

(U) Under Secretary Thompson's (T) Statement for the Record
Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
"The Future of Arms Control Post-Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty"
May 15, 2019

(U) Chairman Risch, Senator Menendez, and distinguished members of the Committee – thank you for hosting this hearing and welcoming me here today. I look forward to continuing our discussion from last September, when I had the honor of appearing before this Committee. There have been important developments, none more so than the U.S. suspension of its obligations and announcement of withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in response to Russia's longstanding violation.

(U) I would like to begin by reminding everyone of a passage from the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which states that "progress in arms control is not an end in and of itself, and depends on the security environment and the participation of willing partners." The value of any agreement is derived from our treaty partners maintaining compliance with their obligations, and avoiding actions that result in mistrust and miscalculation. As you know, Russia has taken actions over the past several years that have posed real challenges to our bilateral relationship and deepened the deficit of trust we have with Russia. In the arms control sphere, Moscow continues to violate a series of obligations that undermine the trust the United States can place in treaties with Russia, including some that have served global security interests for years. Russia is not alone in challenging U.S. interests. As President Trump and Secretary Pompeo have highlighted, China's growing capabilities, coupled with its increasingly assertive posture, pose growing threats to the United States and its allies and partners.

(U) The United States must look at the world as it is, not as the world we wish to see. The 2018 NPR detailed the deteriorating security environment we face. Effective arms control can help us address this worsening security environment, but for it to be an effective tool, arms control must advance U.S., allied, and partner security; be verifiable and enforceable; and include partners that comply responsibly with their obligations.

(U) At times, arms control measures have benefited the United States by providing mutual transparency and predictability, constraining certain destabilizing weapons, and enhancing stability. With Russia, we want to continue to leverage these benefits by seeking to utilize a strong military deterrent in combination with arms control to maintain stability. While we have a long established arms control relationship with Russia, China's continued lack of willingness to engage in bilateral discussions on nuclear risk reduction, confidence building, and arms control, coupled with its plans to grow its nuclear force, requires our attention.

(U) In this environment, the President has charged his national security team to think more broadly about arms control, both in terms of the countries and the weapons systems involved. The President has made clear that he wants arms control agreements that reflect modern reality -- we should pursue serious arms control that delivers real security to the American people and our allies. In order to achieve this, Russia and China must be brought to the table. The world has moved on from the Cold War and its bilateral treaties that cover limited types of nuclear weapons or only certain ranges of missiles. Moving into the future, we need to be creative and

agile in how we approach and manage strategic competition, and that includes an evaluation of where we stand with respect to our arms control agreements, and their interrelationship with our deterrence and defense requirements as well as those of our allies and partners.

(U) In this testimony, I will discuss developments with regard to the INF and New START Treaties, and will close with a few remarks regarding the outlook for arms control in a changing security environment.

The INF Treaty

(U) I will start with the INF Treaty, and specifically how our diplomatic process has played out. First, I would point out what appears to be Russia's longstanding desire to get out of the INF Treaty. As early as 2004, senior Russian officials approached the United States about mutually withdrawing from the INF Treaty. When the United States did not respond the way Russia wanted, the United States assesses that the Russian government began covert development of an INF-noncompliant missile, the SSC-8, probably in the mid-2000s.

(U) The United States started privately raising concerns with the Russians about their INF Treaty noncompliance in 2013 before publicly announcing Russia's violation in the 2014 version of the Department of State's annual Report on Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments. Russia initially denied, for several years, that the missile described by the United States existed before acknowledging in late 2017 that the missile existed but claimed it could not fly to ranges prohibited by the Treaty.

(U) The United States has invested six years of diplomatic effort to engage the Russians and convince them to return to Treaty compliance. U.S. officials under two Administrations have raised concerns on repeated occasions and at various levels and departments within the Russian Government, including at the highest levels, and provided detailed information to Russia outlining its violation. U.S. efforts continue, numbering more than 30 engagements with Russian officials, six-expert level meetings with Russia, more than a dozen meetings within NATO regarding the INF issue, and Treaty-compliant research and development on potential U.S. conventional, ground-launched, intermediate-range systems to show Russia the cost of endangering the INF Treaty. Senators, I assure you that diplomatic engagement remains my priority. Since I last addressed the Committee in September, I have met with Russian counterparts six times; and more than 20 times with NATO allies and partners. Thanks to this engagement, we had unanimous Allied support for our decision to notify Russia of our intent to withdraw from the INF Treaty. Allies continue to fully support our position that Russia must return to full and verifiable compliance to preserve the INF Treaty.

(U) Throughout our years of efforts, we stressed that Russia's continuing violation and failure to take concrete steps to return to compliance created an untenable situation whereby the United States complied with the INF Treaty while Russia violated it. On December 4, 2018, the Secretary of State declared Russia's continuing violation to be a material breach of the Treaty and announced the United States would suspend its obligations under the Treaty as a remedy in 60 days unless Russia returned to full and verifiable compliance. I led a U.S. interagency delegation to Geneva on January 15 to meet with Russian experts led by Russian Deputy Foreign

Minister Ryabkov. Instead of taking advantage of this opportunity, Russia doubled down on denying its violation and making false allegations against the United States. As a result of Russia's continued refusal to correct its noncompliance and reverse course, the United States on February 2 suspended its obligations under the Treaty and provided six-month notice of U.S. withdrawal from the Treaty.

(U) As the Secretary of State has said, remaining in a treaty that restricts only one side, while the other side cheats with impunity, does not enhance the security interests of the United States and its allies. The United States abided by its INF Treaty obligations, while Russia cheated. During this time, of course, China, Iran, and North Korea, who are not parties to the INF Treaty, were unconstrained to develop formidable arsenals of intermediate-range missiles. If we had maintained the status quo despite Russia's persistent violation, the future credibility of arms control would have been undercut by demonstrating that there are no real consequences for cheating on agreements.

(U) During our several years of diplomacy, Russia made clear it preferred keeping its INF-noncompliant missile system over preserving the Treaty. Rather than move toward compliance, Russia actually moved in the opposite direction. Russia went from producing and testing the SSC-8 to fielding multiple battalions of the system as of late 2018 – a system that poses a direct threat to European and global security. Even as recently as this February, President Putin publicly endorsed converting a sea-based, intermediate-range missile of the Kalibr class into a ground-launched missile, which would be inconsistent with the INF Treaty. This is a clear sign that Russia has no intent to try and save the Treaty prior to August 2, the effective date of U.S. withdrawal.

(U) We have been clear to the Russians that returning to compliance requires the verifiable destruction of all SSC-8 missiles, their launchers, and associated support equipment. If Russia fails to return to full and verifiable compliance before August 2, our decision to withdraw will stand, and the Treaty will terminate. Russia will bear sole responsibility for the Treaty's end.

(U) Our allies are united that Russian actions are to blame for the pending demise of the INF Treaty. When the United States declared Russia in material breach back in December, NATO strongly supported the announcement and agreed "the situation whereby the United States and other parties fully abide by the Treaty and Russia does not, is not sustainable." Allies, again, "fully supported" the U.S. suspension in February. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg has reiterated that "A treaty that is respected by only one side cannot be effective and will not keep us safe. If a treaty no longer affects the reality on the ground, then it is nothing more than a piece of paper."

(U) If the Russians do not return to compliance with the INF Treaty and we find ourselves in a world without its restrictions, we must be ready to ensure U.S. and allied security. To ensure that our adversaries receive no military advantage, the United States is developing its own intermediate-range, conventionally-armed, ground-launched missile systems. To reiterate, these systems are conventional only – not nuclear. This research and development is designed to be reversible, should Russia return to full and verifiable compliance before August 2. Because the United States has been abiding by the Treaty, we are not in a position to immediately field a

ground-launched, INF-range system. We are committed to consulting with allies as we move forward, although it is too early to discuss any potential basing at this stage.

(U) If Russia fails to return to full and verifiable compliance, the result will be the demise of the Treaty. As Secretary Pompeo stated on February 2, “Regrettably, the INF Treaty is no longer effective due to Russia’s ongoing material breach.” The deployment of multiple battalions of SSC-8 missiles by Russia poses a threat to international peace and security which this Administration takes very seriously. Going forward, this Administration will continue to work with Congress and our allies to deny Russia any military advantage from its development of ground-launched intermediate-range missiles.

The New START Treaty

(U) We are implementing the New START Treaty and verifying Russian compliance. In February 2018, each country confirmed its compliance with the Treaty’s central limits on ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers and their associated warheads and launchers.

(U) I know this Committee has sought the Trump Administration’s view of extending the New START Treaty, which is scheduled to expire February 5, 2021. While some might argue that there is an urgent need to extend right now, we must be careful to assess all of the complexities and changes in the evolving security environment since the Treaty was signed in 2010. To be direct: the Administration has not made any decision on a potential extension of New START. Since there are many aspects of our review, I will take time now to walk through some of the considerations.

(U) First, while Russia is complying with the New START Treaty, Russia’s strategic forces are currently undergoing a comprehensive modernization in their force structure, operations, and planning. In a March 1, 2018 speech, President Putin spoke about the development of five new nuclear-armed systems: a nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed cruise missile; a nuclear-powered unmanned underwater vehicle with intercontinental range; an air-launched ballistic missile; a “gliding wing unit”; and a heavy ICBM. Russian official commentary and media reports indicate that some of these systems could be fielded before New START is scheduled to expire in February 2021. We assess at least two of them, the Sarmat heavy ICBM and Avangard hypersonic system would count as existing types and be subject to New START at the appropriate point in their development cycle. Further, we assess that the other three systems meet the U.S. criteria for what constitutes a “new kind of strategic offensive arms” for purposes of New START. The United States is monitoring the development of these systems and has raised them with Russian officials. Meanwhile, as was noted in the New START Resolution of Ratification, Russia’s large stockpile of nonstrategic nuclear weapons is not subject to the Treaty’s limits and verification regime, and Russia potentially views this stockpile as providing coercive advantage in a crisis or at lower levels of conflict.

(U) Second, we cannot ignore Russia’s record of being a serial violator and selective implementer of the arms control obligations and commitments that it undertakes. Russia has violated the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Open Skies Treaty, the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, and the INF Treaty. Its actions have raised serious concerns about its

compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention. It also has acted inconsistent with its Vienna Document commitments and the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991-1992. Russia also professes to support arms control for preventing an arms race in outer space while developing anti-satellite systems.

(U) Third, our decision on extension will carefully consider U.S. and allied security needs. When the Treaty was negotiated, we were in a more benign security environment, where relations between the great powers were less tense and mistrustful. However, in the intervening years, the security environment deteriorated significantly, and increased uncertainty and risk pervade. Russia's malign actions, including invading and seeking to annex part of Ukraine's territory, have contributed substantially to this deterioration. We are carefully considering how our deterrence requirements are shaped by the geostrategic realities of today and the future.

(U) Finally, China's lack of transparency regarding the scope and scale of its nuclear modernization program raises questions regarding its future intent. China has been investing considerable resources to modernize and expand its nuclear arsenal, which is resulting in an increasingly diverse force with next generation missiles, submarines, and a stealthy, long-range strategic bomber. China also appears to be considering how new types of weapons might fit into its posture, such as low-yield capabilities and hypersonics. These developments, paired with China's assertive behavior towards its neighbors, disregard for binding international norms, and its unwillingness to engage in meaningful dialogue with the United States on issues of nuclear weapons policy and risk reduction, raise the risks of miscalculation, and instability. The United States has tried to raise mechanisms with the Chinese to discuss these issues but our efforts have so far been rebuffed. China currently benefits from having the two largest nuclear powers restrained while it can pursue competition on its own terms. That status quo is unacceptable.

(U) Central to the U.S. review is whether a New START extension is in the U.S. national interest and how the Treaty's expiration would impact U.S. national security in the deteriorating security environment, where Russia is developing new strategic and nonstrategic offensive arms and China is modernizing and building up its nuclear forces. We will continue to consult with Congress as this Administration determines its next steps.

Conclusion

(U) There is much work ahead to ensure that our arms control agreements deliver the best security to the United States and our allies and partners. The value of any agreement is derived from our treaty partners maintaining compliance with their obligations, and avoiding actions that result in mistrust and miscalculation. Russia, unfortunately, has created a trust deficit that leads the United States to question Russia's commitment to arms control. Done correctly, arms control will manage and stabilize our strategic relationship and promote greater transparency and predictability in how our countries address weapons of mass destruction issues and policies. The President and the Secretary of State have been clear: we need a new era of arms control to address new and emerging threats. In the current security environment, we also must consider how we can bring other countries into our agreements so that the United States is not limited while others, such as China, are unconstrained.

(U) Make no mistake, we are in an era of revived Great Power competition. While we seek to bring Russia and China to the arms control table to deliver meaningful results, we will be relentless in our efforts to advance U.S. and allied interests, ensure our security, and deny our adversaries advantages. Modern and effective U.S. nuclear capabilities as called for in the NPR are critical. As the NPR's preface stated: ensuring our nuclear deterrent remains strong will provide the best opportunity for convincing other nuclear powers to engage in meaningful arms control initiatives. I thank you for convening this important hearing, and look forward to your questions