

President Obama Implements His Arms Control Agenda

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Speaking in Prague last year, President Obama set forth an ambitious and bold agenda to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. He acknowledged that achieving that goal would take patience and persistence and that it might not happen in his lifetime. But more than just a destination, President Obama's agenda is a series of concrete steps designed to prevent proliferation of nuclear material and weapons, reduce the role and numbers of weapons, and enhance the security of the United States and our allies.

As one of two nations with the most nuclear weapons, we—the United States—acknowledge and embrace our responsibility to lead the way in reducing the numbers and salience of nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, we will maintain a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal so long as nuclear weapons exist. We will never waver in our commitment to defend ourselves, our allies and our interests. Any adversary should know we will defend ourselves and punish aggression.

But clinging to nuclear weapons in excess of our security needs does not make the United States safer. Holding onto unnecessary weapons does not make us more secure. It makes others feel insecure. It could give some countries an excuse to pursue nuclear weapons. It also hinders efforts to convince others to help prevent proliferation.

During the next few months, the Department of State is playing a leading role in implementing the Obama administration's arms control and nonproliferation agenda.

On March 26, 2010, the United States and Russia reached agreement on a Treaty to succeed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which will result in a 30 percent reduction of nuclear weapons from their Cold War levels.*

The Obama administration is concluding a review of our strategic forces, the Nuclear Posture Review. This document will update our nuclear policies to address today's threats rather than yesterday's fears. It will continue on the course charted by previous Presidents to reduce nuclear weapons while maintaining an effective deterrent to protect the United States and its allies.

In April, President Obama will take another major step forward by focusing attention on the global threat of nuclear terrorism at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC. More than 40 heads of state and government will attend the summit to

* *Editor's Note: As The Ambassadors REVIEW went to press, the parties were expected to sign the Treaty in Prague on April 8, 2010.*

discuss international efforts to secure all vulnerable nuclear material, break up black markets by detecting and intercepting illicit cargo in transit, and using financial tools to disrupt this dangerous and illicit trade.

The Nuclear Security Summit follows President Obama's successful effort last September when he chaired a special session of the United Nations Security Council, which unanimously adopted United Nations Resolution 1887, outlining comprehensive steps to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

The Obama administration also will ask the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). We seek entry into force of the CTBT because it can make us safer and more secure. We can safely and confidently do so because of the superb work of our laboratories and scientists through the Stockpile Stewardship Program.

Science and technology have advanced to the point that we do not need to test nuclear weapons. In fact, we know more today about our nuclear weapons than when we were testing. To continue ensuring that our scientists and engineers can maintain a safe, secure and effective deterrent, the Obama administration has proposed an additional \$600 million to improve our stockpile stewardship efforts.

President Obama also said that the United States will pursue negotiation of a verifiable Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty to end the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium for weapons purposes. The world already has a surplus of those nuclear bomb-making materials—we don't need more nuclear material that we have to worry about protecting from terrorists.

Finally, in May, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference will seek a consensus among NPT parties to revitalize and strengthen the nonproliferation regime.

In plain language that means that every nation—whether a nuclear power or not—must step up to the plate. Countries without nuclear weapons can play important roles in curbing the spread of dangerous technologies and standing united against those who violate international norms and agreements.

There are times when proliferation appears inevitable. Yet proliferation can be curbed and stopped.

We have had significant success. More than 180 countries have forsworn nuclear weapons. More countries have given up or been denied nuclear weapons programs than those that have acquired nuclear weapons over the past 40 years.

But we also know that the consequences of another state or terrorists acquiring these horribly destructive weapons are severe and that we must remain vigilant and proactive. That's why nonproliferation, nuclear security and arms control are at the top of the Obama administration's national security agenda.