

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Chairman John F. Kerry
June 16, 2010

Chairman Kerry Opening Statement At Hearing
On “The New START Treaty: Views From The Pentagon”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) chaired a hearing titled “The New START Treaty: Views from the Pentagon,” to address the concerns about the New START Treaty’s impact on U.S. missile plans and nuclear deterrence. This is the eighth hearing Chairman Kerry has conducted as part of the Committee’s treaty review process.

The full text of his statement as prepared is below:

Today we are pleased to welcome three men with long and storied careers in the defense of American security. They are here to testify about U.S. nuclear posture, modernization of the nuclear weapons complex, and our missile defense plans.

Dr. James Miller is the Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, advising Secretary Gates on a wide range of vital strategic issues. He has extensive experience inside and outside of government on WMD security.

General Kevin Chilton is an accomplished Air Force officer and pilot—and the rare witness who has flown on the Space Shuttle. He is now the commander of U.S. Strategic Command, in charge of America’s nuclear deterrent.

And Lieutenant General Patrick O’Reilly is the director of the Missile Defense Agency, which gives him responsibility for the systems we are developing and deploying to protect America and American forces from missile attack. He has also served as a physics professor at West Point.

This is our eighth hearing on the New START Treaty. Members of the Obama administration, the treaty’s negotiators, and many former officials—Republicans and Democrats—have urged us to ratify New START. James Baker and William Perry said that ratifying the New START Treaty is crucial if we want to keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of rogue states and terrorists. Henry Kissinger and Stephen Hadley explained that New START is fundamental to the U.S.-Russian relationship. James Schlesinger called ratification obligatory, and Brent Scowcroft warned that if we don’t ratify the treaty, we would throw all our diplomatic efforts to control nuclear weapons into “a state of chaos.” Each of our witnesses has emphasized the importance of reinstating the monitoring and verification measures that lapsed when the original START Treaty expired last December.

These are powerful arguments. But today’s hearing is particularly important because we have the opportunity to talk with the people tasked with the operational details of both the offensive and the defensive aspects of our nuclear strategy. The New START Treaty limits offensive forces, but skeptics of the treaty have been particularly concerned that it could affect our missile defense plans as well.

Let’s be absolutely clear: this treaty does not undercut our ability to protect this country from missile attack in any way. Numerous witnesses—including the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—have testified that this treaty will not affect America’s ability to defend itself from an Iranian or North Korean missile now or in the future. Today we have the opportunity to hear from the head of the Missile Defense Agency why this treaty will not impede our missile defense plans.

Some members have expressed concern because, in its preamble, the New START Treaty acknowledges a relationship between strategic offensive forces and strategic defensive forces. And it is true that the Russians have issued a unilateral statement saying that if our missile defenses ever threaten their deterrent, they might

withdraw from the treaty. But these are not reasons to oppose this treaty. First, the preamble is not legally binding. Second, either country can withdraw from this treaty for any reason—as was the case in previous strategic arms control treaties. And, finally, as Secretary Gates testified before this Committee, neither the last administration nor this one has any plans to build a missile defense that would undermine Russia’s nuclear deterrent.

The New START Treaty is intended to strengthen strategic stability. It reduces the number of nuclear weapons the United States and Russia deploy while increasing the transparency and predictability of their strategic forces. Of course, as we reduce the number of nuclear weapons we deploy, it becomes even more crucial to maintain the safety and reliability of our nuclear deterrent. That is why the Obama administration has submitted an \$80 billion plan to maintain the effectiveness of our nuclear weapons and to revitalize our nation’s nuclear weapons infrastructure over the next decade. What’s more, the administration plans to invest \$100 billion over the next 10 years to maintain and modernize our nuclear delivery systems. By any measure, this is a significant investment, and I am particularly glad that we have General Chilton here today to address these plans for our nuclear forces.

Together our three witnesses can explain the difficult work of maintaining America’s strategic offenses and defenses and why the New START Treaty improves America’s security. This is an open hearing, but if any of the witnesses would like to discuss sensitive material, we can move to a classified setting at the end of the hearing. Thank you all for coming here today. We look forward to your testimony.

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