The Case for New START

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The United States and Russia have dramatically reduced their nuclear stockpiles since the end of the Cold War, thanks to bilateral arms control agreements that have won the support of Republicans and Democrats alike. In the bipartisan tradition of earlier agreements negotiated by Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) would keep Washington and Moscow on track to reduce their arsenals by about 30 percent below current limits.

Signed April 8, 2010, New START would increase U.S. security by limiting Russia to no more than 1,550 strategic nuclear warheads deployed on 700 delivery vehicles (missiles and bombers) and re-establishing a robust, up-to-date monitoring system to verify compliance. The United States would retain a modern nuclear force more than sufficient in size to deter nuclear attack by Russia or any other potential adversary.

Republican and Democratic leaders in the Senate should agree to make time to debate and vote on ratification of New START before Congress adjourns for the year.

Why the urgency? The original START treaty expired Dec. 5, 2009, and with it went START’s arsenal limits and on-site inspections. General Kevin Chilton, Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, testified in June, "If we don't get the treaty, [the Russians] are not constrained in their development of force structure and... we have no insight into what they're doing. So it's the worst of both possible worlds."

Prompt ratification of New START is the only way to close this "verification gap." The treaty would establish an updated system of information exchanges and enhanced on-site inspections that would provide more information on the status of Russian strategic forces than was available under the original START accord.

For these and other reasons, a long list of U.S. military leaders, including seven former U.S. strategic commanders and national security leaders from past Republican and Democratic administrations support New START.

Over the last eight months, more than 20 Senate hearings and briefings have been held on the pact. The administration has answered more than 900 questions from senators. On Sept. 16 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) passed the New START resolution of advice and consent by a bipartisan vote of 14 to 4.

This resolution answered all of the major questions posed by treaty skeptics, and was able to satisfy all 11 Democratic committee members and Republican Senators Richard Lugar (Ind.), Bob Corker (Tenn.), and Johnny Isakson (Ga.). This Issue Brief highlights the reasons why New START deserves prompt Senate approval.

1. New START would cap and reduce Russia’s strategic nuclear arsenal.

Today, Russia deploys approximately 2,000 strategic nuclear warheads, not counting bomber weapons in storage, according to the Congressional Research Service. New START would reduce this force to 1,550 or less, meaning that hundreds of Russian nuclear warheads would no longer be
deployed on ballistic missiles that could be aimed at the United States. Moreover, New START would lock-in these limits for the next decade or longer.

At the same time, New START would allow the United States to maintain a devastatingly powerful nuclear arsenal deployed on a "triad" of nuclear delivery systems. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen said Nov. 11 that New START would leave the United States with nuclear forces that are "...more than enough for us to handle our military responsibilities." Besides Russia, the United States' only potential nuclear adversary is China, which has fewer than 50 nuclear-armed long-range missiles.

2. New START would resume inspections of Russian strategic forces.

It has been almost a year since the United States lost the ability to conduct intrusive, on-site inspections of Russia's nuclear arsenal mandated by the 1991 START accord. The 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), still in force, contains no verification provisions. The longer New START remains in limbo, the longer this strategic blackout will continue.

New START would reestablish on-the-ground information gathering about Russian strategic forces that the United States could not get any other way. For example, satellites and other intelligence assets cannot look inside Russian missiles to see how many warheads they carry, but New START's on-site inspection provisions would do just that. The treaty would provide predictability about Russian strategic forces, allowing the United States better-informed decisions about investments in nuclear forces and other military capabilities.

Without New START in force, the U.S. intelligence community would not be able to predict with high confidence the status of Russia's nuclear forces, and both sides would be tempted to engage in more-costly force modernization and hedging strategies.

3. New START is effectively verifiable.

New START would establish an updated system of information exchanges and enhanced on-site inspections that would provide high confidence that Russia is complying with the new, lower limits on deployed strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems.

On-Site Inspections. New START allows up to 18 on-site inspections per year, including direct monitoring of Russian nuclear warheads, something no treaty has allowed before. Some senators have raised concerns that New START allows fewer annual inspections than did the original START.

However, for all practical purposes, the number of inspections in New START is the same as START. New START's "Type One" inspections, which occur at bases for deployed missiles and bombers, can achieve two goals (confirm data on delivery vehicles and warheads) at the same time, and thus ten of these inspections equal 20 START inspections. Together with the eight "Type Two" inspections of non-deployed systems, the 18 New START inspections are essentially equivalent to the 28 inspections under START.

Moreover, the original START's 28 inspections had to cover 70 facilities in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, as the Soviet nuclear complex was spread across these four now-independent nations. Today, all former Soviet nuclear weapons and facilities have been centralized in Russia, and New START's 18 inspections need to cover only 35 Russian sites.

Telemetry. Telemetry, or missile flight test information, was needed under START I to determine the maximum number of warheads that might be loaded onto Russian ballistic missiles. Since New START requires data exchanges on the actual warhead loading of each deployed missile and allows direct on-site inspections to confirm this, telemetry sharing is no longer required. Even so, New START provides for telemetry sharing on up to five missile tests per year as a confidence-building measure.

"Telemetry is not nearly as important for this treaty as it has been in the past," said Secretary Gates March 26. "In fact, we don't need telemetry to monitor compliance with this treaty," he said.
Votkinsk. Although the George W. Bush administration agreed in 2008 to end mobile missile production monitoring at Russia's Votkinsk plant, under the new treaty Russia must notify the United States 48 hours before a new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) or submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) leaves Votkinsk and when it arrives at its destination, which will facilitate monitoring by national technical means, such as satellites.

After hearing testimony in closed session from U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) witnesses, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concluded in its Oct. 1 report that “the New START Treaty is effectively verifiable.” A July 30 letter from Secretary of Defense Gates to the committee reached the same conclusion:

"The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Joint Chiefs, the Commander, U.S. strategic Command, and I assess that Russia will not be able to achieve militarily significant cheating or breakout under New START, due to both the New START verification regime and the inherent survivability and flexibility of the planned U.S. strategic force structure."

"If Russia were to attempt to gain political advantage by cheating or breakout, the U.S. will be able to respond rapidly by increasing the alert levels of SSBNs [strategic submarines] and bombers, and by uploading warheads on SSBNs, bombers, and ICBMs. Therefore, the survivable and flexible U.S. strategic posture planned for New START will help deter any future Russian leaders from cheating or breakout from the treaty, should they ever have such an inclination."

Nevertheless, SFRC member Sen. Jim Risch (R-Idaho), who voted against the treaty, said Sept. 16 that the IC had revealed "very serious information" that in his view should have held up committee approval of New START. Committee Chairman Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) replied that the new information "in no way alters [the IC's] judgment, already submitted to this committee, with respect to the [New] START treaty... It has no impact, in their judgment."


New START helps to demonstrate that the United States and Russia are keeping up their end of the bargain under the 1968 nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). New START would increase Washington's leverage in seeking stronger non-proliferation measures, such as more effective nuclear inspections, tougher penalties for states that do not comply with nonproliferation obligations, and faster action to secure the most vulnerable nuclear weapons materials. Improving the NPT system is essential to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to terrorists and additional nations.

The revival of U.S.-Russian strategic dialogue has already improved cooperation in a variety of fields. For example, Russia supported the U.S.-led effort to enact U.N. sanctions against Iran, and Russia has cancelled its sale of the S-300 air-defense system to Iran. New START will help strengthen U.S.-Russian joint efforts to keep nuclear materials out of the hands of terrorists, as well as keep pressure on Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment program.

Without New START, Russian support will be harder to obtain. On Nov. 8, for example, Sen. Lugar said it is unlikely that Moscow would sustain cooperative threat reduction efforts indefinitely without New START coming into force. "The prospects for extending Nunn-Lugar work in Russia after [2013] would be especially complicated without New START's transparency features that assure both countries about the nuclear capabilities of the other," Lugar said.

5. New START protects U.S. missile defense options.

Claims that the treaty's nonbinding language on the "interrelationship" between strategic offenses and defenses will limit U.S. missile defense options do not add up. As Secretary of Defense Gates bluntly said May 18, "the treaty will not constrain the United States from deploying the most effective missile defenses possible."

Some treaty critics erroneously suggest that Article V, which prohibits both sides from converting launchers for ICBMs and SLBMs into launchers for missile defense interceptors, and vice versa, limits...
U.S. missile defense plans in the future.

However, the United States has no plans for any such conversions. "It's a limit in theory, but not in reality," wrote U.S. National Security Adviser James Jones on April 20. "We have no plans to convert any additional ICBM silos. In fact, it would be less expensive to build a new silo rather than convert an old one. In other words, if we were to ever need more missile defense silos in California, we would simply dig new holes, which is not proscribed by the treaty."

Russia is concerned that future U.S. strategic missile interceptor deployments could undermine its nuclear retaliatory capability, and has made a unilateral statement that it could potentially withdraw from New START if the United States deploys such systems in large numbers.

The SFRC resolution of advice and consent clearly states that it is the Senate's understanding that "the New START Treaty does not impose any limitations on the deployment of missile defenses" other than the treaty's ban on converting ICBM and SLBM launchers for use by interceptors—which the Pentagon has said it has no intention of doing in any case—and that any further limitations would require Senate approval.

The resolution clarifies that "the April 7, 2010, unilateral statement by the Russian Federation on missile defense does not impose a legal obligation on the United States." It also reaffirms language in the 1999 Missile Defense Act that it is the policy of the United States to deploy an effective national missile defense system "as soon as technologically possible" and that nothing in the treaty limits future planned enhancements to the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system or the European Phased Adaptive Approach.

Indeed, the Obama administration is going full-bore on its plans to increase SM-3 intermediate-range interceptor deployments in Europe. While some may bemoan the decision to revise the Bush-era plan to deploy silo-based strategic interceptors in Europe, the new plan better addresses the existing Iranian short- and medium-range missile threat.

6. New START allows for the maintenance of modern, effective nuclear forces.

The Obama administration has pledged, pursuant to section 1251 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, to spend $80 billion over the next ten years to maintain the nuclear stockpile and modernize the weapons complex. The plan calls for spending another $100 billion over the same period to upgrade strategic nuclear delivery systems. The administration's $7 billion request for the weapons complex for FY 2011 was 10 percent higher than the previous year.

Linton Brooks, the head of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) in the Bush administration, said in April, "I'd have killed for that budget and that much high-level attention in the administration." As Secretary of Defense Gates wrote in his preface to the April 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), "These investments, and the NPR's strategy for warhead life extension, represent a credible modernization plan necessary to sustain the nuclear infrastructure and support our nation's deterrent."

Despite this, some senators are concerned that the administration might not deliver on its commitments.

In response, the SFRC's resolution of advice and consent states that "the United States is committed to proceeding with a robust stockpile stewardship program, and to maintaining and modernizing the nuclear weapons production capabilities and capacities." To achieve these goals, the resolution says that the United States is committed to providing the necessary resources, "at a minimum at the levels set forth in the President's 10-year plan."

The resolution also states that "if at any time more resources are required than estimated in the President's 10-year plan," the President shall submit a report detailing: 1) how he proposes to remedy the shortfall; 2) the proposed level of funding required; 3) the impact of the shortfall on the safety, reliability, and performance of U.S. nuclear forces; and 4) "whether and why, in the changed circumstances brought about by the resource shortfall, it remains in the national interest of the United States to remain a Party to the New START Treaty."
Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) Sept. 30 that includes the administration's $7 billion FY2011 budget request for weapons activities at NNSA. Sen. Kerry said Sept. 30 that this funding "sends a strong signal about this administration's commitment to keeping our nuclear arsenal at a viable and suitable level" under New START. The CR runs out on Dec. 3. If the Senate does not vote on New START before year's end, the administration may not be able to protect the program from cuts.

Senators of both parties should recognize that delaying approval of New START-and reconsideration of the Test Ban Treaty next year-would create uncertainty about U.S. nuclear policy and jeopardize the fragile political consensus to increase funding to maintain the U.S. nuclear stockpile in the years ahead.

7. New START allows conventional global strike weapons.

Conventional warheads that the United States may in the future decide to deploy on strategic ballistic missiles would be subject to New START limits. However, there are no firm plans to deploy Conventional Prompt Global Strike (CPGS) weapons, and any future deployments are likely to be small in number. As a result, there is room within the treaty's limits for future CPGS deployments.

In an answer for the SFRC record, Secretary of Defense Gates stated: "As envisaged by our military planners, the number of such conventionally armed delivery vehicles and the warheads they carry would be very small when measured against the overall levels of strategic delivery systems and strategic warheads. Should we decide to deploy them, counting this small number of conventional strategic systems and their warheads toward the treaty limits will not prevent the United States from maintaining a robust nuclear deterrent."

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee concluded that it saw "no reason to doubt statements by the cognizant civilian and uniformed military officials that, at least over the ten-year duration of the treaty, the treaty's limits provide sufficient room to accommodate both the strategic nuclear forces and the limited number of CPGS weapons the United States is likely to deploy."

Moreover, the SFRC resolution clarifies that New START does not limit potential CPGS concepts that would not meet the definitions of ICBMs and SLBMs under the treaty, such as "boost-glide" systems that do not have a ballistic trajectory.

8. New START sets the stage for limits on tactical weapons.

Some complain that New START does not reduce Russia's tactical nuclear warhead levels, which have never been covered by a treaty. By design, New START addresses strategic nuclear weapons. It does not make sense to risk verifiable reduction in Russia's long-range nuclear weapons by insisting that the policy for short-range weapons be settled now. New START lays the diplomatic foundation necessary for a future accord on tactical nuclear weapons reductions.

On this question, the SFRC resolution calls on the President "to pursue, following consultation with allies, an agreement with the Russian Federation that would address the disparity between the tactical nuclear weapons stockpiles of the Russian Federation and of the United States and would secure and reduce tactical nuclear weapons in a verifiable manner."

President Obama has said that he intends to work with Moscow to pursue further nuclear reductions in all types of nuclear warheads—including tactical weapons—after New START is ratified. Moreover, Secretary of State Clinton and Defense Secretary Gates, in a joint answer for the SFRC record, said that:

"Because of their limited range and very different roles from those played by strategic nuclear forces, the vast majority of Russian tactical nuclear weapons could not directly influence the strategic nuclear balance between the United States and Russia... Because the United States will retain a robust strategic force structure under New START, Russia's tactical nuclear weapons will have little or no impact on strategic stability."
9. New START is supported by the U.S. military and bipartisan national security leaders.

New START has the support of the U.S. military establishment and former senior national security officials, both Republicans and Democrats, including:

- **James R. Schlesinger**, former Secretary of Defense and former Director of Central Intelligence, Nixon and Ford administrations; **Lt. General Brent Scowcroft**, former National Security Advisor, Ford and George H.W. Bush administrations; **Stephen Hadley**, former National Security Advisor, George W. Bush administration; **James Baker**, former Secretary of State, George H.W. Bush administration; **Henry Kissinger**, former Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, Nixon and Ford administrations; **George P. Shultz**, former Secretary of State, Reagan administration; **Colin L. Powell**, former Secretary of State, George W. Bush administration; former Secretary of Defense **Harold Brown**, Carter administration; former Secretary of Defense **Frank Carlucci**, Reagan administration; and former Republican Senators **Howard Baker** (Tenn.), **John C. Danforth** (Mo.), **Chuck Hagel** (Neb.), **Nancy Kassebaum-Baker** (Kansas), **Warren Rudman** (N.H.), **Alan Simpson** (Wyo.), and **William Cohen** (Maine), among others.

Seven former U.S. military commanders of Strategic Command announced their support for New START. In a July 14 letter to senators, the five Air Force Generals and two Navy Admirals wrote that they "strongly endorse [New START's] early ratification and entry into force" because "the treaty will enhance American national security."

10. New START allows command and control upgrades.

On Oct. 23, a communications failure occurred at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyo., involving 50 nuclear-armed Minuteman III ICBMs. Even though this incident, which lasted one hour, could have prevented officers at the base from launching the missiles, back-up airborne command and control systems could still have launched on orders from the commander-in-chief. An administration official, speaking about the president's ability to control nuclear forces, said: "At no time did the president's ability decrease."

Meanwhile, even without the 50 ICBMs in question, the United States at the time still had over 800 strategic missiles and bombers deployed with 1,900 nuclear warheads in its active force. Moreover, even if this incident had happened after New START had been fully implemented, the United States would still have had over 600 missiles and bombers with 1,500 nuclear warheads ready to go.

Nuclear command and control systems can and will be improved and New START would not in any way prevent such improvements. In fact, the U.S. military is planning to invest $180 billion in its nuclear weapons and delivery systems over the next decade, while New START would be in force. As a result, Lt. Gen. Frank Klotz, head of the United States' new Global Strike Command, said Nov. 9 that the Warren incident "has absolutely no link at all to the START Treaty."

**Stalling New START undermines U.S. security**

For all of these reasons, New START deserves the Senate's prompt support. In particular, given START's expiration in December 2009, there is currently no bilateral system for monitoring Russia's nuclear forces. Failure by the Senate to approve New START would not only delay the re-establishment of an effective U.S.-Russian inspection and monitoring system, but it would undermine U.S. nonproliferation leadership and jeopardize U.S.-Russian cooperation, including joint efforts to contain Iran's nuclear program.

It is time for senators on both sides of the aisle to come together to strengthen U.S. and global security by voting in favor of New START ratification. -- **TOM Z. COLLINA and DARYL G. KIMBALL**

**Additional Resources:**

New START text and official documents: http://www.state.gov/t/avc/newstart/c39903.htm

- Daryl G. Kimball
- New START

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