

STATEMENT OF JAMES SCHLESINGER
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE
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Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, Members of the Committee:

I thank the Committee for its invitation to discuss the New Start Treaty and its varied implications. At the outset I should like to make two general points. First, the Senate will wish to scrutinize the Treaty carefully, as it has previous arms control agreements. This reflects the many changes as compared to Start I. Second, and perhaps even more important, it will want to examine the Treaty in a wider context of overall military relationships and our alliance responsibilities.

In a way that aspect is reminiscent of the clue in Sherlock Holmes' story of the dog that did not bark. While New Start may be acceptable in the narrow context of strategic weapons, it also needs to be considered in a much larger context. In particular, as I shall come to later, it must be viewed in terms of the evolving Russian doctrine regarding tactical nuclear weapons use and on the balance between Russia's substantial stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons – which are excluded under this Treaty – and strategic weapons.

As to the stated context of strategic nuclear weapons, the numbers specified are adequate, though barely so. To have gone further at this time, as some had urged, would not, in my judgment, have been prudent.

At the time of this Committee's review of the Moscow Treaty in 2002, criticism was sharp with respect to the failure to deal with tactical nuclear weapons, the failure further to reduce MIRV missiles, and with respect to verification. Those criticisms are still relevant today.

On specifics, the Committee will wish to review the question of launchers. First, why did the United States come down from its preferred number of 900 to 700, when the Russians were already at that lower level – and whether we got anything for this concession? The main effect of reducing launchers relative to weapons is to reduce the number of aim points for an attacker, thus hypothetically increasing instability.

Second, a heavy bomber constitutes only one count against the 700 launcher operational limit - even though bombers can carry many more weapons. Since a bomber can carry 16-20 ALCMs, a force of 65 to 70 bombers could readily carry upwards of 500 additional strategic weapons. The official Russian press has

already bragged that under the New Start counting rules, Russia can maintain 2100 strategic weapons rather than the 1550 specified in the Treaty. If there is any advantage in this counting rule, it is that it makes a powerful case for the preservation of the Triad – and indeed for starting on the development, in light of our own aging bomber fleet, of a follow-on strategic bomber.

Third, the Committee will wish to examine specified limits in the Start I Treaty that have now been removed. In contrast to Start I, New Start, for example, does not mention rail-mobile missiles. Does this mean that such missiles could be deployed and not count against New Start limits? Clearly this implies for us that we must carefully monitor any activities outside the now reduced specific limits of New Start.

Now let me change to what is not included under strategic nuclear weapons – i.e., the dog that did not bark – the frustrating, vexatious, and increasingly worrisome issue of Russia’s tactical nuclear weapons. Russian officials have acknowledged that the number of their tactical nuclear weapons (non-strategic nuclear weapons) is some 3800—and the overall number is believed to be significantly larger. The United States has over the years reduced its tactical nuclear weapons in Europe by over 95%—and the percentage reduction is even

higher if one includes the weapons withdrawn from our aircraft carriers in the early 1990s.

In its hearings on the Moscow Treaty in 2002, this Committee was quite critical on this issue. That Treaty had done nothing about tactical nuclear weapons. Then-chairman Biden asked “Why does the treaty not limit tactical nuclear weapons – which are the most susceptible to theft?” Secretary Powell had, in his prepared statement, stated:

“As we went about negotiating the Moscow Treaty, one of the questions foremost in my mind as a former soldier and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was how will we address tactical nuclear weapons?”

“We continue to be concerned about the uncertainties surrounding Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW), and I believe we should discuss inventory levels of NSNW with the Russians and press Moscow to complete the reductions it pledged to make in 1991 and 1992.”

Later in the hearing Powell also stated “the President is still very interested in tactical nuclear weapons. So this is going to be an area of discussion with the Russian side.” That expression of intent to discuss tactical nuclear weapons with “the Russian side” was eight years ago—it seems to go on interminably—and still nothing has been done. While the Obama administration has repeatedly expressed an intent to deal with tactical nuclear weapons, up to this point the Russians have

been deaf to our entreaties. The point to bear in mind is that the ratio between tactical nuclear weapons and strategic nuclear weapons continues to rise.

Indirectly the problem with tactical nuclear weapons is acknowledged in the preamble of the New Start Treaty though in relation to the balance between strategic offense and strategic defense: “This interrelationship becomes more important as strategic nuclear arms are reduced.”

Similarly, the significance of *tactical* nuclear weapons rises steadily as *strategic* nuclear arms are reduced. We must bear in mind that with respect to tactical nuclear weapons there is an inherent asymmetry between the United States and Russia. While the United States is far away, Russia is cheek by jowl with the countries on the Eurasian continent. For a Poland, a Czech Republic, or a Lithuania, it is hard to discern the difference between Russian tactical nuclear and strategic nuclear. As the plaintive comments of Secretary Powell reveal, the Russians have steadfastly resisted any attempt on our part to deal with the imbalance in tactical nuclear weapons – and understandably so.

The likelihood of their being willing to do so in the wake of New Start, is sharply diminished—for we have now forfeited substantial leverage. The Russians

have indicated that they would not even discuss tactical nuclear weapons until the handful of weapons we still maintain in Europe are withdrawn. In this connection Russian policy, like Soviet policy before it, is quite consistent. In the 1970's and 80's the Russians regularly demanded either that we should withdraw our "forward based systems" from Europe or, at a minimum, count them against our total number of strategic weapons. In those days, however, they remained unsuccessful in achieving that goal.

The United States has made transparency a global initiative. The Strategic Posture Commission stated that "the United States and Russia have a shared responsibility to increase nuclear transparency and to set a high standard in their own postures". In no nuclear area—other than for proliferators like North Korea and Iran—has transparency been as lacking as it has been with respect to Russian tactical nuclear weapons.

In the current political context a premeditated attack on the United States itself has little credibility. Nevertheless the role of a lopsided tactical nuclear posture is potentially important in intimidating our allies on the Eurasian continent. Extended deterrence remains central to formulating our nuclear posture. Offsetting

potential tactical nuclear weapons intimidation of our allies remains a critical element in deterrence.