

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Chairman John F. Kerry

May 25, 2010

Chairman Kerry Opening Statement At Hearing On “The Role Of Strategic Arms Control In A Post-Cold War World”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) today delivered the following opening statement at a hearing titled, “The Role of Strategic Arms Control in a Post-Cold War World”.

The full text of his statement as prepared is below:

This morning we are privileged to welcome one of America’s most distinguished statesmen, Dr. Henry Kissinger, who served as national security adviser and secretary of state to Presidents Nixon and Ford. This is our fourth hearing on the New START Treaty—and by our count it is Dr. Kissinger’s 66th appearance before this committee.

We are particularly fortunate to have him back to testify because of his deep expertise on great power relations and nuclear strategy. It was 1957 when Dr. Kissinger helped define the study of nuclear deterrence by publishing one of the classic books on the subject, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*. And while serving President Nixon, he successfully negotiated the SALT I accord—the first agreement to limit U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapons.

In 2007, precisely 50 years after publishing his book, Dr. Kissinger once again shaped public debate on nuclear security when he joined with George Shultz, William Perry, and our former colleague Sam Nunn to endorse the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. That suggestion surprised many people. But Dr. Kissinger and his co-authors wrote that the spread of nuclear weapons to rogue states and possibly even terrorists means that “the world is now on the precipice of a new and dangerous nuclear era.” That, they argued, demanded a new way of thinking.

Now, as you know, Dr. Kissinger does not have a reputation for empty pronouncements. That’s why his article laid out a list of concrete steps that would enhance our security in the immediate future.

One of the steps Secretary Kissinger recommended is that we continue reducing the size of the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals. New START, which lowers the legal limit on deployed warheads by up to 30 percent, is a responsible move in that direction. Four decades of bilateral arms control treaties with Moscow have decreased fears of nuclear aggression and helped the United States and Russia work together. The New START Treaty continues and advances the tradition of reductions that was forged in the original START agreement and the Moscow Treaty.

Secretary Kissinger and his co-authors have also argued that strategic arms control can help us fight nuclear proliferation. The United States and Russia have more than 90 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons, they wrote, and therefore they have “a special responsibility, obligation and experience to demonstrate leadership.” They said bilateral nuclear reductions are key to our global effort to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

This is a crucial point. Some have said that other countries don’t care how many nuclear weapons the United States and Russia have. In fact we’ve already seen that New START can help us fight nuclear proliferation and therefore nuclear terrorism. Last week, Secretary Clinton testified to this committee that New START had renewed American credibility at this month’s conference in New York to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That means we’ve been better able to isolate Iran and prevent it from diverting attention from its own troubling behavior. And the New START Treaty has re-energized our relationship with Russia, helping us persuade Moscow to support a new round of UN sanctions against Iran.

Since 2007, Dr. Kissinger and his co-authors have elaborated on their groundbreaking work. They have emphasized, among other things, the importance of the original START Treaty’s verification mechanisms, which expired on December 5th of last year. Skeptics have argued that the New START treaty’s verification provisions are not as effective because they provide for fewer inspections. But that overlooks three crucial details: First, there are many fewer facilities to inspect today than when START was first signed. Second, for the first time ever each Russian missile will be given a unique identification number that allows us to track it. And third, U.S. inspectors will be able for the first time to determine how many re-entry vehicles are on a Russian missile. Our military is confident that New START’s verification provisions are adequate.

And the new treaty's safeguards are certainly far better than what we have right now: Until we ratify a new treaty, we have none.

Secretary Kissinger has also argued that we must reduce tensions with Russia on missile defense so that we can cooperate more effectively. The preamble to the New START Treaty acknowledges the relationship between offensive forces and missile defenses; as Secretary James Baker testified last week, we're tipping our hat to Russia's concerns without giving anything away. But some insist that the preamble constrains our ability to deploy missile defenses against rogue states.

Let me be clear on this point: This accord imposes no restriction on our ability to defend ourselves. In fact, the administration has been clear that we will not be limited in any way in plans to continue to build missile defenses to protect America from Iran and North Korea.

Dr. Kissinger knows how important bipartisanship is in our consideration of arms control agreements; the Senate approved SALT I by a vote of 88 to 2 during his tenure as national security adviser. Many years later, it endorsed the original START Treaty 93 to 6. The Moscow Treaty was approved with 95 Senators voting in favor, and none voting against.

I am confident that once this committee concludes its deliberations, we will find overwhelming support for the New START Treaty as well. Part of that deliberation is inviting distinguished U.S. statesmen to share their thoughts with us, and we're pleased to have Henry Kissinger here today.

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