularly the nonproliferation issue.”

We all understand that questions have been raised about New START, and it is this committee’s responsibility to give those concerns a fair hearing. Some have alleged that it will constrain our missile defense plans, which it will not; in fact, it allows us to proceed with all our planned testing and deployments. Some have charged that it will narrow our conventional strike options, which it will not; we will still be able to deploy conventional warheads to promptly target enemy sites around the globe. Others have argued that we cannot eliminate surplus weapons because our nuclear infrastructure is aging, but the administration’s plan to spend \$80 billion to improve that infrastructure should lay those questions to rest.

To explain the contours of this treaty, we are fortunate to have three very distinguished witnesses with us.

As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton has worked tirelessly to leverage America’s progress on strategic arms control in our fight against nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has served presidents of both parties with great distinction in a remarkable range of roles. He is one of our nation’s most respected voices on national security.

Admiral Michael Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is providing far-sighted leadership to our military at a time of great challenge and transition, as we fight two wars and face the diffuse threats of the post-9/11 world.

Both Admiral Mullen and Secretary Gates were originally appointed to their current positions by the last administration, and their support for New START is a sign that the treaty is consistent with our long tradition of bipartisanship on strategic arms control.

Thank you all for being here today. I look forward to your testimony and the opportunity to discuss this important treaty. Senator Lugar.

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