Interview with Sergey Kislyak, Russian Ambassador to the United States

A Fresh Start?

An Interview with Russia's Ambassador to the United States Sergey Kislyak

Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, Russia's new ambassador to the United States, has assumed his post at a critical time in U.S.-Russian relations and at a point when presidential transitions are underway in both Moscow and Washington. Kislyak has served in a number of senior foreign policy positions in Moscow. Most recently, he served as Russia's deputy foreign minister where he played the lead role on arms control and nonproliferation issues. On November 14, Arms Control Today spoke with Ambassador Kislyak about his views on a number of issues in U.S.-Russian strategic relations, including missile defense, future strategic arms reductions, the status of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, and Russian views on how to deal with Iran's nuclear program.

ACT: Mr. Ambassador, with President-elect Barack Obama taking office in January, could you briefly outline the most important and urgent issues that you think must be addressed to improve the U.S.-Russian strategic and security relationship?

Kislyak: I think there are many questions that need to be looked at. Our relations have not been in the best state during the last years, but at the same time, they are not entering the Cold War as some are suggesting. We do work on a number of issues that are important to the United States and Russia, and we are going to continue, but certainly we can do much better.

Once I was speaking here, I think addressing the bar association, and they were asking me, "What is one thing you want to do differently?" I said, and I'd like to repeat it, that what we would like to see happen is that the United States will treat Russian interests the same way that the United States would like to see Russia treat American interests. That would be the magic formula because we have a lot of interests that are common. These interests transcend the spectrum of issues that are usually enumerated in this respect. Certainly, nonproliferation is one. Combating terrorism, extremism in all its forms, among other things, is another. A new added challenge that we all face is the possibility of a nexus between terrorism and nuclear materials. We have started working on this issue, I would say, very successfully. It is one of the few examples of us working together as one and being successful. We started this initiative of the two presidents, Mr. [Vladimir] Putin and Mr. [George W.] Bush, and now we have in two years over 70-plus countries joining us. So it is an example of how we can work, addressing challenges together to the benefit of the security of Russia and that of the United States.

I think that if we limit ourselves only to these few challenges that everyone is talking about, that would be a big disservice to the interests of your country and mine. We have economic relations that are developing pretty fast. Irrespective of the ups and downs in the political dialogue between the two of us, the economic relations are booming. That's something to be encouraged.

I do not have figures for this year, and most probably the current financial crisis will have its impact on the economic exchanges as well, but we can easily expect 30-plus billion dollars of trade this year between the two of us. That is quite a significant change, I would say, from four years ago when it was three times less. We saw in the last years an increase in mutual investment, and I underscore the word mutual, because Russian private business has invested here almost with the same rate, if
not higher, than U.S. business has invested in Russia. That is also very good because that helps normal, friendly interaction between our societies, and that is a good underpinning for overall relations as well.

Certainly for you, the most important thing is the security area, and it has always been very important for our relations. I would like to underline, it is of primal importance for the stability in the world, and for the stability of our relations, but I think that it would be less than prudent to focus exclusively on our relations in the security area. Our relations should not be limited only to the content of arms control. It must be larger, and I think people tend to benefit from that.

**ACT:** One of the more immediate security challenges facing the United States and Russia is the December 2009 expiration of START, including its verification regime. [2] Obama has told this magazine that he wants to work with Russia to "make deep cuts in global nuclear stockpiles" during his first term and "extend the essential monitoring and verification provisions of START I prior to its expiration." Would Russia be willing to extend START if necessary?

**Kislyak:** It is difficult to say what you mean by "extend." Do we extend it the way it is, do we extend it for five years, do we extend it for two? All of these questions need to be discussed between our two teams.

If you ask me where we are currently, having discussed all these issues for quite a long period of time, I would say unfortunately I cannot report to you that we are satisfied with the level of agreement between us and the current administration of the United States on this particular issue. We have quite different views as to what the follow-on to START should be. We think there needs to be an extension of START, preserving the main systematic structure of the agreement, which does not mean we need to carbon-copy the agreement. It is large and had a very strong emphasis on the destruction of weapons that have been fulfilled completely by the United States and Russia.[3] We need to focus on things that do provide guarantees for stability in the future. That would certainly include limitations on delivery vehicles. Also, we need to be sure deployment modes do not change in a way that will be threatening to each other. Those elements of START that can provide stability for the future, we want to preserve in the future agreements.[4]

With lowering levels, I am not discussing with you now what the exact numbers I think that need to be filled in. It is something that should be negotiated between the delegations. One should not negotiate through the press, but I am trying to help you to understand how we see the follow-on to START. Sometimes the treaty was criticized for being too lengthy and too complicated. I would say it was not too lengthy because it was addressing challenges that we had at the time of the signing of the agreement. We were entering a process that was new to us, new to you. That was the first agreement to practically reduce strategic components of both sides.

But by now, after the treaty is almost completed, we have accumulated a wealth of experience on how to implement it. We are now concerned about taking pieces that we know how to implement and to import them in the follow on agreement that would be providing guarantees for the stability of the future. One of the most important things for us is that [the START follow-on] addresses delivery vehicles because you have to be sure that the deployment modes of both sides would not be any more threatening than they are now. Hopefully, they will be less so, more predictable, and at a lower level. That has always been our philosophy and position on this issue, whereas the philosophy of the U.S. government is a little bit different. What our [U.S.] colleagues are suggesting basically is not a follow on to START but rather an extension or a follow-on to the Moscow Treaty.[5] Those are two different treaties, but they are mutually complementary. The Moscow Treaty, partially at least, was relying on the verification procedures and the system of mutual exchanges provided for in START. Those are two complementary things and not substitutes for one another. What we would like to see happening is that we have a follow-on to START that will be picking up those elements that are still important today and would provide extended stability in our relations, hopefully at the lower levels covering everything: delivery vehicles and [warhead] deployments. A Moscow Treaty plus the follow-on to START would do the trick.

**ACT:** A hybrid approach?
Kislyak: It is not a hybrid. The Moscow Treaty is there. It is valid until 2012. Currently, we have to resolve the issue on what is to succeed START. The first discussion on what we are going to have afterwards needs to be taken before December of this year. The treaty will expire unless anything else is created or decided in a year. If we do not have anything in January 2010, we will wake up, all of us, in a situation where there are no limits on delivery vehicles and no limits on anti-ballistic missile defense.

I’m asking myself, are we going to be better off in terms of providing stability in our relations and in the world context? I think it would be a very unfortunate, if not dangerous, situation, because it is a kind of free-for-all of strategic arms and we might lose the mutual constraints provided for on a mutual voluntary basis by arms control agreements.

ACT: Just to clarify a little bit, in terms of the extension, you are not ruling out the possibility of an extension? Does the Russian government consider the current meeting, the Joint Compliance and Inspection Commission (JCIC) that is happening in Geneva, sufficient under the treaty terms to invoke the principle that it is fulfilling the treaty requirement that, to extend the treaty, the parties must meet on the matter at least one year before START expires?

Kislyak: We need to talk to the others and to form the view that will be reflecting the use of our arms. As I said, I do not negotiate in the press. I am not going to do here today the job that is going to be done in Geneva. What I am suggesting is that we have a follow-on agreement that would come into force as soon as possible. That is the maximum that we can do, and that is what is needed to be done.

We see a particular situation in the United States where you have a regime and a presidential transition, which is certainly important for you, and it is very important for us, because we want to understand better what is going to be the policy of the new administration on all of these issues. We certainly have read what President[-elect] Barack Obama had said when he was running for the presidency. There are a lot of interesting things in his statements, including the interview that you referred to. We hope it provides a basis for serious negotiations, and we are certainly more than willing to do so.

ACT: Can you be a little bit more specific in terms of what Russia is looking for in terms of which verification provisions from START should be continued? It was not clear if you wanted those in the future agreement.

Kislyak: Yeah, we do want the follow-on to be providing for verification, exchanges of information, and transparency. It is not that we favor just political declarations. We want to be sure that if we do have an agreement, the agreement needs to be verified and that the American side will be as compliant as we are.

As to the particularities of what we want—once again, I do not negotiate in the press.

ACT: Former President Vladimir Putin said at one point that Russia would be prepared to reduce its strategic forces down to 1,500 warheads or less. That has been interpreted in different ways. What does that mean in terms of whether those warheads would be counted under the SORT [Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty] system or START? Can you provide any clarification of what he meant or what was meant in those comments?

In moving forward in talks with the United States on strategic systems, what is Russia’s view about how best to deal with the United States’ interest in converting some of the strategic systems that are armed with nuclear warheads to conventional warheads? How might that be taken into account in these future discussions?

Kislyak: First of all, the numbers. We are certainly willing to go lower. That has always been our position, even at the time of negotiating the Moscow Treaty. The number of 1,500—there is nothing magic about it. Those are the numbers as a target that we are willing to negotiate with our American colleagues on. So whatever the mechanism is for arriving at this number, we are willing to be open and stick together. What we want to see happening is the mutual constraints provided for in START
should not be lost because they do provide stability and are one of the important things that also should be preserved and should not be discarded.

As to the idea of converting nuclear strategic weapons into conventional weapons, we are very much concerned about this concept. We don't believe that, so far, that there is a mechanism that would ensure that it would not be destabilizing. We have been told that this conversion of strategic delivery vehicles into non-nuclear ones would not affect Russian security, but that's easily said. It is difficult to understand how it could be guaranteed; how one can be relaxed about a number of delivery vehicles, that can be reconverted at any time, and secondly can have strategic missions. So, we do not agree in principle because we do not know of any guarantees that it is not going to be threatening to our security.

**ACT:** Russia has criticized U.S. exploration of new or modified nuclear warheads and suggests that such pursuits will trigger a new arms race, whereas Russia also modernizes its nuclear forces and regularly produces warheads. Why is it seemingly acceptable for Russia to upgrade its nuclear forces but not the United States?

**Kislyak:** I am not sure that I know of the programs that you are referring to. We have armed forces maintained on the current level. We do not create new types of weapons. They [strategic forces] are modernized, but we are not creating new nuclear weapons. What we are sometimes concerned about when we hear that new types of weapons are being created is that this creates new means of employing nuclear weapons and making them more usable.

**ACT:** Would Russia be willing to consider joint limitations on warhead production?

**Kislyak:** That would need to be explored through negotiations. First of all, we need to agree that we go further. So far, we have not been able to achieve that. As I said, if we do agree to go further [in terms of arms control agreements]. Then one can explore mechanisms that would reassure that neither side will go above that [level]. So far, a lot of the things you ask sound a little bit theoretical because the first priority for us in negotiating with our American colleagues is to agree on what we want to do beyond START. I am not sure I can report to you today that we have satisfied that [requirement].

**ACT:** To date, U.S. and Russian arms control treaties have focused on strategic weapons. Yet, many analysts outside Russia have raised concerns about the size and security of Russia's stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons, as well as whether Russia has fulfilled past commitments to reduce these weapons. Under what conditions would Russia be willing to provide a full accounting of these systems and start verifiably disposing of them?

**Kislyak:** First and foremost, on the security of these weapons, this issue has been talked about many times. In my opinion, having been involved in negotiations, I do not know of a single case where there has been a real problem with the safety and security of Russian nuclear weapons. The United States has to work more seriously on how it deals with this issue. The latest reports on these issues that we know of indicates that a lot of things need to be looked at in this country. I saw statements by the secretary of defense on this issue suggesting that there were decisions made in order to reinforce control of your stockpile and your components, and situations where some elements of them would find themselves in different countries. It is not acceptable, and we are certainly looking forward to seeing more control in this country of your components. As far as we are concerned, certainly, one cannot be complacent at any time, but the system of protection of Russian nuclear weapons is very, very stringent.

I remember, I think it was in Bratislava, that both sides, the presidents and the staffers and the advisers, had discussed the issue of safety of components of nuclear weapons. They agreed there was a good level of protection in both countries. But one of the ideas was that we should never be complacent about it. That is something that is the case in my country. So I take exception to the notion that our nuclear weapons are insecure. Our strategic forces can be considered as secured.

As to lowering the scope of nuclear weapons in negotiations. I think we need to be aware that the
nuclear weapons do not exist in isolation. It is also [a] part of military culture on both sides. We see that we have difficulties to even negotiate a follow-on to START that regulates the strategic component of [U.S. and Russian] forces.

At the same time, when you come, say to European situation, we see a lot of imbalances in conventional weapons. We see a very disappointing situation with the CFE [Conventional Armed Forces in Europe] Treaty. We still believe the CFE Treaty that was negotiated for the situation when two opposing military blocs existed still regulates the relations between two groups of countries. We see that one group is no longer and the other is expanding and taking bit by bit the quotas that were given to the group that is no longer there. Suggesting that the treaty doesn't work. It is something that is so surreal and does not provide the sense of stability, that we were forced to send [through the Russian moratorium] a strong signal to our colleagues that this situation should be corrected. Some years ago ... on the initiative of Russia, we started negotiating the [adaptation] to the CFE Treaty that provides a little bit different approach. It is not an ideal document either, but at least it does provide more predictability in this field by providing for two networks of limitations, not on the basis of groupings, but on individual membership to the treaty. We did expect that this treaty would have been in force already, say, five years ago. And what happens? Nothing. The adapted treaty has not entered into force. Our colleagues in the United States and NATO have decided not to start ratification of the treaty. The conditions for ratification, as far as we are concerned, are official; and we think that, first and foremost, there was lack of [NATO] interest in seeing it enter into force.

However, Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus did ratify the [adapted] treaty, so we live in a very asymmetrical situation in terms of conventional buildups in Europe. I am not suggesting there are enormous buildups that are immediately threatening or deployed to prepare a tank attack, like we were concerned about in Cold War times. But the situation is that there is an expansion of conventional weapons in one grouping that is still there. The situation in the [conventional] arms control is not satisfactory.

ACT: Is it fair to say then that the quantity of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is not the main concern or the main motivation for why Russia would be prepared to retain its weapons?

Kislyak: It is one of them. We have always advocated the repatriation of all weapons to one's own territory. We do not keep nuclear weapons beyond the territory of Russia, and we have always advocated that it would be a good idea for the others to do the same [to keep them on their national territories].

ACT: If the United States was willing to withdraw those tactical nuclear weapons, would that change Russia's position on consolidating, reducing, or eliminating its tactical nuclear weapons?

Kislyak: It would certainly be a serious factor, but would it be enough? I think we need to have a little bit more complex discussion between us and the United States and between us and NATO on the security environment in Europe.

ACT: On the CFE Treaty, Russia last year suspended implementation of it. When does Russia intend to resume implementation, and what actions will it take to bring the Adapted CFE Treaty into force?

Kislyak: Well, I do not believe that we are interested in resuming implementation of the current CFE Treaty [without it being adapted]. You know how the CFE Treaty works? You have the current CFE Treaty that is the old one, and we have an adapted treaty. The adapted treaty does not exist without the first one, so in order to have an adapted treaty in force, we have to have both (The old one to be adapted by the new one). So, the moment that the adapted treaty is in force, we will have both: the old one, as amended by the treaty of adaptation.

But legally speaking, we are already there. We have ratified the adapted treaty, so in a way, we are waiting for others to join us. It is not us blocking the treaty and implementation; it is us waiting [for the others].
ACT: The argument on the other side is that you have not fulfilled these political commitments.

Kislyak: Yes we have. We have fulfilled everything that is applicable to the CFE Treaty implementation.

ACT: What about the withdrawals from Moldova and Georgia that were supposedly tied to the Adapted CFE Treaty?[16]

Kislyak: No, no, no, we have done everything that is related to the treaty, we have withdrawn all TLE [treaty-limited equipment] from Moldova in time. But there are political agreements between us and Moldova and us and the United States on the political environment there. They are bilateral understandings. Same with Georgia, on the withdrawal of our bases. Our bases are no longer there, we have withdrawn them. But the Georgians also were under commitment to do several things, and they have failed to do so. But in any way all this goes beyond what was required to implement the treaty.

By the way, by the same token, one of the commitments of Istanbul for all of us, including the United States, was the ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty. It is yet to be implemented [by the West].

ACT: One of the major concerns of U.S. lawmakers regarding the pending U.S.-Russian nuclear cooperation agreement (a so-called 123 agreement), is Russia's relationship with Iran.[17] What specific assurances can the Russian government provide members of Congress to ease their concerns about Russian sales of arms and civil nuclear systems to Iran, as well as Russian support for tougher UN Security Council sanctions on Iran?

Kislyak: Could I ask you, why do we need to provide assurances to the U.S. Congress? We provide assurances to the Russian parliament. So if the United States is interested in working with us in nuclear energy cooperation, that is fine. It is for the United States to decide what it is that it wants. If it wants to cooperate with us, the doors [for cooperation] are open. If we are asked to make our actions, our policies, reportable to the [U.S.] Congress in order for the U.S. to make decisions on cooperating with us, we are not interested in that kind of scheme. We are fully in compliance with our obligations, with our commitments. We have not violated any agreement with the United States or anybody else. Our cooperation with Iran is limited in the nuclear field to Bushehr. By the way, your president has welcomed the way we cooperate on Bushehr because a scheme for the project that was developed with the Iranians that is very reliable and provides an alternative, a visible alternative, to the need to develop an indigenous enrichment capability. Because we build the reactor, we provide the fuel, and we take it back.[18] This is the best way to provide access to nuclear energy and electricity derived from nuclear energy. It was also supported by Europe.

When it comes to the defense supplies you seem to be referring to, there are no inconsistencies with our obligations or the resolutions of the Security Council, because we do show restraint, and whatever we do is purely defensive and for deterrence. It is our policy, and it is reportable the Russian parliament and Russian people and not anybody else. If the United States is interested in working with us [in the field of nuclear energy], we will be more than ready to work together, but it needs to be based on mutual respect and the mutual respect of interests. I think there are all sorts of reasons why we could and should cooperate in this field because both of us can do a lot in order to promote nuclear energy. That is something that most probably for the coming 20-30 years will be the alternative of choice to fossil fuel, and I do not know of any other [alternative] source of energy that can be employable in the foreseeable future but nuclear energy. All other renewable energies are either in scarce supply or the technology has yet to be developed to the point where it becomes competitive.

So we will see, all of us, significant development of nuclear energy in a lot of countries, in yours as well. We also embarked on an ambitious program to expand nuclear energy production. Currently we have, I think, 16 or 17 percent of electricity produced in my country from nuclear energy sources, and we will expand it to 25 [percent] within maybe 15 or more years. It is an ambitious program. We are going to make it. At the same time, we have a lot of things that are of interest to your industries. You might be interested in [our]technologies, so we are very much mutually complementary. But unless we have a bigger [legal] framework for that, there can be no reliable interaction between our
respective businesses. If the United States wants to work with us, we would be more than willing to do so.

There is another initiative by the two presidents, and that is to develop alternative sources of nuclear energy for the rest of the world that are less prone to proliferation. We are offering the multilateral enrichment center and your president has launched the idea of the GNEP [Global Nuclear Energy Partnership].[19]

**ACT:** As for the multinational enrichment center, Angarsk, do you know when that is going to open?[20]

**Kislyak:** I am not sure I know the date.

**ACT:** Have you concluded a safeguards agreement with the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] for Angarsk?

**Kislyak:** Well, we have a number of countries that have joined [the project], Kazakhstan being the first, Armenia being the second. As far as I understand, there will be several other countries that will be knocking on the doors pretty soon. We are very lucky that it is getting up and running and will be operational pretty soon.

It is a concept that I think can be very helpful to countries that are interested in the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It would make it possible for them not to seek their own enrichment facilities. They could use the benefits of these multilateral centers that would be fully under the IAEA safeguards. We hope it will be also to their economic advantages. But what is most important, they have ready-made vehicles to use in order to get, in a reliable fashion, participation in the management element of it, all of the enrichment services, which does not mean that any of the non-nuclear-weapon countries or any other countries would have access to the technology. So, we are, like, offering a Mercedes if you know how to shift gears and drive the car, but there will be somebody else, specialists, who will take care of your engine. That is the kind of service we are offering.

**ACT:** Iran has unfortunately not taken up Russia's offer to make use of Angarsk. The United States and Russia share the challenge of dealing with Iran's ongoing enrichment program, as well as Iran's construction of the Arak heavy-water reactor.[21] Just briefly, in your view, what do the United States and Russia and other members of the Security Council need to do in the near future to fortify the existing strategy or adjust the existing strategy to persuade Iran to suspend its enrichment program and comply with the IAEA investigation of its past nuclear activities?

**Kislyak:** Well, I do not believe we need to reinvent the strategy. This strategy has two basic components. One is based on decisions made by the IAEA Board of Governors enumerating for the Iranian government what needs to be done to return credibility to its program. The Security Council has adopted already four resolutions that are beefing up the requirements of the IAEA.

So there have been strong but measured signals of the international community to Iran that it is expected to comply with the IAEA requirements. And that was reinforcing the latest [U.N. Security Council] resolution from September. It [the September resolution] was short but, I think, very important, with a serious message. What needs to be done also is to try to engage in discussion with Iranian colleagues and work out the benefits, for them and for all of us, if they do cooperate with the requirements. The six [China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States] have produced a package of ideas which I think is a good one. It provides for the Iranians, if they choose to pick it up and to develop it with us through negotiations, an excellent opportunity to expand cooperation not only with us, but also with Europeans, with the United States, with China, on a very, very broad range of issues, including nuclear energy, even scientific research, and many other things that would help them to be more integrated into the world economy. That is an offer of
cooperation by countries "from the Atlantic to the Pacific" to our Iranian colleagues. That is something we try to reinforce when talking with Tehran. We are very much interested in seeing the Iranian government understand that this package is an honest one. We are satisfied that the American government is more and more involved in promoting this package. We saw Bill Burns, together with us, at the Geneva meeting back in the summer, which I think was a good message reinforcing that if we do have an agreement on this package, the United States will be part of it. That is a very important part. There are a lot of concerns on both sides. There is a lot of mistrust on both sides that needs to be overcome. That is the track that, I think, is a little bit underdeveloped so far, and we need to work more on that.

**ACT:** Russia has asserted that the Bush administration has pursued several policies that threaten to upset U.S.-Russian strategic relationship and stability. Foremost among these is this administration's effort to base 10 missile interceptors in Poland and a new radar in the Czech Republic. Why is Russia concerned about 10 interceptors, and why does it keep threatening to target the proposed U.S. installations?

**Kislyak:** It is not about 10 interceptors per se. We certainly understand that these 10 interceptors and the radar stationed in Czech Republic are not isolated components. They are elements of strategic anti-ballistic missile deployment. We see this for the first time, as far as I understand in history, that the United States is planning to deploy strategic components of its forces in Europe. It is close to us. This is about destabilizing deterrence. There are several bases of strategic offensive force in the European part of Russia that will be within range of this system. What is planned to be deployed is not just an observation or [early] warning radar, this is a battle management radar. We understand that most probably it is not the last [planned] deployment in the region. There might be others. I do not know when or where. We see it not as 10 innocuous missiles being deployed. We see it as an element of a bigger picture. This picture seems to be increasingly destabilizing, and potentially more destabilizing in the future. That is the concern.

**ACT:** What measures or actions could the United States take to mitigate Russian concerns about the proposed deployment?

**Kislyak:** We had proposed an alternative idea of cooperating against what was the stated goal for this deployment and that is to offset the possibility that the deployment would appear threatening to other countries.

**ACT:** Is there any possibility that your government and the Obama administration could build on this administration's proposals for joint threat assessment, limiting interceptor deployment, and pursuing a joint missile defense architecture?

**Kislyak:** What we had proposed was to join our monitoring systems including our radar station in Azerbaijan. There would be a system strategically located in the region that might be of service in the future of missile defense. What we were proposing was to create a joint monitoring system that would be giving all of us on a joint basis the possibility to monitor what is happening and what is not happening. That is equally important.

We also proposed that we will conduct a discussion as to what we can do and need to do together in order to offset any possible threat if and when it appears. We do not see a credible threat to the United States appearing any time soon, at least not in my opinion, to strike the United States from this region [the Middle East]. To threaten the U.S. from that region one has to have missiles of 8,000 to 11,000 kilometers range, and I do not see an industry in this region that would be capable any time soon to produce that kind of system.

When it comes to arguments about the need to protect Europe, I do not believe Europe asked for
protection. It was decided for Europeans without consulting Europeans. The problem is that we also have specialists on ballistics and trajectories and mathematics, and we understand that, had it been the goal to protect Europe, maybe we would have used a different scheme of deployment to protect all of Europe. So if this is not to protect the United States and it is not to protect Europe and if there is no threat to offset, then the only "clientele" as they say, for this system would be Russia. Russian territory is very close, and we have components of strategic deterrence there. That is the concern. We are concerned that this system is an added element (close to our borders) to the overall effort to undermine strategic deterrence. And we, you and us, have not yet abandoned strategic deterrence.

**ACT:** Bush discussed with Putin a few months back, I believe at Sochi, the possibility of limiting the scope of that deployment, in addition to the Russian proposal that you just outlined. [25] Is that a realistic area for future discussion because you did just say that the concern is not 10 interceptors per se, but the possibility of a broader and more robust missile defense capability of the United States?

**Kislyak:** No, these elements will be serving as part of a layered defense. Nobody was offering to us any limitations of the strategic missile defense of the United States. I never heard of any proposals of that kind. It is not nearly enough [to alleviate Russian concerns] because we have had that kind of discussion in the past and we have raised our concerns. To be honest, we have not seen those concerns always being taken seriously.

**ACT:** Last fall, Russia and the United States called on other states to adopt the same restrictions on their missile programs as are currently followed by the United States and Russia under the INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces] Treaty. [26]

**Kislyak:** Yes.

**ACT:** During the campaign, Obama said he would seek to expand this to a worldwide effort. [27] Russia also outlined efforts of a broader treaty limiting missile deployments. What is the international response to these initiatives, and what is Russia's plan to advance them?

**Kislyak:** First and foremost, there was a good response from the United States because immediately after proposing this advance, the United States supported the joint statement in New York by our two countries that calls for making this commitment global. We have started discussing this issue with many countries. The response is certainly not necessarily universal and immediately welcoming, but we did not expect it to be an easy exercise. We need to talk to countries, to discuss with them their security concerns. It is something that we are going to put a lot of work into, but respectful work. Respectful work with the countries you want to be partners in that kind of commitment. If we do have the United States working with us, I think we stand to benefit from this.

**ACT:** Russia is a strong proponent of negotiating an agreement to prevent an arms race in outer space. [28]

**Kislyak:** Yes, we are.

**ACT:** U.S. officials contend there is no arms race in space and that Russia's proposals are neglecting to address the real danger of terrestrial based anti-satellite systems. What is Russia's response to the U.S. arguments, and why has Russia made outer space a priority?

**Kislyak:** We made it a priority because we are concerned if you start an arms race in outer space, you would not be able to disintervene it. It is going to be destabilizing if it is allowed to take place. The notion that there is no arms race in outer space does not sound to us credible because we are concerned that there will be programs in the future that might lead to the deployment of striking weapons in outer space. That is a problem. I remember there were a number of statements, even by experts outside of the government here, that had begun to advocate that kind of program should be accelerated. We understand there is a lot of thinking about this and, at some point in the discussions about the strategic defenses in your country, there were ideas to deploy various versions of weapons
into outer space.

So, this issue has not been withdrawn from the table. We are concerned if that happens and if others would have to reciprocate, if we will bring the competition into outer space, it [space] will become increasingly destabilized and, in the long term, strategically dangerous. It will undermine also the ability of countries to explore outer space for peaceful purposes. So, there are many components why one can be concerned. We are very much satisfied that a lot of countries with supported us in a vote for resolutions at the United Nations. The appreciation of the problem seems to be almost universal. It is only the United States that does not join us yet. We will see what the future will bring to us.

**ACT:** Since the early 1990s, Russia and the United States have been working together on cooperative threat reduction programs.

**Kislyak:** Yes.

**ACT:** Obama has said that he'd like to secure the most vulnerable nuclear materials within four years.

**Kislyak:** In the United States? (Laughs.)

**ACT:** Everywhere. I think it was everywhere.

**Kislyak:** That is fine, because it is part of our joint effort in the global initiative on combating nuclear terrorism. It is one of the goals that we share, and we need to help the others secure nuclear materials.

**ACT:** Russia has been taking more responsibility and management of these programs. Does Russia have priorities and budget and plans for continuing the security upgrades and maintaining them now that more responsibility has shifted to Russia in this area?

**Kislyak:** It has always been our responsibility. We have never shifted this responsibility to anybody else. So, whatever assistance was offered, especially in the first years after the decomposition of the Soviet Union, was rather technical and sometimes financial help in providing the necessary equipment. All of this started with our effort to bring nuclear weapons back from Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, when the governments of those countries decided, and we applauded them, to abandon nuclear weapons. In order to help abandon this heritage from the Soviet Union, we had to move significant numbers of nuclear weapons to the territory of the Russian Federation. We had very limited time. That kind of operation has never been done by any other country, anytime in the world. Whatever you did, for your own purposes, and what we did [before] were very, very small efforts if compared to the one that we had to undertake. At that time, the United States offered some help to us. That was the origin of the program. We received some technical equipment. We received some fire extinguishers and equipment, a lot of specialized small things that we were missing in big numbers, that we did not have at that time, and we needed in big numbers, immediately. It was very helpful, it helped to create a culture of cooperation [between the two countries].

**ACT:** Is there a program for maintaining this?
Kislyak: Of course there is. It is not going to disappear in Russia because we are a responsible country first of all. We are responsible and frank with the Russian people. Knowing what has been done, I am very comfortable with Russian concern for the safety of such systems in Russia.

ACT: Many former U.S. statesmen are now calling for a renewed emphasis on making progress toward the goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. Do Russia's leaders see this goal as feasible? Do they share the views of Kissinger, Schultz, Perry, Nunn, and many others, that the nuclear-weapons states can and should move quickly on concrete steps to realize this goal?[29]

Kislyak: As the ultimate goal, yes, but in order to achieve this goal, a lot of things need to be done. Certainly the lower you go, the more complex the situation becomes. As we go down, we need to be sure that nuclear weapons are not going to appear in other countries. You need to work toward increasing the guarantees of nonproliferation at first. Secondly, we need to have all other [nuclear-armed states] on board. Third, while we are moving toward this goal, how are the other components of security to be assured? It is complex. It is a very, very complex goal, but it is a noble goal. We can work toward this goal. It has always been our commitment in the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, but we need to take first steps first.[30] The first priority for us and probably for you, today, is to decide what is going to follow-on to START. That would be a first step. That is a very good goal that needs to be worked on, I'm afraid, for quite a long period of time.

ACT: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, we appreciate your time.

[1] The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism was announced by Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin in July 2006 at the Group of Eight summit in St. Petersburg. The voluntary initiative aims to improve participating governments' efforts to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear materials and weapons and to strengthen national laws criminalizing nuclear proliferation activities.


[3] All member states to START I met the agreed December 5, 2001, implementation deadline.

[4] The basic terms of START I call for reductions in delivery vehicles and deployment modes, so that seven years after the entry into force of START I and thereafter, numbers do not exceed 1,600 deployed ICBMs, submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers for each side. It also limits the number of warheads attributed to ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers. No more than 4,900 may be on ICBMs and SLBMs, 1,540 on heavy missiles, and 1,100 on mobile ICBMs.

[5] The Moscow Treaty, also known as the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), was signed by Bush and Putin in 2002 and came into force in June 2003. SORT differs from START I in that it limits the number of operationally deployed warheads, whereas START I only limits "accountable" warheads attributed to their delivery vehicles. SORT calls for both parties to limit their nuclear arsenal to 1,700-2,200 operationally deployed warheads each.

On November 17, 2008, Representatives of the United States of America, The Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine met in Geneva, Switzerland to consider whether to extend the 1991 Treaty. According to a Nov. 21 State Department fact sheet, "the requirement of the Treaty to meet on the issue prior to December 5, 2008, is fulfilled." The fact sheet noted that the Parties "will continue to consider the issue and note that a decision on this issue can be made up until the date of expiration of the Treaty on December 5, 2009.


The Global Strike Initiative is a Pentagon initiative that would convert some long-range SLBMs to deliver conventional warheads instead of nuclear ones. See Wade Boese, "Panel Endorses U.S. Global Strike Initiative," Arms Control Today, June 2007, pp. 34-35.


The Bratislava Initiatives were announced in a joint statement on nuclear security cooperation issued by Bush and Putin in February 2005. Both presidents reaffirmed commitments to making securing vulnerable materials a top priority, as well as to work together on energy, counterterrorism, and space cooperation. These initiatives have contributed to efforts to remove highly enriched uranium (HEU) from Poland and Libya, secure U.S.-origin HEU around the world, and convert HEU-fueled reactors to operate on low-enriched uranium (LEU).

The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, signed in November 1990, set equal limits on the amount of tanks, armored combat vehicles (ACVs), heavy artillery, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters that NATO and the former Warsaw Pact could deploy between the Atlantic Ocean and the Ural Mountains. With the breakup of the Warsaw Pact and the dissolution of the Soviet Union after the Cold War, CFE Treaty states-parties overhauled the treaty in November 1999. The Adapted CFE Treaty replaces the bloc and zone weapons limits with national and territorial arms ceilings, and Russia notified signatories of its intended suspension of the original CFE Treaty in July 2007.


After three years of negotiations, the Adapted CFE Treaty was concluded and signed at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) summit in Istanbul in November 1999.

NATO members' concerns regarding Russian compliance to the adapted treaty imperiled the official signing of the agreement. Several states, including Russia, made last-minute political commitments in an package called the "Final Act" to quell these doubts. Under the agreements, several NATO
members pledged not to increase their territorial ceilings of treaty-limited equipment (TLE), and Russia agreed to reduce its TLE in Georgia and withdraw its military presence from Moldova.

Only Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine have ratified the adapted treaty. The United States and NATO allies have conditioned their ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty on Russia fulfilling its Final Act pledges. See Wade Boese, "CFE Adapted at OSCE Summit in Istanbul," Arms Control Today, November 1999, p. 23.


[18] Russia has been working on the construction of Iran's first nuclear power plant, a light-water reactor located near the city of Bushehr. Germany initiated construction of the plant in 1975 but withdrew from the project following the 1979 Iranian revolution. Russia took over construction in 1995, and since then, the project has been met by continual delays for technical, financial, and political reasons. In 2005, Iran agreed to return the spent fuel from the plant back to Russia, thereby reducing some of the political sensitivities regarding the reactor. In December 2007, Russia began to deliver fuel for the plant, which is currently slated to become operational in early 2009.

[19] The Bush administration launched the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) in 2006, and 25 countries have now signed its statement of principles. Bush administration officials have claimed that GNEP, which seeks to develop new nuclear technologies and new international nuclear fuel arrangements, will cut nuclear waste and decrease the risk that an anticipated growth in the use of nuclear energy worldwide could spur nuclear weapons proliferation. Critics assert that the administration's course would exacerbate the proliferation risks posed by the spread of spent fuel reprocessing technology, be prohibitively expensive, and fail to significantly ease waste disposal challenges without any certainty that the claimed technologies will ever be developed. For more information, see Miles A. Pomper, "GNEP Membership Grows, Future Uncertain," Arms Control Today, November 2008, p. 50.

[20] Early in 2006, Putin and his nuclear energy chief, Sergey Kiriyenko, announced the Global Nuclear Infrastructure Initiative, which envisaged Russia hosting four types of nuclear fuel-cycle service centers as joint ventures partly financed by other countries and involving the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). One would be a proposed International Uranium Enrichment Centre (IUEC) at Angarsk in Siberia. A second would involve reprocessing and storage of spent nuclear fuel. A third would deal with training and certification of nuclear personnel, especially for new nuclear countries. A fourth would involve joint research and development.

The Angarsk proposal itself existed in two parts: an enrichment center and a fuel bank. By 2007 the Russian Duma approved enabling legislation that would grant participating countries the right to partake financially in the facility. Russia legally established the IUEC in September 2007 as a joint stock company. A deal had already been signed with Kazakhstan by the time shares were issued in November 2007. Kazakhstan purchased 10 percent of the shares. At that time, Armenia also indicated its interest in joining, a step that was taken through an exchange of notes in February 2008. In July 2008, Ukraine also offered to buy a 10 percent share in the center, and its proposal has been accepted by Kazakhstan. Russian officials have said that they anticipate wrapping up negotiations with Ukraine by the end of 2008. Russia invited Slovenia to join the center, but it has not yet done so. The eventual plan is for Russia's share to drop to 51 percent as other partners are admitted. In order to address concerns regarding the spread of technology, the IUEC will be structured in such a way that no enrichment technology or classified knowledge will be accessible to the foreign participants. Any IAEA member state is eligible to participate.

In December 2007, the Russian government took the decision to include the enrichment center in the list of facilities it is willing to submit to IAEA safeguards. Safeguards are also to be applied to a 120-ton LEU stockpile that is to be set aside, separately, as a fuel bank for foreign nuclear reactors in the event of a supply disruption for political reasons unrelated to nonproliferation. Although an agreement between the IAEA and Russia on the safeguards arrangements was originally expected to be concluded in the first half of 2008, no such agreement has yet been finalized. For more information, see Fiona Simpson, "Reforming the Nuclear Fuel Cycle: Time Is Running Out," Arms
Interview with Sergey Kislyak, Russian Ambassador to the United States
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[21] Iran has been making preparations for the construction of a 40-megawatt heavy-water research reactor near the town of Arak since the 1990s and began construction on the plant in 2004. The site was made public in 2002 by an Iranian dissident group, prompting an IAEA investigation at the previously undeclared site. Iran claims that the reactor will be used to produce medical isotopes, but the configuration of the reactor also makes it suitable for producing high-quality plutonium for nuclear weapons. Because of this concern, the UN Security Council has demanded that Iran suspend construction of the reactor. The IAEA has also requested that Iran provide updated design information for the reactor. Iran has not cooperated with the Security Council or the IAEA regarding these measures and continues construction of the plant, which is slated for completion in 2011. Iran completed construction of a heavy-water production plant to provide heavy water for the reactor at the same site in 2006.

[22] Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns participated in a July 19 meeting between the permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and Germany and Iran to discuss proposals addressing Iran's nuclear program. Burns' participation marked a reversal of U.S. policy prior to the meeting in which Washington refused to send a representative to meetings with Iran until Tehran complied with UN demands.


[26] The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty required the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers. The negotiation of the INF Treaty was the first time the USSR and United States had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and utilize extensive on-site inspections for verification. By the treaty's implementation deadline of June 1, 1991, the United States and the Soviet Union had destroyed a total of 2,692 short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles. States-parties' rights to conduct on-site inspections under the treaty ended on May 31, 2001. In recent years, Russia has raised the possibility of withdrawing from the INF Treaty.


[28] Russia is a vocal supporter of an international agreement against the weaponization of space and has supported the creation of an ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to focus on the issue. In February 2008, Russia and China co-sponsored a proposal at the CD to ban weapons in space. See Wade Boese, "Russia Pushes Pacts as U.S. Kills Satellite," Arms Control Today, March 2008, pp. 50-51.


[30] Article VI of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty obligates "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the
nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

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