



# INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW

THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2010  
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WASHINGTON, D.C.

**WELCOME/MODERATOR:**

**George Perkovich**

Vice President for Studies and Director, Nuclear Policy Program  
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

**SPEAKER:**

**Gary Samore**

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The White House

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GEORGE PERKOVICH: Good morning. I want to thank everyone for coming. I think the turnout at this time – and I know the traffic was bad – is a testament to the amount of interest and the importance of the topic and the nuclear policy issue generally, both here in the U.S. and internationally. Certainly, for those of us who work on these topics, the last three or four weeks have been about as intense as it gets.

[0:00:43.8]

We're going to have three panels through the course of the day and I'm sure there will be some circulation of people in and out. One of the panels in the afternoon will be an interesting test of technology and geography. We were affected by the air traffic disruptions in Europe as well, so in the afternoon panel, one of our speakers will be by phone from Warsaw, one will be by satellite from Tokyo, and god bless the Norwegians who are closest to the volcano – they'll be here. (Laughter.) But that's later.

This morning, it's my pleasure to introduce Dr. Gary Samore, who is going to lead off the day. Gary at this point shouldn't need an introduction. He is the White House coordinator for arms control and weapons of mass destruction terrorism. The aforementioned events of the last few weeks – the NPR, START, the summit – all run through his brain, phone, office. And so we can imagine what an intense time it's been for Gary if it was a difficult and challenging time for us just to keep up with what was happening.

So we are delighted that Gary has agreed to come and give us a presentation this morning on his sense and the administration's sense of what they intend the NPR to communicate and to represent in terms of U.S. policy going forward. And then we'll have the rest of the sessions afterwards to get a better sense of how in fact that message is being received, what ongoing questions there are.

So let me invite Gary up to the podium. Gary is going to make the presentation, then we'll go right to discussion before we begin our first panel. So Gary Samore.

[0:02:43.3]

GARY SAMORE: Thanks, George. It's great to see so many people turn out to talk about the Nuclear Posture Review, which is not normally an item of much interest.

You know, typically, the Nuclear Posture Review is focused on U.S. defense and security policies. And that's primarily not a foreign policy issue. It's primarily an issue of what we think is best for the national defense. But in this particular case, as the NPR makes clear, the document is designed to support President Obama's commitment to nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

So therefore, it is very – we very consciously – as we crafted the document, very consciously intended to influence the perceptions of different foreign audiences. And of course, since that different foreign audiences have different interests and perspectives, the document reflects a balance in terms of how we crafted the language and the substance of the review.

So I'm going to talk about what I think were the principal foreign audiences and how we tried to accommodate the views and interests of those different foreign countries. This first, and to me the most important,

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foreign audience are U.S. allies and countries that depend on the U.S. for their security. And in particular, I'm talking about allies without nuclear weapons.

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So obviously, we wanted to make absolutely certain as we signaled our commitment to reduce the number and role of U.S. nuclear weapons as President Obama said he intended to do in his Prague speech, we wanted to be very sensitive to avoid in any way damaging or weakening our security relationship with allies and countries that depend on the U.S. for their security both because we don't want to weaken our relationship with those countries but also we don't want to do anything that would undercut the credibility of our extended nuclear deterrence that therefore might lead those countries to believe that they have to develop their own nuclear weapons capability.

So in this respect, reassuring allies is a fundamental nonproliferation objective. And I think that's been clear throughout history that extended deterrence is probably one of our most powerful tools for convincing other countries that they don't need their own nuclear weapons since they can depend upon the United States to use its nuclear weapons to deter attacks and to defend them if necessary.

So you will note that the new negative security assurance – that the U.S. will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations – I know that's a mouthful – that that was deliberately crafted to exclude countries like North Korea and Iran which threaten our allies – or countries that depend on us – with a range of potential nuclear, biological, chemical and conventional threats.

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So we wanted to make sure that our allies knew that our new negative security assurance would not jeopardize our commitment to their security. And for the same reason, we are obviously not prepared to do “no first use” or “sole purpose” because that could raise questions about our commitment to use the full range of our military forces to protect friends.

In the same way, the stockpile management program, I think is a very credible program to maintain safe, secure and reliable nuclear forces without nuclear testing and without having to develop new warheads. So the commitment of funds, the commitment of looking at a range of options to maintain our forces as long as we have them – which is likely to be for many years – that is also intended to make sure that our allies have confidence in the capability of our forces.

And finally, as the NPR makes clear, any future reductions beyond the “New START” treaty will be taken with full consideration of the need to maintain extended deterrence. So we're not going to reduce our forces in the future to the point where it would jeopardize our ability to defend friends. So that was the first – and to me, the primary – audience.

[0:07:34.4]

The second audience are non-nuclear weapon states that are parties to the NPT and in particular, the countries from the Non-Aligned Movement who have always complained that having joined the treaty. Having joined the treaty, having given up the right to have nuclear weapons, being in compliance with their obligations, they should not feel threatened by any nuclear strikes. And President Obama thought that was a very reasonable argument.

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So our new negative security assurance is very much intended to address that concern and put us in a stronger position to argue that as the U.S. has taken measures to reduce the role and the number of nuclear weapons, we should now look for ways to strengthen the NPT. And we'll have the opportunity – or one opportunity – to do that at the upcoming review conference in terms of stronger inspections, stronger enforcement and compliance measures.

So in that respect, the NPR is designed to – just as the “New START” treaty is, it's designed to demonstrate U.S. commitment to disarmament and, in that way, put us in a stronger political position to argue for measures to strengthen the treaty.

[0:08:54.4]

The third audience are U.S. allies that have nuclear weapons – U.K. and France. And the motto here was basically do no harm, and live and let live. And we made it very clear to our allies – and you can see this in the document – that the changes in U.S. declaratory policy are ones that we think fit our particular needs and security interests. We're not recommending or in any way encouraging other countries to adopt our approach because those countries face a different situation in terms of their conventional forces and what they see as the need to maintain their nuclear forces.

So you'll see that the document is very careful not to take a missionary position. We're not advocating that others do what we're doing. This is just what works for us. And in the same way, you'll see the document is very careful not to advocate schemes from multilateral nuclear arms control conventions or anything of that sort because frankly the political conditions in the world are not right for that kind of an approach.

And this gets to the next important audience-country, which is Russia. The treaty talks about the desire of the administration to pursue discussions with Russia on additional arms control, on additional arms reductions after the “New START” treaty and makes clear that we would like in those discussions to include both nondeployed systems as well as tactical systems.

But I think if you look at the document, you'll see there's a recognition that in order to be successful in those discussions, we have to take a broad approach that addresses Russian concerns about U.S. missile defense as well as conventional – what's called global strike – long-range strike capability. And the document talks about having a strategic dialogue with Russia that looks at this broad complex of issues. And I think that that is actually an accurate reflection of the future of any U.S.-Russia arms control talks is going to have to take place in a comprehensive context. I don't think it can be separated from concerns of missile defense or conventional capabilities.

[0:11:25.1]

And finally, the last important target audience was China. And there, the study makes clear that we recognize China is engaged in a modernization program, a build-up program. And we hope to have a – hope to begin a strategic dialogue with China that would emphasize transparency in terms of understanding what the intent and the goal of their build-up is, while at the same time, explaining our own position vis-à-vis our missile defense program.

So I think that summarizes the key foreign audiences that we were aiming to influence. I frankly don't know to what extent we've been successful. I'd be very interested to hear what Ambassador Kisliak says about the Russian perspective.

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We have had some – I mean, most of the feedback I've gotten has been very positive. I won't speak for other countries but most countries that have expressed a view on the Nuclear Posture Review have – basically are happy with it.

The one country that's objected is Iran, which figured out that the NPR doesn't include – that the negative security assurance doesn't include them. So they accurately read the document and were not happy that they're not protected from the threat or use of U.S. nuclear weapons under current circumstances.

Okay, I'll end there and would be happy to answer any questions.

[0:13:01.6]

MR. PERKOVICH: Why don't you stay there, Gary? I think that might be easier. And then I'll call on people, so please raise your hands and then identify yourselves and our colleagues will bring microphones, I believe. Let's start with this gentleman here and this lady here.

(Off-side conversation.)

Q: Thank you. My name is – (inaudible) – with Radio Free Asia. Yesterday, North Korean foreign ministry said that it would not produce nuclear weapons to excess or engage in arms race and North Korea was ready to join an international nonproliferation campaign as a nuclear-arms state. So what's your comment on this North Korea's assertion?

MR. SAMORE: I don't think the NPR addresses that but U.S. policy on this is very clear. We do not accept North Korea as a nuclear weapon state and we insist on total denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And I should say, that's not just an American position; that's a position that's held by all the other countries in the six-party talks: Russia, China, Japan and South Korea. So I don't think North Korean statement causes me much happiness or relief.

Q: (Inaudible) – with – (inaudible) – from Lebanon. You spoke about the non-nuclear weapons, the Non-Aligned Movement who feel threatened by other countries who have weapons. Here comes to mind the Arab states who feel threatened by the Israeli nuclear bombs, weapons, whatever they have. You have the NPT conference coming in New York. What's the position of the Obama administration on the Israeli nuclear weapons issue and how are you going to deal with this to be able to deal with the Iranian issue to allay the fears of the Arabs? Thank you.

[0:15:10.4]

MR. SAMORE: Well, again, this isn't in the NPR but I'm happy to answer the question. Look, the U.S. supports the 1995 resolution that calls for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, and obviously that includes nuclear weapons as well as biological and chemical. And we think it's important that the NPT review conference agree on steps that could be taken to demonstrate that the parties are committed to making progress in terms of realizing the 1995 effort.

At the same time, I think we have to recognize that conditions in the Middle East are not very conducive to progress on a regional zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The peace process obviously has not been as successful as we would hope it would be. There are a number – since 1995, there have been a number of cases of noncompliance with the NPT, some of which are now resolved, like Libya and Iraq; others are not resolved, such as Syria and Iran. And it's hard to imagine that you could achieve a nuclear-weapons-free zone or a zone free of

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weapons of mass destruction in the region unless you address compliance issues as well as questions of adherence to the NPT.

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Now, as President Obama said last week, the U.S. would like to see Israel join the NPT. We believe in universal adherence to the NPT. But I think we also have to recognize that in order to achieve that, you have to create conditions that make it possible for countries to join the NPT. And that includes not just Israel but India and Pakistan as well. And that fundamentally means regional peace and security.

So we'd like to see progress toward implementing the 1995 resolution but I think we also have to look at practical steps. We cannot hope to achieve a full zone in the Middle East until we can create conditions on the ground that make that possible.

MR. PERKOVICH: I'll do a couple questions in a row just because we have a lot of people, so Kim, the gentleman right back – come around the middle and then go back five rows.

(Off-side conversation.)

MR. SAMORE: (Chuckles.) That man is David Sanger of the New York Times.

[0:17:41.6]

Q: I guess I don't need to say who I am then. Gary, there was an interesting phrase in the document in which you said that the purpose of nuclear weapons was to defend the United States, its allies and its partners. But "partners" were never defined. And of course, if you go back over the list of countries that President Obama over the past 15 months has identified as partners, there were some you probably don't completely intend on extending the nuclear umbrella over.

So I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about that phrase, why you chose it and who it covers. Do you mean in this case other states in the Middle East, like the Saudis, who you would be concerned might go nuclear if Iran did?

MR. SAMORE: Well, the phrase I used – I'm sure you noticed – the phrase I used was countries that depend on the U.S. for their protection. I said allies and countries that depend on the U.S. for their protection.

So there are a number of countries where we don't have a formal alliance relationship as we have with NATO allies or with Japan and South Korea, but where informally, those countries have a relationship with the United States that includes some need to rely on the U.S. to help defend them. And I have deliberately avoided naming exactly who those countries are.

[0:19:01.5]

But I think in the Middle East, you don't have a formal alliance structure as we have in Europe and Asia. But nonetheless, I think the extent to which those countries feel that the U.S. is providing some assistance to their defense and their protection can help to reduce pressure on those countries to feel that they need to develop their own nuclear weapons capability if at the end of the day Iran does not stop.

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Q: I'm just trying to understand if this is a change in policy because previously we have committed ourselves to the defense of these countries, or partners, but we've been very careful not to say whether or not the nuclear umbrella goes over them. In fact, I think at some point there was an interesting issue last year when Secretary Clinton seemed to suggest that and then sort of backed away.

Are we supposed to think from the document now that if you are a partner who depends on the protection of the United States that the nuclear umbrella is part of that defense or just may be part of that defense?

[0:20:03.0]

MR. SAMORE: You know, I wouldn't read it that way. I mean, the U.S. government cannot make a formal commitment without having a treaty, which means that Congress has to, of course, give advice and consent, so I would read it that way. We're not trying to change policy through this document. I'm just saying as a statement of fact, the extent to which the U.S. nuclear forces are seen as credible, it helps to dampen down pressure on other countries to feel that they need to have their own nuclear deterrent.

Q: You're leaving it ambiguous, in other words, as to whether or not the –

MR. SAMORE: I'm not going to make that announcement from this podium today – (laughter) – and especially because, as I said, as a constitutional matter, the executive branch cannot commit itself to the defense of another country without the advice and consent of Congress via a treaty.

Q: (Inaudible.) To some extent, the question has been answered but is it fair, then, to say that in regard to extended deterrence as it applies to the allies – U.S. allies, partners – in the Persian Gulf that there is no change? Is this the thrust of NPR as it relates to our allies there?

[0:21:23.1]

MR. SAMORE: Well, I mean, there's no change in the sense that it remains – I think it remains credibly and I think a specific objective of the NPR was to make sure that it remains credible. So to the extent that we change number and role of nuclear weapons, we are explicitly making an effort to ensure that it doesn't weaken the credibility of our nuclear assurances, whether they're explicit or implicit. And as far as I can tell, we've achieved that. I haven't heard anybody complaining that they feel unprotected now in the aftermath of the NPR.

Q: Yeah, thank you, Gary. Todd Jacobson with Nuclear Weapons & Materials Monitor. You touched on the stockpile management program and what it does, as according to the NPR, is it allows refurbishment, reuse and replacement but gives a strong preference for the first two. Republicans have seized on that as something that potentially limits the labs. So I was wondering why there was the need felt to make that distinction for a strong preference for the first two options.

MR. SAMORE: Well, to me, the fundamental issue is to maintain the safety and the security and the reliability of U.S. nuclear forces. And just speaking for myself, I was satisfied having gone through a lot of discussions with the technical experts in the U.S. government that the life extension program that was put in place almost 20 years ago is working very, very well and that I do not see any near-term risk to the reliability of U.S. nuclear forces. The programs that have been put in place and the programs that we proposed to put in place are very effective in terms of maintaining our forces for the foreseeable future.

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But at the same time, we obviously need to make sure the scientists look at all options available. And so that's why we said that they should, in the course of looking at different warheads on a case-by-case basis – which is the only way to do this – and the W-78 is the next one that's sort of up in the queue – we've asked them to look at the full range from refurbishment to reuse to replacement.

Now, we thought as a political matter, giving preference to refurbishment and to reuse was preferable because that uses existing components. We don't have to make new components that are not currently in the stockpile. But if necessary, if we have to do a replacement in order to maintain those forces, then the president has that option available to him.

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And I think we have not in any way circumscribed the freedom of scientific work that the labs will do. And I think my personal view is if we had to do replacement, we would do replacement if that was necessary. I don't think it will be, frankly, from what I understand. And again, this is from technical people who really understand this business. I think refurbishment and reuse will be perfectly fine for the foreseeable future. But if I'm wrong and replacement becomes necessary, the president has the option to do that.

Q: Gary, Michael Adler from the Wilson Center. I think something that has not been fully clarified, who determines if a country is in noncompliance? You're not going to take the IAEA's determination. And is Syria considered in noncompliance?

And just one more thing about the NPT which was touched on, have you worked out some sort of compromise with Egypt going into the NPT so that you won't have the sort of problems you had over a nuclear-weapons-free zone that arose in 2005?

[0:25:17.7]

MR. SAMORE: We're engaged in a very intense discussion with the Egyptians along with other countries because this is not just a U.S.-Egyptian issue, so Russia, U.K., all of the countries that care about the future of the NPT are obviously very focused on the question of the Middle East because that could very easily ruin the conference if we're not able to come to an agreement.

On the question of who determines, that's a U.S. national determination. I mean, obviously, we'll be influenced by the actions of other parties. If the IAEA Board of Governors decides that a country is not in compliance with their safeguards obligation, that it would be difficult or – not impossible, but difficult – for the U.S. government to ignore that.

Syria is an interesting case. Syria is not sort of clearly in or out of compliance. I think there are obviously questions about their past activities; there are currently questions about the IAEA – right now the IAEA has of course not made any formal determination that they are in non-compliance and I think it will very much depend upon future Syrian actions as to which side of the line they will fall on in the negative security assurance that we've developed.

Q: Can a country be in compliance with the IAEA but not considered in compliance by Washington?

MR. SAMORE: Well, I think that the latter half of the NSA is in compliance with nuclear nonproliferation obligations, which are broader than safeguards agreements. So in the case Iran, for example, they're in



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noncompliance with four U.N. Security Council resolutions which have to do with their nuclear program. It's hard to imagine such a fine distinction but we're trying to, in the latter part of the negative security assurance, we're trying to make it broader – we're trying to make it as broad as possible so that it includes things like U.N. Security Council resolutions; 1540 is another mandatory obligation; nuclear-weapons-free zones are obligations that countries undertake. But the two salient cases are Iran and North Korea and those are clearly countries that don't qualify for the NSA for obvious reasons.

Q: Bonnie Glaser, CSIS. Hi, Gary, how are you? You said in your opening remarks that the political conditions are not right for a multilateral arms convention. So I wonder if you could talk to that issue a bit. What are the conditions that would have to prevail and particularly, what are the circumstances in which we might think about bringing China into these discussions? And secondly, are we willing to have these same kind of discussions with China about missile defense and prompt global strike that we are willing – that you were talking about having with Russia? Thank you.

[0:28:12.4]

MR. SAMORE: Well, the second question is easy to answer: Yes. Of course we would very much look forward to having discussions with China. The problem, as you know, has been at the Chinese end: a great reluctance to talk to us about their nuclear program. I don't know whether that will change.

The Chinese have always said that being in a position of having distinctly inferior nuclear forces, they're not comfortable about transparency because that would reveal their weaknesses and emphasize our strengths. As the Chinese modernize, that sensitivity may begin to erode and they may be more willing to have an open dialogue. That hasn't happened yet but we're indicating in the NPR that we're prepared to do that.

The first question you asked really requires, I think, a much longer answer than I can give and there's no official U.S. government position so I'll just tell you what my thinking is personally. There's such a structural difference among the five nuclear weapons states in terms of the size and complexity of their nuclear forces. The U.S. and Russia are still, even in the wake of the "New START" treaty, we're still at least 10 times more than any of the others and it's difficult to imagine a multilateral arrangement that would not be based on parity. I just don't think the Chinese and the French and the British would be prepared to accept a treaty that locked them into a position of inferiority vis-à-vis the U.S. and Russia. So as long as there's a huge disparity among the five, it's hard for me to see how you could have a meaningful negotiation.

And then the other issue is how do you fold in nuclear – countries that have nuclear weapons that are not official nuclear weapons states? That is a very difficult conundrum which we're – I don't see any way to tackle that at this point. So in my view, talk about nuclear weapons conventions and time-bound nuclear disarmament is really not practical or realistic and in some ways, I think it's actually very counter-productive.

It's much better to focus on practical steps that we can actually take and I think it seems pretty clear that if there's going to be another round of arms cuts, I believe it's going to be another bilateral U.S.-Russia step, either in the form of an agreement or in some kind of parallel actions and as I said earlier, I don't think that can take place unless it's in the context of a more comprehensive dialogue that includes missile defense and prompt global strike and things like that.

[0:31:03.3]

MR. PERKOVICH: We're going to go with this gentleman here and then Anne and then that woman there.

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Q: Hi, Gary. Jon Landay with McClatchy. Basic question: The administration has emphasized the fact that you've produced a non-classified NPR. One of the things that seems to be missing, however, is precisely what your definition of a "new nuclear weapon" is and I'd like you just to outline what is the administration's definition of a new nuclear weapon.

MR. SAMORE: A new nuclear weapon is a nuclear weapon that's based on a design that's not previously tested and that, of course, means primarily what they call the physics package: the nuclear components. For example, some of the RRW warheads were based on designs that were not previously tested – that would be a new nuclear weapon.

Q: Quick follow-up: Does that mean, therefore, that the designs that were tested but never deployed, never put into the active stockpile, could be put into the active stockpile if there's a – if the administration or the labs see a need for a weapon that previously hasn't been deployed?

MR. SAMORE: That is in the replacement category. Remember, you've got the three R's, right? Refurbishment, reuse, replacement. Replacement would be to make a weapon with a physics package that had been previously tested but is not currently deployed.

Q: And you don't see that as having complication in terms of the way other countries perceive the U.S.'s new – the NPR, the way you just described it?

[0:32:46.2]

MR. SAMORE: Well, look: If we need to – if it's necessary to go the replacement route to maintain the reliability of our nuclear weapons, we will do it. The president, I think, is very likely to do that because maintaining the reliability of our nuclear weapons is primary to the defense of the United States and our allies.

My personal view is that that's not likely in the near future because refurbishment and reuse will be adequate. But we've obviously made it clear that if necessary, if the president believes that we need to use the replacement option, that is available to him.

Q: Anne Penketh from BASIC. A question about the nuclear sharing issue and the NATO nukes in Europe which the NPR does address. As you know, this issue comes up at every review conference so in the light of this NPR, what will the administration say to the non-nuclear weapons states who claim that this means that the U.S. is not in compliance with the NPT and Article I?

MR. SAMORE: Well, the only thing the NPR says about U.S. nuclear weapons in NATO is that it is an issue that NATO will address as an alliance and given the schedule of meetings, it's not likely to – there's not likely to be any conclusion until the Lisbon meeting in November, which will be after the NPT review conference. I don't think the U.S. is in noncompliance with Article I. Any sharing that we do is with nuclear weapons states, which is not a violation of the treaty. The U.S. and the U.K. have a nuclear weapons relationship that goes back to World War II – that's not a violation of the NPR.

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Q: Seong Chu Li (ph) from South Korea, a George Washington University student and a broadcast news reporter with SPS in Seoul. Following up on North Korea, someone says that holding NPT review conference without North Korea is like holding firefighters' conference while their neighborhood is burning.

So what is the White House idea of engaging North Korea? Do you have any plan to get them back to six-party talks negotiation table? Or do you have any idea of directly engaging North Koreans while the NPT conference is held in New York?

MR. SAMORE: Well, you know, we can't force North Korea to come to the NPT review conference. I think as a technical legal matter we don't recognize that they have withdrawn from the treaty. But as a practical matter, I don't think we can drag them to the meeting if they refuse to come.

And the administration's position on North Korea is very clear: We believe the six-party talks is the right venue for achieving total denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The North Koreans obviously are not at this point prepared to engage in serious negotiations and we are observing a policy of strategic patience, using pressure and our diplomatic efforts in order to convince them to engage in serious negotiations.

MR. PERKOVICH: I have to say, I like – (audio break). I will steal it. I'll try it out with my son later on today. (Laughter.)

MR. SAMORE: Doesn't work with children. (Laughter.)

MR. PERKOVICH: No, I know. James and let me ask if there are any journalists – I think Gareth is there and if there are other journalists – but, James, go ahead and I want to make sure that the press gets their – (inaudible).

[0:36:37.1]

Q: James Acton from the Carnegie Endowment. Gary, you've been very, very specific that North Korea is excluded from the U.S. negative security assurance. And in 1994, the U.S. offered North Korea a legally binding – a negative security assurance under the Agreed Framework. Do I take it, therefore, that the NPR marks a clearly defined change in policy with regard to North Korea and that the U.S. is now putting the option to use nuclear weapons against North Korea back on the table when they hadn't previously been?

MR. SAMORE: Well, I actually know that 1994 incident very well because I was, of course, one of the negotiators. And I remember telling my North Korean counterpart that the negative security assurance the U.S. was making in the Agreed Framework would only become operational when North Korea was back in compliance with the NPT, which of course never happened.

So no, there's been no change. The U.S. has never seen North Korea in compliance with the NPT even when the Agreed Framework was concluded. That, as you know, had a plan for North Korea to come into compliance but they never achieved that because they cheated on the agreement.

MR. PERKOVICH: Gareth.

[0:37:49.8]

(Off-side conversation.)

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Q: Gareth Porter, Inter Press Service. Gary, you, in the NPR, you have language about a limited range of contingencies in which the nuclear option might be exercised, which are defined with regard to the class of states that will not benefit from the NSA. There is a contingency, of course, that is sort of the 700-pound gorilla in the room, with regard to Iran and that is the contingency of a war that starts with an Israeli strike against Iran and an Iranian conventional response to that against Israel.

So my question to you is do you in fact expect Iran to interpret this new policy as a sign that the United States will in fact use nuclear weapons in that sort of contingency?

MR. SAMORE: Well, I would hesitate to speculate how Iran would see things. The point we're trying to make is that there are two categories of countries: There are countries that have given up the right to have nuclear weapons and that are in compliance with their obligations. Those countries need not fear the threat of a U.S. nuclear attack – obviously that would be only out of the most extreme circumstances in any event.

Then there's the second class of countries which are not in compliance with their obligations and those countries don't benefit from that same reassurance. So the idea here is to create incentive for countries to come into compliance with their nonproliferation obligations in order to enjoy the benefits of the negative security assurance.

[0:39:45.2]

MR. PERKOVICH: Any reports? And don't fake it. (Laughter.) I know how people go to the World Series and everything. But any other press questions? All right – it's a free-for-all. Others? This gentleman here has been patient and then Peter. Thank you.

Q: Everybody else has been patient too, so thank you. I've been strategically patient, though. (Laughter.)

MR. PERKOVICH: It worked for you. (Laughter.)

Q: Eric McVadon, the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis. Gary, I've heard a lot of discussion of how a confusion can arise between things like the Chinese anti-ship ballistic missile and our prompt global strike, because they look like nuclear missiles. Are we addressing that or looking to see how we might address it in the future? Would you comment on that?

MR. SAMORE: Well, in the first place, we haven't, of course, made a decision to actually deploy prompt global strike. But if we do, we'll need to address that. I think it will be important that if we actually deploy such a system, which we would only do in very limited numbers in any event, as I understand it, we would obviously have to make sure that in the event that we used it against the kind of targets that it's designed to be used against, we would want to make sure that other countries who were not threatened by that system would not misinterpret the launch in any way as being directed against them.

But that's not an issue that we face now because the system doesn't exist and who knows if we'll ever deploy it?

[0:41:18.3]

Q: And who's making the most noise about it?

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MR. SAMORE: Well, certainly Russia has expressed a concern and this is addressed in the “New START” treaty, because we’ve agreed to count conventional warheads on long-range systems under the 1550 ceiling for deployed strategic warheads and we have to explain to the Russians that the system is not intended to be used against them and it’s going to be deployed in such small numbers, in any event, that it has no practical military utility against Russian nuclear forces which number in the hundreds, in terms of missiles and deployed systems.

Q: Thank you. Peter – (inaudible) – from the Australian Embassy. Gary, one thing that struck me about the NPI, and you mentioned, of course, sole purpose – you decided against it – but what you did do in the NPI was show a glide-path towards that possibility. Now, the NPI refers to the U.S. working to create conditions for the possibility of adopting a sole-purpose policy. I’m just wondering what that actually means.

Does that mean that you’re waiting on geopolitical circumstances to be favorable or that the U.S. will take a more proactive approach to reassuring allies in an operational sense rather than necessarily taking on concerns that are more political than operational? In that context, I’m wondering whether NATO’s Strategic Concept might be one such opportunity coming up shortly.

[0:42:50.5]

MR. SAMORE: Well, I can’t give you a comprehensive answer but one thing that immediately springs to mind is the nature of the threat. I mean obviously, if the chemical and biological or conventional threats were reduced, then the need to contemplate the use of nuclear weapons against an attack using those types of weapons would be much reduced and it would be easier to go to a sole-purpose.

The important point here and the caveat which is in the NPR is that if the biological weapons threat expands to the point where it poses a threat of mass casualties, then we’ll have to reconsider our current NPR and I think vice versa: If the biological threat were to recede, then it would make it easier to imagine a sole-purpose kind of commitment.

Q: Ze Amine (ph) from Princeton University. In the posture review, it talks about the large-scale investment in the nuclear weapons labs and production complex in the United States for several decades. I was wondering that – when it talks in particular about the new pit production capability for making the plutonium cores for nuclear weapons, the chemistry and metallurgy research and replacement project at Los Alamos, it talks about building in a modest surge production capacity.

I’m just wondering, under the Bush administration, there was talk of a modern pit production facility. What’s the difference in scale between the pit production facility the Bush administration wanted and the chemistry and metallurgy replacement project that the Obama administration supports and the size of this surge capacity? How many pits per year will this facility be able to produce?

[0:44:46.2]

MR. SAMORE: I’m sorry – I just don’t know the answer to that question. I’m sure somebody at DOE or NNSA would know but I’m sorry, I just don’t know.

MR. PERKOVICH: We have time for a couple more. I want to take them all in a row. Since you’re back there, Katie, and then come up here to Ed and then in the middle there. Yup. Right where you are – that’s great. Let’s take all three of them and then – in a row, and then Gary can respond. Yeah.

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Q: Thanks, George. Gary, Stephen Schwartz, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. I was struck by something you said in response to Jon Landay's question; I wanted to give you a chance to clarify, perhaps walk it back. (Laughter.)

You said that nuclear weapons are primary to the defense of the United States and I'm wondering if you really meant to mean "primary" because to me, that sounds like number-one, most important, sine qua non which seems to go against what the administration is trying to do with nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons policy. So are nuclear weapons the most important component of our national defense or are they one of a number of things that are important? It does have a bearing on Jon's question. Thank you.

MR. PERKOVICH: Let's go here, Nima (ph), because you were there earlier and then Katie to Ed.

[0:46:06.3]

Q: Paul Kerr, Congressional Research Service. I want to give you a similar opportunity that Steve just granted you. In your response earlier to Michael Adler's question, you suggested that the negative security assurances would not apply to countries who were not in compliance with Resolution 1540, which would mean that if a country does not have what the United States deems to be sufficient export controls that it would not qualify for a negative security assurance. Is that right?

Q: I want to go back to the stockpile management issue and –

MR. PERKOVICH: Hold that, then, because these two are similarly and I want to make sure we get it. These are important questions. Go ahead.

[0:46:44.4]

MR. SAMORE: Yeah. Steve, I'm sorry if I misspoke. I think you can read the language of the NPR, which was very carefully crafted. The fundamental purpose of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear use against the U.S. and its allies. The truth is nuclear weapons have very little military utility. In the Cold War, we tried to invent some use given what we saw as the conventional imbalance. Now that the Cold War is over, the value of nuclear weapons as a military instruments is very small except as a matter of deterrence and I think that makes it very clear.

On the negative security assurance: Obviously I wasn't saying that countries that have inadequate export controls are automatically excluded from the NSA. The point I'm making is that there are the clause in the NSA that says incompliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations is intended to be a broad clause and we'll interpret that – when the time comes, we'll interpret that in accordance with what we judge to be a meaningful standard.

Right now, we're saying that Iran and North Korea are not in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations, which is obvious to anybody. We're not saying that about any other country. You heard the question about Syria and I said that that's still to be decided. We're not saying any other country is not in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations.

Q: (Inaudible.)

MR. PERKOVICH: Well, that depends on their behavior in the future. Again, the NSA is intended to create an incentive to comply with one's obligations but also presumably from other parts of the Posture, where we talk about primary purpose to deter nuclear use, that the scenario in which we consider using it, somebody's used a

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nuclear weapon in which case they're probably in violation of their obligations under the NPT. So I mean, it's not necessarily the case but –

Q: (Inaudible.)

MR. PERKOVICH: What's that?

[0:48:48.1]

Q: (Inaudible.)

MR. PERKOVICH: But we're not nuking Iran right now. It's about some provisional time in the future that if there was a conflict or what have you. It's not talking about preemptive nuclear strikes on Iran.

MR. SAMORE: Yeah, I mean, I think it would be a mistake to see the NSA as somehow – if you don't qualify for the NSA, that means we're going to nuke you. (Laughter.) That's actually not the intent and I don't think anybody sees it that way. If you look at the rest of the document, it makes it clear that even if a country was not covered by the NSC, we would only use nuclear weapons in the most extreme of circumstances.

The point here is, as I said before, the point is to create a political divide between those countries that are in compliance, do not have nuclear weapons, they're living up to their obligations. Those countries should enjoy the benefit of being free from the worry of being threatened. Those countries that are not in compliance, those countries that either have nuclear weapons outside the treaty or they're not living up to their obligations, like Iran, they shouldn't expect to receive the same benefit until they come into compliance.

[0:50:00.8]

So the effort here is to create diplomatic and political incentives, both for countries that are in compliance to stay that way and for countries that are out of compliance, to come into compliance. That's the intent.

Q: I add last question –

Q: On a stockpile management issue, and this may be splitting hairs a little bit, but our facilities date back to the '40s and the '50s and we're going through a modernization program and there is some material that we made weapons out of, for example, beryllium, that is toxic and we would like to get rid of.

With regard to modernization and pulling down these facilities, how are we going to be able to refurbish old weapons if we need to make those facilities safer, because those facilities that did that will no longer be there? How are you going to structure budget proposals? And also to the folks that are worried that we're making new weapons, that we're not; but we are refurbishing, we're making things safer?

[0:51:03.2]

MR. SAMORE: The three R's only refer to the nuclear components. Non-nuclear components, to the extent that they have to be replaced with newer materials using different technologies, that's not in any way limited. I don't consider that to be a new nuclear weapon if you – I don't know whether the particular case of beryllium applies but if an old fuse that was designed in the 1970s is no longer available and we use an updated fuse, that's not a new

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nuclear weapon, that's just putting in a better non-nuclear component. So there's no restriction whatsoever on non-nuclear components.

MR. PERKOVICH: Thank you. I'm sorry we didn't get all the questions but since we've got a jammed schedule, I want to make sure we stay relatively on track and we've done that. I also think we've really put Gary through his paces and given that the last four weeks were so easy, I'm sure this seemed like a jog in the park. But I really want to thank you, Gary, for both the presentation and the Q&A. I want to thank all of you. So let's give Gary a round of applause.

[52:07]

MR. SAMORE: Thanks, everybody. (Applause.)

(END)