

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

Date: 05/18/2010 • <http://lugar.senate.gov>
Andy Fisher • 202-224-2079 • andy_fisher@lugar.senate.gov

Opening Statement for Hearing on the New START Treaty

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing.

Today, we welcome Secretary Clinton, Secretary Gates, and Admiral Mullen to the Foreign Relations Committee. We are pleased that our national security leadership is with us to present the New START Treaty and answer Senator's questions.

Our witnesses have been deeply involved in the negotiation of the New Start Treaty, as well as the formation of the broader context of nuclear weapons policy. Secretary Clinton undertook many discussions on the treaty with her counterpart, Foreign Minister Lavrov. Secretary Gates has a long association with this treaty, going back to the meetings he attended in Moscow in 2008 with Secretary of State Rice. Admiral Mullen undertook several important meetings on the treaty and related issues with General Makarov, the Russian Chief of the General Staff, as well as other Russian officials. Consequently, each of our leaders today, comes to the Treaty with unique experiences that can inform Senate consideration of the pact. Their personal involvement and commitment to this process underscores the consensus within the Administration and the military leadership that the New START Treaty will benefit U.S. national security.

As the Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate begin to examine the New START Treaty in greater detail, I would urge the three of you to devote personal energy to accelerating the timetable for producing the National Intelligence Estimate and a formal Verification Assessment related to the treaty. The President has declared the New START Treaty to be a top legislative objective and has called for Senate approval this year. Failing to deliver these reviews related to START in expedited fashion would diminish perceptions of the priority of the treaty and complicate Senate debate.

On April 29, our Committee heard from former Secretaries of Defense William Perry and James Schlesinger, who voiced their support for ratifying the treaty. Secretary Schlesinger stated, "I think that it is obligatory for the United States to ratify." He continued: "Any treaty is going to have limitations, questionable areas. There are some in this treaty. We need to watch them for the future, but that does not mean that the treaty should be rejected."

Secretary Perry underscored the importance of treaty ratification to broader U.S. arms control objectives, asserting: "If we fail to ratify this treaty the United States will have forfeited any right to provide any leadership in this field throughout the world."

Secretary Schlesinger concurred, saying: "For the United States, at this juncture, to fail to ratify the treaty in the due course of the Senate's deliberation would have a detrimental effect on our ability to influence others with regard to, particularly, the nonproliferation issue."

In my view, even as we carefully examine individual provisions of the treaty, a U.S. choice to deliberately forego a strategic nuclear arms control regime with Russia would be an extremely precarious strategy. Distancing ourselves from nuclear engagement with Russia would greatly reduce our knowledge of what is happening in Russia, hinder our ability to consult with Moscow in a timely manner on nuclear and

national security issues, further strain our own defense resources, weaken our non-proliferation diplomacy worldwide, and, potentially, heighten arms competition.

During the post-Cold War era, U.S. national security has been helped immeasurably by the existence of the START I treaty and related arms control endeavors. As an author of the Nunn-Lugar program, I have traveled to the former Soviet Union on numerous occasions to encourage and witness the safeguarding and destruction of weapons covered by START and other initiatives. The destruction of thousands of weapons is a monumental achievement for our countries, but the process surrounding this joint effort is as important as the numbers of weapons eliminated. The U.S.-Russian relationship has been through numerous highs and lows in the post-Cold War era. Throughout this period, START inspections and consultations and the corresponding threat reduction activities of the Nunn-Lugar program have been a constant that have served to reduce miscalculation and build respect. This has not prevented highly contentious disagreements with Moscow. But it has meant that we have not had to wonder about the make-up and disposition of Russian nuclear forces during periods of tension. It also has reduced, though not eliminated, the proliferation threat posed by the nuclear arsenal of the former Soviet Union.

In my judgment, the question before us is not whether we should have a strategic nuclear arms agreement with Russia, but rather whether the New START Treaty's provisions meet our objectives and how they will be implemented in the context of our broader national security strategy.

Arms control is not a static enterprise governed solely by words on a treaty document. The success or failure of a treaty also depends on the determination with which it is verified and enforced. It depends on the rationality of the defense programs backing up the treaty. And it depends on the international atmosphere to which it contributes. For these reasons Senators are interested in numerous questions peripheral to the treaty text, including our plans for warhead modernization and missile defense.

We are eager to hear the Administration's perspectives on these elements of our defense policy, as well as the witnesses' views on the New START Treaty and our relationship with Russia. I appreciate that our top national security leadership is personally invested in the Senate ratification process, and I look forward to working with you and members of this Committee to achieve a timely treaty review that will fully inform Senate consideration.

###