As the world's two leading nuclear powers, the United States and Russia must lead by example.
--President Barack Obama, Moscow, July 6, 2009

On behalf of the nonpartisan, independent Arms Control Association, I would like to commend the US Air Force, USAF Counterproliferation Center and Defense Threat Reduction Agency for hosting this important event and for inviting me to speak. It is an honor and privilege to be here.

I have no doubt that our next speaker Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller will do an excellent job describing the administration’s current positions on arms control. So as not to steal her thunder, I will try to give a different perspective and look further into the future as to where administration policy should go, and why.

But first, the present. On April 5 in Prague, President Obama delivered an electrifying speech on the future of nuclear weapons. In it, the president committed the United States to a bold new path on nuclear weapons and global security, including his now-famous pledge to “seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.” President Obama made clear that he is seeking a nuclear-weapons free world not as an end in itself, but as a key part of a broader strategy to reduce the risk of nuclear war, contain the proliferation of nuclear weapons and prevent nuclear terrorism:

Today, the Cold War has disappeared but thousands of those weapons have not. In a strange turn of history, the threat of global nuclear war has gone down, but the risk of a nuclear attack has gone up. More nations have acquired these weapons. Testing has continued. Black market trade in nuclear secrets and nuclear materials abound. The technology to build a bomb has spread. Terrorists are determined to buy, build or steal one. Our efforts to contain these dangers are centered on a global non-proliferation regime, but as more people and nations break the rules, we could reach the point where the center cannot hold.

The president’s concern, widely shared by others, about a “nuclear tipping point” is fueled by recent events. North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003 (the first state ever to do so), conducted nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, and continues to produce nuclear materials and test its missiles. Iran is also testing missiles, developing a nuclear power program and is enriching uranium, which could potentially be used in nuclear weapons. At a time of justified concern about climate change, the spread of nuclear power to additional nations, including states in the Middle East, is a key proliferation concern. North Korea in particular seems intent on sharing its nuclear-knowhow, with frightening implications for proliferation and terrorism. Militant groups have reportedly attempted attacks on nuclear sites in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the United States and Russia continue to deploy thousands of nuclear weapons on active
alert, far in excess of any justifiable mission other than keeping rough parity with the other. This overblown posture perpetuates the myth that such large arsenals are necessary to ensure US and Russian security, when in fact the opposite is true. Both countries are vulnerable to the accidental or unauthorized launch of nuclear weapons, to the loss of control of these weapons (as illustrated by the 2007 incident in which the Air Force mistakenly loaded nuclear weapons onto B52 bombers) and to nuclear materials falling into terrorists’ hands. Large nuclear arsenals are the root cause of these threats, not solutions to them.

The challenge now for the Obama administration is to strike a new balance between the often-competing priorities of deterrence and nonproliferation, such that the US nuclear force can be maintained at lower levels while at the same time fostering the international cooperation we need to meet today’s proliferation challenges. The need for a new approach is urgent, as nuclear dangers have been increasing just as US leadership was receding.

President Obama is now providing the new leadership we need. With his Prague speech, the July Moscow Summit, the G8 meeting in Italy and other efforts, the president has swiftly begun to reinvent US nuclear policy to address the threats we face today, and will likely face tomorrow. He has begun in earnest to refocus US efforts on reducing Cold War arsenals and countering nuclear proliferation and terrorism by undertaking an integrated strategy:

1. **Reestablishing US leadership on arms control.** The Obama administration recognizes that proliferation is a global challenge that cannot be solved without US leadership and international support. The administration is seeking to earn that support by resuming talks with Russia on a binding, verifiable arms reduction agreement to replace START by the end of 2009. The President has also called for senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and for a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) to ban the production of fissile materials for weapons. The president also declared, significantly, an ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. These important steps open the door for the US to resume its historic role as an effective leader on global efforts to stop the bomb’s spread.

2. **Redefining the purpose of nuclear weapons.** The administration’s arms control agenda must be supported by realistic missions for a reduced nuclear arsenal. If the United States were to adopt a policy that focuses the mission of nuclear weapons to preventing their use by others, then it could drastically reduce the nuclear inventory to a total of no more than 1,000 weapons of all types—strategic, tactical, deployed, and reserves. The ongoing Nuclear Posture Review must address this challenge and support the president’s goals.

3. **Reinvesting in the Nonproliferation Treaty system.** By making good on past arms control commitments and by working to improve the international inspections system, President Obama hopes to ensure a successful NPT review conference in 2010 and a stronger treaty thereafter. The president also plans to reenergize diplomatic efforts to restrain North Korea and Iran’s nuclear programs. The administration plans to work for stronger measures to address noncompliance and withdrawals from the treaty and to prevent civil power programs from being used as fronts for weapons activities, such as by placing greater restrictions on the transfer of enrichment and reprocessing technologies. Significantly, the president will chair a special meeting of the U.N. Security Council in September on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament.

4. **Strengthening programs to thwart nuclear terrorism.** In addition to the NPT and the nuclear inspection system, there is a growing web of multilateral agreements to thwart terrorist acquisition of nuclear weapons and material, such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, the Proliferation Security Initiative, UN Security Council Resolution 1540, and others. President Obama announced in Prague a new international effort to secure vulnerable nuclear materials within four years, break up black markets, intercept materials in transit, and use financial tool to disrupt illicit trade. To better coordinate and promote these efforts, the president also announced plans to host a Global Nuclear Security Summit in March 2010 in Washington, DC.

The Obama administration’s integrated strategy on nuclear security can be best understood as a target with concentric circles. The bull’s eye is securing nuclear materials and weapons that may be vulnerable to terrorists. The next circle out is the NPT regime, preventing the spread of nuclear
weapons to additional states. The outer circle is the US-Russian arms reduction process, which is essential to reducing and securing nuclear arsenals in their own right and to creating international support for the NPT regime and other efforts.

**New START and Beyond**

The first step in the Obama administration’s nuclear agenda is to rebuild the US-Russian arms control process. This July in Moscow Presidents Obama and Medvedev made history by “resetting” US-Russian relations after years of decline. In particular, the two presidents agreed to replace the START treaty to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

The START follow-on agreement, or “New START,” is by necessity a limited effort as it must be concluded by the time START expires on December 5. Modest as it may be, New START is an essential down-payment toward further verifiable reductions in each side’s bloated nuclear arsenals. As the two presidents outlined, the new agreement will create 25% lower limits on strategic delivery systems (from START limits of 1,600 to 1,100) and on the number of warheads that may be deployed on those systems (from SORT limits of 2,200 to 1,675).

Given the December deadline, this new treaty will not be able to deal with some of the most important and difficult issues, such as deeper strategic reductions, tactical weapons, missile defense, and verified dismantlement of retired warheads. Yet these issues must be tackled if President Obama hopes to make progress toward his goal of a nuclear-free world. The heavy lifting is still to come.

Therefore, U.S. and Russian leaders should not stop with New START, but should expeditiously begin to outline the next agreement—I’ll call it “New START II.” Even as they work to wrap up the current round of negotiations, the two sides should prepare the way for a new round of talks on deeper reductions in 2010.

In this next phase, the two sides should aim to:

1. Reduce their respective arsenals to 1,000 total warheads or fewer, with verified dismantlement of retired warheads and disposal of fissile materials, and

2. Agree on limitations to strategic missile defenses that will give the United States the option of deploying a system to counter missile threats from Iran or North Korea, but that would not undermine Russia’s confidence in its nuclear deterrent.

Arsenal Reductions: As part of the ongoing Nuclear Posture Review, the United States should focus the mission of nuclear weapons to deterring their use by others. If it does, then it could drastically reduce its nuclear inventory to a total of no more than 1,000 weapons of all types—strategic, tactical, deployed, and reserves (compared to over 5,000 such weapons today).

Such a reduced force and revised targeting strategy would be more than enough to leave no doubt that the United States retains the ability to retaliate against any nuclear-armed state in the event they would initiate a nuclear attack against the United States or its allies.

As for tactical weapons, some Russian military planners believe they are needed as an insurance policy against U.S. and NATO conventional forces, but the military value of these weapons is questionable. Not only is the chance of a direct conventional conflict between Russia and NATO remote, but the huge potential damage from tactical weapons makes their use inappropriate as a response to conventional attack. Hanging on to these weapons also perpetuates the risk that they may fall into the hands of terrorists.

It would be far better to retire these unnecessary weapons and have their dismantlement verified and their nuclear materials rendered unusable for military purposes. Verifiable dismantlement of all retired warheads and disposition of fissile materials would further reduce both sides’ capabilities to reconstitute a larger arsenal. U.S. leaders may be more likely to agree to verifiable dismantlement if Russia agrees to begin dismantling its outdated tactical arsenal.
To nudge Russia in this direction, NATO should be willing to consider giving up its tactical weapons as well. Bob Einhorn, State Department special advisor on nonproliferation and arms control, said in July that the need to reduce Russian tactical weapons "poses a question of whether the U.S., as an inducement to Russia to limit or consolidate its tactical weapons, should be prepared to reduce or eliminate the relatively small number of U.S. nuclear weapons that remain in Europe."

Missile Defense: Neither the US nor Russia should allow the missile defense issue to impede progress toward deeper nuclear reductions. The Obama administration has reasonably delayed work on a third missile interceptor site in Europe, but it is unlikely to rule out additional interceptors until it completes its ongoing review of U.S. missile defense policy. Suggestions that the administration has “traded” European missile defense for Russian agreement to New START are mistaken.

The reality is that there is nothing to trade. The U.S. interceptors for Europe have not been tested and are years away from possible deployment. There is time for Moscow and Washington to explore and develop truly cooperative approaches to counter Iran’s potential long-range missile threat and agree to limits on strategic missile defenses. If the US and Russia can work together to contain Iran’s nuclear and missile programs, then there would less need for a European deployment.

Beyond New START, it is unlikely that Russia will agree to significantly lower levels of nuclear arms in the face of the possibility of unlimited US missile defense deployments. The time has come to set priorities, and the Obama administration should prioritize arsenal reductions. The security value of arms control is proven; strategic missile defense is not.

Ending Nuclear Testing, Fissile Material Production

In addition to New START, an important part of the administration’s nonproliferation agenda is ratification of CTBT and negotiation of a FMCT. Significant progress on these agreements will greatly aid efforts to strengthen the NPT at the May 2010 review conference and will enhance global nonproliferation efforts in general. In the words of Ellen Tauscher, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security:

"We are not so naïve as to believe that problem states will end their proliferation programs if the United States and Russia reduce our nuclear arsenals. But we are confident that progress in this area will reinforce the central role of the NPT and help us build support to sanction or engage states on favorable terms to us. Our collective ability to bring the weight of international pressure against proliferators would be undermined by a lack of effort towards disarmament."

"US Senate ratification of CTBT is more important than ever, given the need to reestablish US leadership on arms control, strengthen the NPT, and constrain the development of advanced nuclear weapons by other states. Meanwhile, the treaty is effectively verifiable and will not undermine the US deterrent force; the United States can maintain a reliable arsenal under a CTBT. According to the bipartisan 2009 Council of Foreign Relations Report on U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy co-chaired by Bill Perry and Brent Scowcroft:

"While a state could develop a first-generation Hiroshima-type nuclear bomb without nuclear testing, the CTBT would prevent a state from gaining guaranteed technical assurance through nuclear testing that advanced nuclear weapons would work reliably. The political benefit of the CTBT is that it has been strongly linked to the vitality of the nonproliferation regime. The Task Force believes that the benefits outweigh the costs and that the CTBT is in U.S. national security interests."

"As important as it is, the CTBT ratification effort is in danger of getting lost in the noise. The administration is understandably focusing first on New START, given that START will expire in four months. Ratification of New START is not expected until next spring, hopefully before the May NPT conference. It may not be possible to mount a successful CTBT ratification effort before the NPT meeting, although the administration should still seek to do so. At a minimum CTBT ratification should be well underway with the prospect for a vote in summer 2010, and by no means should this vote be delayed until the fall. To achieve this goal the Obama administration needs to launch a high profile campaign for CTBT ratification soon."
FMCT is essential to capping global stockpiles of weapons-usable fissile materials, and thus is an important part of a broader effort to reduce those stockpiles and prevent their transfer to other states or terrorist groups. But it will take time to negotiate this treaty at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva. In the meantime, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France should announce moratoria on the production of fissile materials for weapons and seek agreement from China, India, Pakistan, and Israel to do the same.

By the May NPT meeting, the US and Russia should make every effort to ratify New START and announce plans to quickly move on to talks on New START II. By then, a high profile CTBT ratification campaign should be well underway in Washington and the nuclear weapon states could announce joint plans to deposit their instruments of ratification and seek entry-into-force of the treaty. It would also be useful for the nuclear weapons states to declare joint moratoria on fissile material production for weapons, call for a global halt, and announce a timeframe for completing FMCT negotiations at the CD.

**The Road to Zero**

The Obama administration’s nuclear agenda is ambitious. Achieving it will take time and will make the world safer in the near-term, and help us toward the long-term vision of a nuclear weapons-free world. Once we complete this first phase, the world will be in a better position to determine the next steps. The United States and Russia, for example, will at some point need to bring China, the United Kingdom and France into talks. We will need to talk with India, Pakistan and Israel. Many tough questions remain. The map we have to a nuclear weapons free world--incomplete as it may be--is good enough to start the journey.

Thank you.