

Remarks on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

March 26, 2010

Good morning, everybody. I just concluded a productive phone call with President Medvedev and I'm pleased to announce that after a year of intense negotiations, the United States and Russia have agreed to the most comprehensive arms control agreement in nearly two decades.

Since taking office, one of my highest priorities has been addressing the threat posed by nuclear weapons to the American people. And that's why, last April in Prague, I stated America's intention to pursue the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, a goal that's been embraced by Presidents like John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan. While this aspiration will not be reached in the near future, I put forward a comprehensive agenda to pursue it—to stop the spread of these weapons, to secure vulnerable nuclear materials from terrorists, and to reduce nuclear arsenals. A fundamental part of that effort was the negotiation of a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia.

Furthermore, since I took office, I've been committed to a reset of our relationship with Russia. When the United States and Russia can cooperate effectively, it advances the mutual interests of our two nations and the security and prosperity of the wider world. We've so far already worked together on Afghanistan. We've coordinated our economic efforts through the G-20. We are working together to pressure Iran to meet its international obligations. And today we have reached agreement on one of my administration's top national security priorities, a pivotal new arms control agreement.

In many ways, nuclear weapons represent both the darkest days of the cold war and the most troubling threats of our time. Today we've taken another step forward by—in leaving behind the legacy of the 20th century, while building a more secure future for our children. We've turned words into action. We've made progress that is clear and concrete. And we've demonstrated the importance of American leadership and American partnership on behalf of our own security and the world's.

Broadly speaking, the new START Treaty makes progress in several areas. It cuts, by about a third, the nuclear weapons that the United States and Russia will deploy. It significantly reduces missiles and launchers. It puts in place a strong and effective verification regime. And it maintains the flexibility that we need to protect and advance our national security and to guarantee our unwavering commitment to the security of our allies.

With this agreement, the United States and Russia, the two largest nuclear powers in the world, also send a clear signal that we intend to lead. By upholding our own commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we strengthen our global efforts to stop the spread of these weapons and to ensure that other nations meet their own responsibilities.

I'm pleased that, almost 1 year to the day after my last trip to Prague, the Czech Republic, a close friend and ally of the United States, has agreed to host President Medvedev and me on April 8th as we sign this historic treaty. The following week, I look forward to hosting leaders from over 40 nations here in Washington as we convene a summit to address how we can secure vulnerable nuclear materials so that they never fall into the hands of terrorists. And later

this spring, the world will come together in New York to discuss how we can build on this progress and continue to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime.

Through all these efforts, cooperation between the United States and Russia will be essential. I want to thank President Medvedev for his personal and sustained leadership as we worked through this agreement. We've had the opportunity to meet many times over the last year and we both agree that we can serve the interests of our people through close cooperation.

I also want to thank my national security team, who did so much work to make this day possible. That includes the leaders with me here today: Secretary Clinton, Secretary Gates, and Admiral Mullen. And it includes a tireless negotiating team. It took patience, it took perseverance, but we never gave up. And as a result, the United States will be more secure and the American people will be safer.

Finally, I look forward to continuing to work closely with Congress in the months ahead. There's a long tradition of bipartisan leadership on arms control. Presidents of both parties have recognized the necessity of securing and reducing these weapons. Statesmen like George Shultz, Sam Nunn, Henry Kissinger, and Bill Perry have been outspoken in their support of more assertive action. Earlier this week, I met with my friends John Kerry and Dick Lugar to discuss this Treaty, and throughout the morning, my administration will be consulting Senators from both parties as we prepare for what I hope will be a strong, bipartisan support to ratify the new START Treaty.

With that, I'm going to leave you in the able hands of my Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, as well as Secretary of Defense Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mike Mullen. So I want to thank all of you for your attention.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretaries of State George P. Shultz and Henry A. Kissinger; former Sen. Samuel A. Nunn; and former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Gates, Robert M.; Kerry, John F.; Kissinger, Henry A.; Lugar, Richard G.; Medvedev, Dmitry A.; Mullen, Michael G.; Nunn, Samuel A.; Perry, William J.; Shultz, George P.

Subjects: Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Security; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia, proposed expansion; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction; Commerce, international : Group of Twenty (G-20) nations; Congress : Bipartisanship; Congress : Members, meetings with President; Defense, Department of : Joint Chiefs of Staff; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Russia : Military equipment transit into Afghanistan, agreement with U.S.; Russia : Nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction; Russia : President; Russia : Relations with U.S.; Russia : Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with U.S., proposed expansion; State, Department of : Secretary.

DCPD Number: DCPD201000205.