

“Advancing the Prague Nuclear Risk Reduction Agenda”

Ellen O. Tauscher

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Arms Control Association Annual Meeting, May 6, 2013

Fifty years ago next month, on June 10, 1963, President Kennedy delivered a game-changing speech at American University addressing threats posed by nuclear weapons.

He said that America would “do our part to build a world of peace where the weak are safe and the strong are just.”

He said that “Confident and unafraid, we labor on--not toward a strategy of annihilation but toward a strategy of peace.”

Today, the Obama administration, and all of us, labor on. For as much progress as we have seen over the last four years to move toward a world free of nuclear weapons—and there has been a lot—our work is not done.

Now is the time to renew the effort and to complete key elements of the agenda that President Obama laid out so eloquently four years ago in Prague.

As we see in Iran and North Korea, nuclear dangers will not wait and they will not go away. We must address them head on. And to those who say the politics are too hard, that just means we need to redouble our efforts. Anything worth doing will not come easily.

Case in point, the New START treaty, one of my proudest achievements, was a heavy lift.

But we got it done because the administration—and all of you—rolled up our collective sleeves and did not waver on the long march to our goal. And if President Obama sets his mind to it, we can win victories like this again.

New START, of course, has been in force since 2011 and is bringing U.S. and Russian nuclear forces down to the lowest levels since the 1950s. Under President Obama’s leadership, we also completed the Nuclear Posture

Review, which will, when implemented, further reduce the role and number of U.S. nuclear weapons.

We launched the Nuclear Security Summits, working with world leaders to keep nuclear materials out of the hands of terrorists. And we strengthened the Nonproliferation Treaty by contributing to a successful 2010 review conference and a final document that points us in the right direction for the future.

So what should that future hold? How can we best, as President Kennedy put it 50 years ago, “labor on...toward a strategy of peace”?

There are three things that I believe this administration can and must accomplish in its second—and last—term:

1. Complete another round of significant nuclear reductions with Russia;
2. Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; and
3. Make the nonproliferation regime even stronger.

US-Russian Reductions, Round Two

The Pentagon’s March decision to restructure Phase 4 of its plans for missile defense in Europe has, we hope, opened the door for missile defense cooperation with Russia that has the potential to transform the strategic relationship between Washington and Moscow. This is a bipartisan goal – both President Reagan and President Bush supported cooperation on missile defense with Russia.

The cancellation of Phase 4 also removes one of the major reasons that Russia has been resisting another round of nuclear arms reductions. As President Obama has been saying since 2010, he wants another round that includes strategic and tactical warheads, both deployed and in storage.

As the President said in March 2012 in South Korea, even under New START “we have more nuclear weapons than we need.”

Additional reductions would mean fewer Russia weapons potentially aimed at us, and fewer U.S. weapons, which could translate into billions of dollars in savings on the maintenance and modernization of the U.S. nuclear triad.

We could also get a better handle on Russia's tactical weapons, which the Senator on both sides of the aisle are eager to do.

Finally, further reductions would help our overall nonproliferation efforts by bolstering the NPT and encouraging cooperation from other nations.

Unfortunately, some Senators (Inhofe, Corker) are of the view that the administration has not kept the nuclear modernization promises it made during New START ratification, and thus are not willing to even consider a new treaty. But this view misinterprets what the administration said it would do on modernization during the course of the 2010 debate on New START.

The Obama administration has demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to maintaining a safe, reliable and effective nuclear stockpile and to reinvesting in the nuclear weapons production infrastructure. Back in 2010, the White House made budget projections as to what it thought the task would require and what the nation could afford. It did not promise specific dollar figures no matter what, but made clear they were subject to change.

And in fact, change they did.

The Budget Control Act came along in 2011, and sequestration this past March. The administration requested full funding in 2012, but the Republican-controlled House cut the budget by \$400 million.

But even though the initial budget projections have not been realized, funding for the National Nuclear Security Administration or NNSA has still gone up significantly at a time when other budgets are tanking. The weapons activities budget of NNSA has gone up by \$1.2 billion, almost 20 percent, from 2009 to 2013 (\$6.38 to \$7.58 billion).

Find me a program manager who would not welcome that!

Moreover, all senators should be open to finding more efficient ways to achieve the mission. For example, NNSA originally said we needed a \$6 billion plutonium facility in New Mexico to help make new warhead parts, called "pits." But then the national laboratories found that pits can last decades longer than expected, and they can be reused over again. So now when NNSA extends the life of a warhead, they don't need to make a new

pit, they can reuse an existing one. This approach meets the mission requirement and can save billions of dollars.

So, my plea to certain senators: lets not focus on the specific budget numbers, but the job at hand. There is bipartisan agreement that the infrastructure needs to be modernized and the arsenal maintained. There should also be bipartisan agreement that if we find more efficient ways to do that, we should take the opportunity to save money for the taxpayer.

But most important, we should not let this misunderstanding get in the way of an agreement that can make the United States safer and more financially secure.

How can we move forward with additional reductions in the Russian and U.S. Stockpiles?

There are at least three options, which are not mutually exclusive.

First, and ideally, as President Obama has said he would like to do for some time, Presidents Putin and Obama can direct their negotiators to begin work on a follow-on to the New START Treaty that addresses not just deployed, but non-deployed warheads and not just strategic nuclear weapons but also tactical nuclear weapons.

Russia's earlier concerns about more capable SM-3 interceptors should fade away with Secretary Hagel's recent announcement that for budgetary and technical reasons the Phase 4 of the European Phased Adaptive Approach on missile defense will be indefinitely postponed.

But as the Secretary of State's International Security Advisory Board noted in their November 27, 2012 report on "Options for Implementing Additional Nuclear Force Reductions," this negotiation will be far more complicated than New START.

It will involve resolving issues concerning counting and monitoring of non-deployed warheads and substrategic nuclear weapons, which have never been part of a formal arms control treaty.

Even if Presidents Obama and Putin can agree to begin such a process soon after their meeting next month, this would likely mean that the talks would take longer to complete—much longer than New START.

But as the ISAB report noted, with New START verification tools already in place, further reciprocal U.S.-Russian nuclear reductions need not wait for a formal follow-on treaty.

To accelerate progress, President Obama can and should follow through on his 2009 pledge to “end Cold War thinking” and signal that he will further reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons. To do so, the White House must finally implement a saner, “nuclear deterrence only” strategy outlined in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review. The NPR implementation has the potential to eliminate outdated targeting assumptions and remove a significant number of deployed U.S. weapons from prompt-launch status.

The President could also announce that he is prepared to accelerate reductions under New START and, along with Russia, move below the treaty’s ceiling of 1,550 deployed warheads. Russia is already below this level; the United States is approaching it.

Mutual reductions to about 1,000 deployed strategic warheads are possible and prudent. And they can be achieved promptly.

In my view, there is no reason why U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces should remain at arbitrarily higher levels. While the United States and Russia are uneasy partners and still have a number of disagreements, we can and should move away from the current condition of mutually assured destruction and closer to mutual assured stability.

This would help reduce the enormous cost of planned strategic force modernization by both countries in the coming years.

Such actions would put pressure pressure China to halt its slow increase in nuclear forces and open the door for serious, multilateral disarmament discussions, with the other nuclear-armed states, a process that the Obama administration has already started to pursue through their consultations with the P-5 group.

At the same time, the United States in consultation with NATO, could engage in parallel talks aimed at accounting for the remaining tactical nuclear weapons stockpiles held by Russia and by the United States, including the forward-deployed U.S. weapons in Europe with the aim of providing clarity about numbers, consolidating the warheads at a smaller number of more secure sites, and moving them further away from the border between Russian and our European allies.

Realizing the Promise of the CTBT

Now let me turn to banning nuclear tests, an idea first introduced by President Eisenhower in the late 1950s, and continued by Kennedy. In his 1963 speech, President Kennedy announced that high-level discussions would begin in Moscow on a comprehensive test ban treaty. “Our hopes must be tempered with the caution of history -- but with our hopes go the hopes of all mankind.”

President Kennedy achieved a Limited Test Ban Treaty—ratified by the Senate in September 1963 by a vote of 80 to 19--but aspired to do more. Fifty years later, the process started by Eisenhower and Kennedy is still not over.

President Obama vowed to pursue ratification of the CTBT in his speech in Prague. In doing so, the United States is once again taking a leading role in supporting a test ban treaty.

This being Washington, everything is seen through a political lens. So before discussing the merits of the treaty, let me talk about this in a political sense for a moment.

The New START debate in many ways opened the door for the CTBT. Months of hearings and debate and nine long days of floor deliberations engaged the Senate – especially its newer members – in an extended seminar on the composition of our nuclear arsenal, the health of our stockpile and the relationship between nuclear weapons and national security. When the Senate voted for the New START, it inherently affirmed that our stockpile is safe, secure and effective and can be kept so without nuclear testing.

More importantly, the New START debate helped cultivate emerging new arms control champions. Before the debate, there was not a lot of muscle

memory on treaties, especially nuclear treaties, in the Senate and now there is. So we are in a strong position to make the case for the CTBT on its merits.

To maintain and enhance that momentum, the Obama administration has been engaging the Senate and the public on an education campaign, focusing on three primary arguments.

One, the United States no longer needs to conduct nuclear explosive tests, plain and simple. Two, a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty that has entered into force will obligate other states not to test and provide a disincentive for states to conduct such tests. And three, we now have a greater ability to catch those who cheat. Let me take these points one by one.

From 1945 to 1992, the United States conducted more than 1,000 nuclear explosive tests, more than all other nations combined. The cumulative data gathered from these tests have provided an impressive foundation of knowledge for us to base the continuing effectiveness of our arsenal. But historical data alone is insufficient.

Well over a decade ago, we launched an extensive and rigorous stockpile stewardship program that has enabled our nuclear weapons laboratories to carry out the essential surveillance and warhead life extension programs to ensure the credibility of our deterrent. Every year for the past 15 years, the secretaries of Defense and Energy, from Democratic and Republican administration and the directors of the nuclear weapons laboratories have certified that our arsenal is safe, secure and effective.

And each year, we have affirmed that we do not need to conduct explosive nuclear tests. The lab directors tell us that stockpile stewardship has provided deeper understanding of our arsenal than they had ever thought of when testing was commonplace.

Think about that for a moment. Our current efforts go a step beyond explosive testing by enabling the labs to anticipate problems in advance and reduce their potential impact on our arsenal, something that nuclear testing could not do.

I, for one, would not trade our successful approach based on world-class science and technology for a return to explosive testing.

So, when it comes to the CTBT, the United States is in a curious position. We abide by the core prohibition of the treaty because we don't need to test nuclear weapons. And we have contributed to the development of the international monitoring system.

But the principal benefit of ratifying the treaty – constraining other states from testing – still eludes us.

That doesn't make sense to me and it shouldn't make any sense to the members of the Senate. I do not believe that even the most vocal critics of the CTBT want to resume explosive nuclear testing. What they have chosen instead is a status quo where the United States refrains from testing without using the fact to lock in a legally binding global ban that would significantly benefit the United States' national security.

Secondly, a CTBT that has entered into force would hinder other states from advancing their nuclear weapons capabilities. Were the CTBT to enter into force, states interested in pursuing or advancing a nuclear weapons program would risk either deploying weapons that might not work or incur international condemnation and sanctions for testing.

While states can build a crude first-generation nuclear weapon without conducting nuclear explosive tests, they would have trouble going further and they probably wouldn't even know for certain the yield of the weapon they built.

More established nuclear weapons states could not with any confidence deploy advanced nuclear weapons capabilities that deviated significantly from previously tested designs without explosive testing.

Nowhere would these constraints be more relevant than in Asia where you see states building up and modernizing their forces. A legally binding prohibition on all nuclear explosive testing would help reduce the chances of a potential regional arms race in the years and decades to come.

Finally, we have become very good at detecting potential cheaters. If you test, there is a very high risk of getting caught. Upon the treaty's entry into force, the United States would use the international monitoring system to complement our own state-of-the-art national technical means to verify the treaty. In 1999, not a single certified IMS station or facility existed.

We understand why some senators had some doubts about its future capabilities. But today, the IMS is more than 80 percent complete. Two hundred and seventy-five of the planned 337 monitoring stations are in place and functioning.

The IMS detected all three of North Korea's announced nuclear tests. The IMS detected trace radioactive isotopes from the 2006 and 2013 tests. In all three cases, there was significant evidence to support an on-site inspection. But on-site inspections are only permissible once the treaty enters into force.

While the IMS continues to prove its value, our national technical means remain second to none and we continue to improve on them. Senators can judge our overall capabilities for themselves by consulting the national intelligence estimates. Taken together, these verification tools would make it difficult for any state to conduct nuclear tests that escape detection.

In other words, a robust verification regime carries an important deterrent value in and of itself. Could we imagine a far-fetched scenario where a country might conduct a test so low that it would not be detected? Perhaps. But would a country be willing to risk being caught cheating? That's doubtful, because there are significant costs to pay for those countries that test.

The National Academy of Sciences, a trusted and unbiased voice on scientific issues, released an unclassified report in 2012 examining the treaty from a technical perspective. The report looked at how the United States' ratification would impact our ability to maintain our nuclear arsenal and our ability to detect and verify explosive nuclear tests. The NAS report concluded that, without nuclear tests, "the United States is now better able to maintain a safe and effective nuclear stockpile and to monitor clandestine nuclear-explosion testing than at any time in the past."

Moving forward on the CTBT will be tough. No doubt. I recognize that a Senate debate over ratification will be spirited, vigorous and likely contentious. The debate in 1999 unfortunately was too short and too politicized.

The treaty was brought to the floor without the benefit of extensive committee hearings or significant input from administration officials and outside experts. We will not repeat those mistakes.

Just as we did with New START, the Obama administration can and should make a more forceful case when it is certain the facts have been carefully examined and reviewed in a thoughtful process. I know that Rose Gottemoeller is committed to taking a bipartisan and fact-based approach with the Senate.

For my Republican friends who voted against the treaty in 1999 and might feel bound by that vote, I have one message: Don't be. The times have changed.

As my good friend and fellow Californian, George Shultz, likes to say and repeated this year— those who opposed the treaty in 1999 can say they were right. But they would be more right to vote for the treaty today. So we have a lot of work to do to build the political will to ratify the CTBT.

Nuclear testing is not a front-burner issue in the minds of most Americans, in part because we have not tested in over 20 years. To understand the gap in public awareness, just think of the fact that in 1961, some 10,000 women walked off their job as mothers and housewives to protest the arms race and nuclear testing.

Now, that strike did not have the same impact as the nonviolent marches and protests to further the cause of civil rights. But the actions of mothers taking a symbolic and dramatic step to recognize global nuclear dangers show that the issue has resonance beyond the Beltway, beyond the think-tank world and beyond the ivory tower. That level of concern is there today and we need your energy, your organizational skills and your creativity to tap into it.

Strengthening the NPT

In March 1963, President Kennedy also said, "I see the possibility. . . [of] the United States having to face a world in which 15 or 20 or 25 nations may have these [nuclear] weapons. I regard that as the greatest possible danger and hazard."

This possibility was avoided in large part by the NPT, which was concluded 45 years ago this summer.

Today, The NPT has nearly 190 members, and requires states without nuclear weapons to refrain from getting them, and states with them seek to move to eliminate their stockpiles. We must polish both sides of the coin to keep it shiny.

Additional U.S.-Russian arsenal reductions and U.S. ratification of the CTBT would not only strengthen U.S. security in their own right, but they will help facilitate greater international cooperation on other elements of the president's nonproliferation agenda.

U.S. and Russian leadership on disarmament will strengthen our leverage with the international community to pressure defiant regimes like those in Iran and North Korea as they engage in illicit nuclear activities. We will have greater credibility while encouraging other states to pursue nonproliferation objectives including universality of the additional protocol.

In short, progress on disarmament is essential to preventing proliferation.

Specifically, the 2010 Action Plan underlines the importance of resolving all cases of noncompliance with IAEA safeguards. Noncompliance by Iran, North Korea and Syria are a serious threat to the nonproliferation regime. NPT states must demand they return to full compliance with the NPT. States must be held accountable for treaty violations and abuses of the withdrawal provision.

I must also highlight the important role of nuclear security in preventing nuclear terrorism. Through the Nuclear Security Summit process we need to expand partnerships, accelerate cooperation, and create long-lasting institutions to continue this critical work. The IAEA conference on Nuclear Security in July will be an important opportunity to advance this urgent priority.

Finally, the action plan called for a conference on a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. The United States supports this goal and, although a conference could not be held in 2012, I hope that states in the region can agree to hold it soon.

To ensure that the Middle East zone meeting involves all states, including Israel, it is important that all states in the region meet for consultations on the agenda. And that agenda needs to be comprehensive: addressing steps that states can take on nuclear nonproliferation, as well as chemical weapons elimination, biological weapons, and ballistic missiles.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that to remain effective, the nuclear non-proliferation system must be updated, new commitments must be implemented, and progress on disarmament must be accelerated. The next opportunity to measure success will be in two years at the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

Even with the NPT, political and military tensions continue to drive proliferation behavior in regional hot spots. If U.S.-led talks with Iran and North Korea fail to persuade them to curb sensitive nuclear fuel-cycle activities and meet their nonproliferation obligations, the risk of arms races and conflicts will grow.

To paraphrase what President John F. Kennedy said five decades ago, we must work faster and harder to abolish nuclear weapons before they abolish us. Doing nothing is not an option.

It is time for the President, working with the Congress, and with the support of Russia and other major global partners, to take the next steps to reduce and eliminate nuclear risks.

That effort will require that the Arms Control Association is able to carry on with its vital research and public education work and that we all do our part.

Thank you for your attention.

I look forward to working with you on these issues in the weeks and months and years ahead, and I would be very happy to entertain a few questions.