

*As prepared for delivery*

**Opening Statement**  
**James A. Baker, III**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**2:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 19, 2010**

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Thank you, Chairman Kerry and Ranking Member Lugar. It is a pleasure to appear again before the Foreign Relations Committee.

I come here today not as an expert on the particulars of the New START treaty. But rather, as the Secretary of State who negotiated much of START I, all of the Lisbon Protocol, and much of START II.

I want to begin by speaking about the role that arms control has played in enhancing American security over the decades. I strongly believe that it is important for our country and Russia to maintain a vigorous commitment to arms control as part of our effort to create and maintain an effective non-proliferation regime. When carefully enacted, arms control treaties can reduce the threat of global nuclear devastation while also preserving our nation's nuclear arsenal as a critical component of our security and the security of our allies. As a result, any treaty the Senate ratifies must maintain our decades-long combination of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles, and heavy bombers as well as retain our ability to change our force mix as needed.

Negotiations on the original START treaty began in the early 1980s, during some of the most contentious years in the U.S.-Soviet rivalry, when the United States and the Soviet Union were running the arms race at a fast clip. Many feared that the Cold War would turn hot.

START was about stopping that race. It was about beginning to shrink the enormous nuclear arsenals that each side had built, and about stabilizing the nuclear relationship between the two countries so that our diplomatic relationship could evolve without the fear that either side was seeking an atomic advantage. By dramatically reducing each side's nuclear forces, START took a relationship filled with uncertainty and made it far more predictable. The original treaty provided a foundation for Washington and Moscow to reduce their arsenals and improve diplomatic ties and cooperation—and we did.

START made the U.S.-Soviet nuclear balance more predictable, and not simply by putting numbers on a piece of paper. It made the balance more predictable by imposing stringent verification provisions, including on-site inspections. President Ronald Reagan was famously focused on the importance of verification. “Trust but verify” was a maxim that he quoted to the Soviets many times—and President George H.W. Bush shared that insistence. START provided unprecedented transparency. It gave us a window into what had been the world’s most secretive and most threatening military establishment. The secrecy that had been a hallmark of the Cold War—and one of its most destabilizing characteristics—was replaced by an openness that was an invaluable asset to our national security.

Of course, when I was Secretary of State and testified before this committee about the START I treaty in June of 1992, conditions had changed dramatically from when negotiations began in the early 1980s. The Soviet Union had dissolved, leaving Boris Yeltsin in charge of Russia. The decades-long U.S.-Soviet conflict was coming to an end.

But, as I said then, if START was a product of the Cold War, it was not a relic of the Cold War. The break-up of the Soviet Union produced a time of great potential but also tremendous uncertainty. Amid that uncertainty, START was an anchor of stability, promising that our nuclear security would remain assured as relations between the two countries evolved.

That promise was fulfilled. Despite ups and downs in relations between Washington and Moscow over the last 18 years, START ensured strategic stability between the United States and Russia; it reduced nuclear arsenals by 30 percent to 40 percent; and it did so verifiably. Later, START II, which was ratified by the U.S. Senate but not the Russian Duma, pushed for the elimination of multiple-nuclear warheads on ICBMs. Even after the Moscow Treaty signed by Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin in 2002 further lowered the ceilings for the U.S. and Russian arsenals, START remained essential. It provided the verification mechanisms for the Moscow Treaty, which had none, propping open that key window into Russian nuclear forces—a window that only becomes more important as our arsenals shrink further.

But the legacy of START extends well beyond the provisions of the treaty. START initiated an era of broader nuclear cooperation with Russia. Two months after he signed START on July 31, 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced his intention to unilaterally withdraw most tactical nuclear weapons that the United States deployed abroad—a decisive step that was

quickly reciprocated by Mikhail Gorbachev. START also enabled our diplomatic, scientific, and military establishments to form deeper levels of trust and collaboration. A direct result of that was the Nunn-Lugar cooperative threat reduction program, which immeasurably improved our security by helping keep nuclear material out of the hands of terrorists. I do not believe Nunn-Lugar would have been nearly as successful as it was, if the Russians had lacked the legally-binding assurance of parallel U.S. reductions through START.

The START I Treaty also served as a sign of the U.S. and Russian commitment to nonproliferation during the period when George H.W. Bush was president and I served as his Secretary of State. As I also testified before this Committee in 1992, the reductions under START I constituted a major step by the United States and Russia toward fulfilling their obligations under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Non-nuclear states have long regarded such reductions as key to the success of that treaty—and to their cooperation with it. Most concretely, through the Lisbon Protocol, START actually removed nuclear weapons from three former Soviet states—Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine—ensuring that the break-up of the Soviet Union did not lead to a break-down of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

START, therefore, was a turning point in U.S.-Russian relations, and today, the threat of nuclear war is only a shadow of what it once was. But that does not mean that arms control is no longer important. It is precisely at times when relations are warming that we can accomplish the most by reducing nuclear dangers and reinforcing our ability to cooperate. That enhanced cooperation in turn enables us to further reduce nuclear dangers, establishing a virtuous circle that strengthens American security.

Although I am not an expert on the nuances of the proposed New START treaty, it appears to take our country in a direction that can enhance our national security while at the same time reducing the number of nuclear warheads on the planet. It can also improve Washington's relationship with Moscow regarding nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles, a relationship that will be vital if the two countries are to cooperate in order to stem nuclear proliferation in countries such as Iran and North Korea.

I agree with Secretary of Defense Bob Gates when he wrote last week in the *Wall Street Journal* that the new treaty provides verification that has been needed since START I expired in

December. An effective verification regime is a critical component of arms control and I believe that the world is safer when the United States and Russia are abiding by one.

In my view, the New START treaty is a modest and appropriate continuation of the START I treaty that expired this past December, subject, however, to there being satisfactory answers to a few questions that have been raised. And so, I would like to mention a few of those questions for your consideration as the committee moves forward. Although this may not be a complete list, it includes questions that I believe should be answered before a ratification vote is taken.

Let me begin with missile defense. Any arms treaty that goes into effect should focus on nuclear weapons reductions and not missile defense limitations. In the New START treaty, however, there is at least one clear limitation on U.S. missile defense systems. Specifically, Article V limits the conversion of ICBM and SLBM launchers into launchers for missile defense interceptors. Now, I understand that the current administration has no plans for transforming strategic weapons launchers into missile defense launchers. The Administration believes that it is less expensive to build new systems rather than convert existing ones. But I am not sure it is wise to restrict future administrations.

Another question concerns the verification program because it does not appear as rigorous or extensive as the one that verified the numerous and diverse treaty obligations and prohibitions under START I. This complex part of the treaty is even more crucial when fewer deployed nuclear warheads are allowed than were allowed in the past. As a result, the proposed verification regime deserves thorough scrutiny.

It is also important that we maintain a nuclear stockpile that will allow the United States to adequately cover the 30 or so countries allied with us around the world that are currently under our nuclear umbrella. And we should make sure that we have enough nuclear capacity in case we decide to expand that nuclear umbrella to include perhaps another 9-10 countries should Iran acquire a nuclear weapons capability.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, while not a part of the New START treaty, I want to call the committee's attention to two other issues that I believe are related to it.

First, a section in the administration's Nuclear Posture Review that appears on Page Eight of the Executive Summary says that "...the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations." Presumably that would apply even if a country were to use chemical or biological weapons against us. I question the wisdom of that position. And my apprehension comes from my own real-world experience.

On January 9, 1991, as the George H.W. Bush Administration was in the final stages of the build-up to remove Saddam Hussein's troops from Kuwait, I had a seven-hour meeting in Geneva with Tariq Aziz, Iraq's foreign minister. At the end of our discussion, when it was clear that war was inevitable, I warned against using weapons of mass destruction against our troops.

"If conflict ensues," I told Aziz, "and you use chemical or biological weapons against US forces, the American people will demand vengeance. And we have the means to exact it. ... this is not a threat, it is a promise."

It is entirely possible, and even likely in my opinion, that Iraq did not use its chemical weapons against our forces because of that warning. Of course, the warning was broad enough to include the use of all types of weapons that America possessed. Years later, when Saddam Hussein was captured, de-briefed and asked why he had not used his chemical weapons, he recalled the substance of my statement to Aziz in Geneva.

The Nuclear Posture Review should not limit our flexibility—not just military, but also diplomatic flexibility—in responding either to the threat of a biological or chemical attack upon us, or to an actual attack.

Second, let me say that it is critical that we beef up the reliability of our nuclear stockpile. Because our security is based upon the safety and reliability of our nuclear weapons, it is important that our government budget enough money to guarantee that they can carry out their mission. As we reduce warheads and launchers it is more and more imperative that those we have left are safe and reliable.

Members of the Committee, as you continue your consideration of this treaty, I know that you will thoroughly examine these questions and others that some may have about New START. It is important that nuclear weapons treaties have the broadest bi-partisan support

possible so that leaders in Moscow and other international capitals understand that our country whole-heartedly supports the treaty.

Bi-partisan support was important when the Senate ratified START I in 1992 by a vote of 93-6 and START II in 1996 by a vote of 87-4. And bi-partisan support will be equally important with New START.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.