

Opening Statement of Dr. Christopher Yeaw
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control and
Nonproliferation
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
November 19, 2025

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this Committee: thank you for this opportunity. I want to thank President Trump for nominating me to serve as the Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control and Nonproliferation. I also want to thank Secretary Rubio for his support. It is a tremendous honor to be nominated and appear before this committee. If confirmed, I will be a clear and unwavering voice for an America First foreign policy in service to the great people of this great nation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my family, friends, and colleagues; without a lifetime of support and encouragement, I would not be here today. I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to my family. My wife Nan and eldest daughter Grace are here with me today. My son John and son-in-law Nathan are unable to join us as they are doing their part to keep our great economy going. And my youngest daughter Mary is home caring for her newborn – and my first grandchild, Christopher. And of course, I thank God, under whose watchful and all-searching gaze we all must serve to the best of the abilities he's bestowed.

I have had the privilege of serving in the federal government for over two-thirds of my 30-year career. In that time, I've worked in acquisitions, intelligence, policy, operations, education, and research. The themes and activities surrounding nuclear deterrence, nuclear weapons and missile defense development, assurance of allies, and formulating an accurate and clear-eyed view of WMD threats have dominated my entire adult life. And if confirmed, it would be an honor to carry that breadth of experience into this new role.

It hardly seems necessary to state here that we are living in an exceedingly

momentous and challenging geopolitical era. To take one example: the 2012 DoD Report to Congress on China's Military Power, stated quite confidently that China would continue to "maintain a limited nuclear force." By 2018, that same Report warned that China was developing an early warning system that could support a launch-on-warning doctrine. The 2023 Report estimated that China would have over 1000 warheads by 2030. And now just days ago, Gen Wilsbach informed the Senate that China is projected to amass a force of 1500 warheads by 2035.

Of course, China is only one potential threat among many. Russia continues its grinding war of attrition in Ukraine and is conducting destabilizing tests of new strategic nuclear weapons, Iran remains recalcitrant on its nuclear program, and North Korea continues to expand and diversify its own increasingly capable nuclear forces.

I am a firm believer that arms control, done properly, can advance American interests. But we cannot seek arms control for arms control's sake. We must pursue arms control that is verifiable and enforceable, and where arms control agreements currently exist, we will work to strengthen their enforcement. While credible and effective deterrent forces can constrain an adversary's desire to employ nuclear weapons, verifiable and effective arms control can constrain an adversary's capability to employ nuclear weapons.

The need for accountability and strong verification extends to the chemical and biological threat landscape as well. If confirmed, I will also ensure my bureau implements the President's vision for improving the safety and security of biological research and strengthening and enforcing the Biological Weapons Convention with modern tools, including AI, and advance our priorities on the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I will also pursue meaningful, effective, and specific policies to strengthen America's nuclear deterrence umbrella. Extended deterrence has been, and continues to be, one of America's greatest accomplishments toward nonproliferation and global stability. And that extended deterrent cannot

remain static, just as the threats to our allies and friends continue to evolve.

While extended deterrence has been the cornerstone of nonproliferation, America must also continue to take active measures to counter proliferation that threatens our national security. It was my honor to carry back the highest value items from Libya's covert nuclear weapons program in January 2004 virtually handcuffed to my wrist ... an operation that remains possibly our nation's greatest counterproliferation operation. That operation was enabled by demonstrable military capabilities, an effective sanctions regime, and decisive interdiction actions based on exquisite intelligence. If confirmed, I commit to continue that legacy of robust American counter and nonproliferation efforts.

In addition to a momentous geopolitical era, we are in an era of increasingly rapid technological development – technologies like AI, quantum, biotechnology, semiconductors - which poses its own nonproliferation challenge. China is rapidly developing indigenous technology capabilities and leveraging civilian technologies to advance military applications. This presents one of the most complex challenges of our time. These technologies expand the potential for destabilizing competition. If confirmed, I will use the Department's full suite of national security tools available to me to confront these challenges.

I will also be committed to promoting American nuclear energy dominance globally. Through his public statements and Executive Orders, the President has made clear that this is an economic and national security imperative, and as the leader of the Bureau responsible for negotiating peaceful nuclear cooperation agreements – or 123 Agreements – I will work assiduously to promote America's nuclear industry as the preferred provider for friends and allies and to promote the highest standards of nuclear safety, security, and nonproliferation as we advance American economic and technological leadership.

In conclusion, if confirmed, I look forward to engaging this committee and consulting with you and your staff on these issues so that we can together

achieve an America First foreign policy ... making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous than ever.