



A New START – A Key Step in the Reduction of Nuclear Weapons

A new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) was signed by President Obama and Russian President Medvedev on April 8, 2010. Before it can go into effect, it must be ratified by the U.S. Senate and the Russian Parliament.

History of the START agreement

The original START treaty between the United States and Russia was negotiated in the 1980s and early 1990s during the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush presidencies, and it was ratified in the U.S. Senate in 1992. It allowed for no more than 6,000 deployed nuclear warheads and no more than 1,600 delivery vehicles (launchers) for each country. And it allowed for inspections and information sharing between the U.S. and Russia for verification purposes. The START I treaty expired in December 2009. A 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) set further reductions for nuclear warheads, but did not cover launchers or verification methods. The New START would supersede the 2002 treaty.

What the New START does

- Limits the number of nuclear warheads to 1550 deployed, and 100 in reserve
- Limits the number of delivery vehicles – land, sea, & air – to 800 total, 700 deployed
- Improves verification methods, including onsite inspections, and regular exchanges of data

Benefits of the New START

- Reduces the number of U.S. and Russian weapons, which account for 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, and sets the stage for further reductions.
- Shows U.S. commitment to reducing our nuclear weapons, which is critical to getting cooperation from other countries in nuclear non-proliferation agreements.
- Improves our relationship with Russia, a key potential ally in dealing with Iran, Afghanistan, and other problem areas.
- Improves overall U.S. security – the verification measures in the treaty will help the U.S. Department of Defense plan better, since they'll know more about what the Russians are doing.

Additional Information

The New START – A View from Washington (video & text)

<http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=40507>

The New START – A View from Moscow (video & text)

<http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=40506>

New START at a Glance

<http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/NewSTART>

Who Supports the New START?

- The “four horsemen of the national security establishment”:
 - Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger
 - Former Secretary of State George Schultz
 - Former Secretary of Defense William Perry
 - Former Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn
- Former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft
- Former Secretaries of State James Baker and Colin Powell
- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton
- Secretary of Defense Robert Gates
- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen
- Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee John Kerry
- Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Richard Lugar

And many others, including many faith groups and arms-control groups.

Who Opposes the New START?

Some national security “hawks” who feel that treaties like this limit the U.S. ability to defend itself. Proponents of missile defense systems are worried that the treaty could limit our ability to build these systems. (Supporters of the treaty say that the treaty does not limit missile defense for either country.) Others worry that treaty verification methods may give the Russians too much information about our nuclear arsenal.

Some peace groups, while not opposed to the treaty, have asked why the treaty does not contain larger reductions in the number of nuclear weapons. National security experts in the Obama Administration say that they are committed to further reductions, but it will take more time to negotiate with the Russians to get that, and it is important to get the New START treaty passed now, to generate momentum for further reductions.

What are the Next Steps towards a New START?

It will take 67 votes in the Senate to ratify the treaty. In the past, Republicans and Democrats alike have agreed that agreements are preferable to returning to a Cold War-style arms race. But many current senators are relatively unfamiliar with the issue of nuclear nonproliferation, and some senators may be tempted to play politics with the treaty since it is an election year.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has held hearings, and is expected to vote on the treaty in mid September. Then the full Senate will need to vote. All senators need to hear from their constituents who want a world without nuclear weapons. Ratification of the New START is the first step in that direction.