ADVANCING U.S.– RUSSIAN SECURITY COOPERATION

THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 2010
10:00 A.M.
WASHINGTON, D.C.

WELCOME:
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SPEAKER:
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Transcript by Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.
JAMES F. COLLINS: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Carnegie and an especial welcome to our C-SPAN audience this morning. Exactly one year ago in London, President Medvedev and President Obama met and they began what has now become known, pretty universally, as a reset in Russian-American relations. Central to that, from the very beginning, has been the nuclear relationship: the strategic arms relationship, pan-nuclear proliferation and other nuclear issues. So I think it’s a particularly fitting event this morning at Carnegie to have one of the leading experts both on our own staff and also on our staff in Moscow talk to us this morning a little bit about what has happened over the last several years to the nuclear relationship and to the situation of nuclear weapons as Russians and Russia sees it.

It’s my pleasure this morning to introduce George Perkovich, who is the director and the vice president for studies, who focuses our efforts here at Carnegie in Washington on the nuclear agenda and he will introduce to you Alexei Arbatov, who is a recognized expert, political leader and long-time student of the strategic relationship between Russia and the United States. So without further ado, George, let me turn it over to you and your – (inaudible).

GEORGE PERKOVICH: Thanks, Jim. Yeah, just to build a little bit on what Jim said to set up the discussion and then introduce Alexei. As Jim mentioned, the START treaty has been agreed, will be signed next week. There are other things that we’re going to ask Alexei to talk about and contextualize for us and respond to your questions on because just as the United States, I believe, next Tuesday, the Obama administration will release, or at least preview, its Nuclear Posture Review – the administration’s review of the U.S. nuclear policy and force posture – Russia, in February, announced its new military doctrine. I think it will be very useful for Alexei to describe that or discuss that with us.

Then also, as today’s papers recount, there is movement in the Security Council – ongoing movement – to try to deal with Iran’s violation of Security Council resolutions and IAEA resolutions and the U.S.-Russian relationship is very, very important in that process which, again, Alexei is very well-situated to discuss and comment on with us here today, and then the broader question of how all of these particular issues, which have a nuclear dimension, fit into the overall reset of U.S.-Russian relations, which the administration began very early seeking to do with its Russian counterparts.

So I think I don’t know anybody better to talk about all of these issues and put all of these issues into context than Alexei Arbatov. Alexei is the chair of the nonproliferation program at the Carnegie Moscow Center. He is also the head of the Center for International Security of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations in Moscow, the Russian Academy of Sciences – the most prestigious institute dealing with international affairs. Alexei has played a leading role in the Russian Duma as an ongoing advisor of the Russian National Security Council. He’s a prolific author – he has a new book out in Russian which covers the horizon of affairs: Russian domestic; international affairs. It’s a very impressive book.

ALEXEI ARBATOV: Thank you, Jim. Thank you, George. I am delighted and honored to be here again and thank you for coming. Let me start with the new treaty which is to be signed in a few days. I think it will be
the most controversial strategic arms control treaty in the whole history of arms control. I am tempted to use Vice President Biden’s formula which he used with respect to health care and apply it to the new treaty but the whole question is on which of the two adjectives do you put an emphasis? (Laughter.)

I think that we have to see the text and to see all the papers, all the protocols, to make a comprehensive judgment. But from what we know at present, some of the judgments may be already advanced. The first thing you ask about a new arms control treaty is how much does it affect strategic forces? What are the real reductions?

And the answer is, compared to what? If you compare the new treaty with START I, which the new treaty is replacing, then reduction of warheads is very impressive: by 75 percent, the ceiling of START I compared to the new ceiling of 1550 warheads. The reduction by launchers is also very impressive: by 50 percent.

If you compare it with the SORT treaty of 2002 – which never really became a treaty but stayed just a gentlemanly agreement with two figures – then the achievement is less impressive. Depending on the ceiling of SORT which you take as a departing point, it’s 30 or 10 percent of warhead reduction – less impressive.

If you compare the ceilings of the new treaty with actual force deployments, then the official position of the United States, which I have already heard, is that reduction is by one-third from the existing force deployment. Well, formally, that is true. But START treaty has very tricky counting rules and much of this one-third of reductions will be taken care of through new counting rules. For instance, the bombers, which were covered by START I and reduced and limited quite significantly, in the new treaty will be counted as one launcher and one warhead. So given the expense of the bombers, you almost have all the reductions – the expense of the new counting rules for bombers. And there are, from what we can judge, a number of other counting rules which make the job of the military and industries in implementing reductions much more easy than it would look if only judging by the formal treaty ceilings.

Now, if you compare reductions which are envisioned by the new treaty with the reductions which were envisioned by START I, you will see that START I, in seven years, introduced actual reduction of warheads by many thousands: four to 5,000 warheads were reduced – actually reduced – from strategic forces of the Soviet Union and then Russia and United States, and many hundreds of missiles, bombers and dozens of submarines. From this point of view, the new treaty is still less impressive, because for seven years of a 10-year duration time, the reduction of warheads will be a few hundred at best and even that with the new, quite formal counting rules.

The main significance of the new treaty is not in its physical reductions. The main significance is restoration of the formal, legally binding dialogue and framework of strategic relationship between the two leading nuclear superpowers. After a long break, it has to be kept in mind that we have not had a new strategic arms control treaty for 20 years. Since 1991, when START I was signed, we have never had a treaty that was signed, implemented, signed, ratified, implemented and entered into force. We had a chain of unsuccessful attempts – START II, START III, SORT, which I mentioned – but never had a formal, legal or binding treaty. This is the main significance of the new treaty.

Basically, the new treaty is SALT Treaty of 2002 with slightly difference ceilings, with the ceiling on delivery vehicles and with agreed counting rules and verification procedures. And that’s not surprising because the expiration of START I put a very tight schedule for negotiators of the new treaty and during less than one year of
actual negotiations, starting basically from scratch because in the preceding years, arms control communities greatly dissolved and they had to reorganize and to organize them anew.

So during one year, they did a great job in coming to a legally-binding treaty which will be, hopefully, ratified and I think that it’s worthwhile to pay tribute to Rose Gottemoeller and Anatoly Antonov who worked very well together, especially Rose Gottemoeller who is a Carnegie person and I think that it’s worthwhile to emphasize their great contribution.

[11:15]

Another significance of the new treaty is that it is a fulfillment of the commitment of the nuclear weapons states, by Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. That is very timely because the review conference is coming in May and after the disaster at the review conference of 2005, the new review conference will define whether we go through further disintegration of nonproliferation review or we start resetting and fortifying this regime on the basis of the new treaty achieved between the two countries.

Last, but certainly not the least, this is in line with the ambitious goal of the article of the four great statesmen and commitments of President Obama. This is a real practical step on the road to nuclear disarmament. However, this is not the end of the process. I would say it is just the beginning of the process because both in the United States and in Russia, the process of ratification of the treaty will face a lot of difficulties, a lot of problems.

I would be happy to say that Russian people enthusiastically wait for the new treaty to be ratified and implemented but that would be a great exaggeration. Those Russian people who are interested in this subject largely have great doubts about the new treaty because nuclear weapons are for Russian people now much more important than decades ago – I would say more important. They are more important than during the Cold War times as a pillar of national security and already – even before the treaty is signed, during the previous few months – in Russia, a campaign started against the new treaty.

In a very erroneous way, this campaign started by a massive attack on the late START I treaty, which expired last year. All of a sudden, after 20 years of START I, article after article in respected military magazines and newspapers attacked START I as being detrimental to Russian security and even was called a “traitorous” treaty. I cannot have any other explanation than just, it’s a precursor attack or the first salvo in the campaign which will be conducted against the new treaty when it is signed and presented to the Duma for ratification.

[14:17]

The reason is that 20 years after the end of Cold War, Russia feels much less secure in contrast to the United States, European states and of course China and many other countries. To a large extent, it is Russia’s own fault. It is mistakes and misdeeds in its economic reforms, domestic politics, foreign policy. But it has to be emphasized that United States and NATO contributed a lot to that feeling of insecurity in Russia and nuclear weapons, now, look as the only reliable assurance and pillar of the national security and the new military doctrine of Russia clearly spells that without any reservations. Nuclear weapons are one of the few legacies of the superpower status of the Soviet Union of which Russia is the heir and now, in particular, after the economic crisis greatly diminished the role of gas and oil exports as an instrument of Russian foreign policy influence and role in the world, nuclear weapons, relatively, have become that much more important.

Certainly, nuclear weapons are looked upon by experts, by the professional community, as the greatest equalizer and instrument to make up for Russian inferiority in conventional forces, in particular with NATO getting
very close to Russian borders and acquiring multiple superiority over Russia in conventional forces, as an
instrument to make up for Russian inferiority in ballistic missile defense technologies, in space technologies, in all
kinds of advanced military technologies, for most, the long-range precision guidance systems relying on space
information support in which Russia feels the most vulnerable. And now, in parallel with attacks on START I, you
can see in Russia a growing, a rising campaign on the threat of new conventional precision-guided systems of the
United States as the greatest threat to Russian national security.

[16:46]

If you look at the military doctrine, the threat of and the list of priorities of foreign military threats, you may
find that NATO expansion is number one, ballistic missile defense and precision-guided long-range systems are
number four, nonproliferation threats or proliferation threats are number seven and that national terrorism is
number 11. You may argue about that – you may prove that this is the wrong list of priorities. But it is an officially
accepted document which reflects, unfortunately, the prevailing opinion of the political elite and strategic
community, both in the government and out of the government of Russia, and it is to be taken as a political reality.

The main argument which will be used against the new treaty is easily predictable. First of all, it does not in
any way limit ballistic missile defense of the United States and does not even provide for any certainly about the
future ballistic missile defense, while placing quite stringent limitations on Russian strategic defensive forces at least
for the next 10 years. Secondly, the precision-guided systems which will be expanded and which will be one way of
reductions in the United States for its strategic forces: Part of the reductions which are implied by the treaty will be
conducted through converting strategic nuclear weapons into convention precision-guided long-range weapons and
that would be seen as a major deficiency of the new treaty.

And the reconstitution capability: In the past, it was the number one objection. Now, it has moved down
the list but still important. That is because of the new counting rules. In particular, the operational deployment
principle – which counts only warheads which are really on missiles, not the number of which missiles were tested –
provides the United States with great potential of build-up by returning warheads from storages to delivery systems
within a relatively short time.

[19:28]

Russia will not have such a potential because Russia is withdrawing in massive numbers its obsolete strategic
forces and then reducing the new ones that are very slow-rate, in very few numbers, and all the new ones will be
loaded to the utmost. So Russia will not have such comparable reconstitution capability.

The main argument in favor of the new treaty in Russia is that it is basically a treaty about American
reductions, not about Russian reductions. Nothing in the treaty prevents Russia from introducing new systems and
Russia will be under the ceilings anyway because of massive withdrawal of all systems and very small numbers of
deployment of the new ones. But in 10 years, according to the Russian current plans, Russia will almost fully
modernize its strategic forces within the new ceilings of START at least by 70 percent – that’s the official number –
including – and I would like to draw your attention to that – the plan, development and deployment of a new heavy
missile – heavy, silo-based missile.

And then if the United States insists on a new treaty, on going further with reductions, in Russia, the
opposition to the new treaty will be much bigger than now because then it will affect newly deployed, very
expensive systems, rather than put a formal ceiling on the empty place, since Russia is now withdrawing the old
systems and would easily fit under the new START treaty.
In order to conduct nuclear disarmament and go with further arms reductions, it would be very important to persuade the Russian political elite and strategic community in three principal ideas. The first is that nuclear disarmament will not affect Russian prestige and status in the world. To put it in a different way, that with much fewer nuclear weapons, Russian interests in the world will not be paid much less attention than at present.

Second, that the United States are serious about nuclear disarmament. The present treaty, as I mentioned in the beginning, sends conflicting signals about that. On the one hand, this is the first practical treaty of the last 20 years which probably will be ratified and implemented. On the other hand, the official counting rules make the treaty very strange from the point of view of actual nuclear weapons elimination and there are a lot of doubts in Russia about the United States’ seriousness with respect to nuclear disarmament. Very few people doubt President Obama’s seriousness about that but many doubt the seriousness of American bureaucracy, military establishment and political elite. Actually, the situation is like mirror image of the one which exists in Russia.

And last but probably the most important idea is that the United States are pursuing nuclear disarmament, if they are serious about it, in order to improve, strengthen international security, rather than in order to enhance the huge superiority in advanced weapons systems in space, ballistic missile defense, conventional forces and precision-guided conventional long-range systems. Russian military doctrine presents this new threat as a number-one threat among the massive military classical traditional military threats to Russia and Russian military doctrine demands, from Russian defense establishment, to assure defense against space-air attack. It’s called space-air attack or air-space attack – that’s conventional systems relying on space information assets.

So all of these three ideas are to taken very seriously here in the United States and in the West in general, in order to go forward with nuclear disarmament. I think that it is high time for the United States military establishment, Department of Defense, to stop ignoring this growing concern of Russia with long-range precision-guided systems. Since Americans have opened this new avenue of military technological development, I think it is up to them to initiate serious consultations with Russian military and with Russian scientists and to provide persuasive arguments that these new systems are not against Russia, and to suggest confidence-building measures and other initiatives that would remove this number-one concern of Russia. As of now, as far as I know, Americans were just ignoring that, saying that Russia is paranoid, that it’s not against Russia, period. Much more is needed than that.

The same relates to ballistic missile defense. Certainly, this treaty is not on ballistic missile defense, but this treaty provides for a lot of transparency and certainty, at least for the next 10 years, with respect to strategic offensive forces. And I think that it would be very good if the United States provided the same level of transparency and certainty to Russia about their strategic defense problems.

Before and now, the main concern of Russia is not the existing systems or the systems which are planned in the nearest future, but the prospects. Americans had before and have now, an open-ended program. And for Russia, some kind of certainty is needed to go forward with further treaties, which certainly would be much more difficult to achieve. So that will define to a great extent whether the new treaty is the first practical step on the long road of nuclear disarmament or the last step many decades to come. Thank you. (Applause.)
MR. PERKOVICH: Rather than use my position as moderator or whatever it is to ask some questions first, I want to go directly to you all to ask questions and I may jump in if there’s something that I can’t resist adding or challenging.

So I’d ask you to raise your hands and then when I call on you, to identify yourself and your affiliation. And we can begin there in the back. Please go ahead and stand up, please.

Q: Hi, Miles Pomper from the Center for Nonproliferation Studies and Monterey Institute. Dr. Arbatov, thank you for a very interesting presentation. A couple of questions: Foreign Minister Lavrov said the other day that seemed to indicate a little more openness to the idea of cooperation on missile defense with the United States after this treaty. I wanted to get your sense on the prospects for that from the Russian point of view.

Also, Undersecretary Tauscher talked about – moving onto the issue of tactical nuclear weapons in negotiations with Russia, what do you see the prospects for that?

MR. ARBATOV: Can you hear me? Well, I think that cooperation on ballistic missile defense is the most important thing in the long-term relationship. But we have to recognize that doing ballistic missile defense implies virtually military alliance; common enemies, common threats. At present, we are quite distance from that state of relationship.

It’s not only technically complicated; it’s politically very complicated as long as we are talking about some kind of global defense which will cover threats from wherever they may emerge. For Russia, certainly, that would create great problems with China because China is adamantly against any defense of that type and doesn’t want to participate in any of that. And for Russia, China is not only a great partner but also a great concern. Russia would not like to join ballistic missile defense and make some countries like Iran its enemies. And a large part of Russian political elite would be very strongly against that.

Still, I think that after successful recertification of the treaty – and I hope that eventually it will be successful in spite of all the difficulties – it would be possible to start to approach this on a step-by-step basis. The first thing that would be very important and not very difficult to implement is to revive the joint data center – JDEC – which was agreed to more than 10 years ago and still has not become operational.

Having some link in early-warning systems and collect data on launches would be important in order to contribute to each other knowledge about what’s happening with ballistic missile tests and launches, and also important to avoid miscalculation, to avoid some concerns about the test of the other side. It would be possible not only to use it as a data-collection center but in line with Putin’s proposals several years ago, to make it operate in real time that’s immediately to send warning of the ballistic missile launch wherever it happens to both sides and probably to allies of both sides.

Another step would be to make our cooperation on theater missile defense practical rather than purely theoretic computer exercise. I think that from strategic logic point of view, this is possible because it does not create conflict of interest with our strategic offensive balance or parity because neither Russia nor the United States
have weapons which may be intercepted by theater ballistic missile defense due to intermediate and shorter-range missile treaty which was signed in ’87 and which I think we should preserve.

Whatever the arguments against it, we do not have weapons that would be targets for theater ballistic missile defense. We do not have medium-range missiles; we do not have shorter-range missiles. So it would be more logical and easier for us to agree on some joint programs or joint deployments to protect our forces abroad and even protect part of Russian territory in Europe and European territory against possible threats from the South; without bringing it into picture, this most complicated and controversial factor of China.

If we are successful in that development, we may gain experience to start something more grandiose, something grand, with respect to global ballistic missile defenses. But that will have to wait until we move far enough in strategic arms reductions and probably the alerting of strategic forces so that we do not find ourselves in a schizophrenic situation when we have joint strategic missile defense while still relying on strategic balance of offensive weapons against each other.

Now, with respect to tactical nukes, I think that there is great enthusiasm in the West about tactical nukes and future tactical nuclear weapons reduction or limitation. I am not so enthusiastic about that, and not because of strategic reasons. There are strategic reasons for Russia to have quite a substantial number of tactical nuclear weapons. It’s the same reason which made NATO maintain a lot of tactical nuclear weapons 20 or 30 years ago that’s conventional inferiority. And actually, the ratio of conventional imbalance is now about the same but reversed in favor of NATO and against Russia compared to what it was 20 or 30 years ago. Of course, in this situation, tactical nuclear weapons look for Russia as an equalizer of that inferiority.

But this strategic part, to address the issue from technical and legal parts, I think that the United States, trying to achieve great success in the new strategic arms reduction treaty, created a serious problem for potential future negotiations on tactical nukes. By insisting and persuading Russia to accept the principle of counting operationally deployed weapons, the United States have greatly undercut the ground for limiting or reducing tactical nuclear weapons because none of those are operationally deployed.

And if you proceed on the legal precedent of the new treaty, which certainly will be implanted in the people’s mind after recertification, you will be able to say a year from now that all tactical nukes are not operationally deployed. They do not exist. They’re all in storages. None of them is on deliveries systems. And if they are put on deliveries systems, they certainly use dual-purpose deliveries systems.

So you cannot use START principle of doing away with weapons through dismantling or limiting deliveries systems because you cannot dismantle and eliminate heavy-caliber artillery, short-range surface-to-surface missiles which use mostly conventional weapons, attack aircraft, attack submarines, ships which may use tactical nuclear weapons for naval purposes, torpedoes, anti-ship missiles. You cannot apply the same principle; otherwise, you will have to do away with your conventional forces altogether.

If you try to limit those weapons which are in storages, you will have to get into storages. You will have to eliminate bombs and warheads and from that point of view, there is no difference between tactical and strategic weapons. Those strategic warheads which are in storage are kept together with tactical weapons in storage. And it’s
not a problem of tactical nukes. It’s a problem of elimination of nuclear explosive devices. And there is no
difference between strategic and tactical.

The technology verification system is horrific from the point of view of diplomats. It will have to be
addressed sooner or later, but it’s not something that we can address now, especially with the prospect of thousands
of nuclear weapons removed to storages, in line with the new treaty. So both from the legal point of view and from
the technical point of view, tactical nuclear weapons would be a very serious problem. Just to give you one
example, SIPRI Yearbook says that Russia has about 3,000 tactical nuclear weapons. I do not know where this
figure comes from. I am member of SIPRI governing board and I could never find out.

MR. PERKOVICH: Well, you were a member of the Duma and you couldn’t find out either, probably.
(Chuckles.)

MR. ARBATOV: Yeah. That figure looks like it’s taken from the ceiling. The chairman of the general staff
of Russian armed forces has stated, repeatedly, that all Russian tactical nuclear weapons are in centralized storages.
Sergei Ivanov, former minister of defense, now vice-premier, has said the same, that all Russian tactical nuclear
weapons are in storages. Well, I have doubts that all of them are in storages. Maybe some of them are at air force
and military bases, but they are in depots. No question about it. That I saw when I was in the Duma and visited
those air force and naval bases.

[38:42]

And doing away with them means getting into the depots, telling nuclear tactical warheads from strategic
warheads, which are also kept there – like cruise missiles, or warheads for sea-based ballistic missiles – and then
bringing them to some manufacturing facility and eliminating them. That would be a great problem. My suggestion
would be for the United States to remove its tactical nukes from Europe to its national territory and Russia to keep
its tactical nukes only on its territory, which, actually, Russia does now, and to have a formal agreement that those
nuclear weapons would be kept in storages, not deployed with operational conventional forces.

If you want to go further than that and insist that all of them are in centralized storages, you will have to
have verification procedures by which Russians would be able to come to every American air force and naval base
and to make sure that in depots of this base there are no warheads for sea-launch cruise missiles, or for any other
weapon.

Presently at Charleston you have, according to available data, about 100 nuclear warheads for nuclear sea-
launch cruise missiles. So it will be prohibited and Russia will have the right to come to every base and to say:
These are strategic, that’s fine. But these are tactical. You have to remove them. The same about huge Russian
territory and Russian naval and air force bases. But that might be possible; however, you understand that that
would be an extremely difficult issue.

MR. PERKOVICH: Let me take two questions. Paul Walker and then Greg. Yeah, thanks.

[40:39]

Q: Great. Thank you very much, Dr. Arbatov, and George, too. I had a question on ratification. We all
know – those of us who’ve been through SALT I, SALT II, START I, START II, SORT, ABM treaty and all the
rest know how complicated and politicized ratification debates can be here in the United States, but also in Moscow
And I wondered if you could explain a little bit more your thoughts on Duma ratification and whether you, in fact, think that this will go smoothly, or will be extremely difficult in Moscow.

MR. PERKOVICH: Hold that and let’s take Greg’s. But introduce yourself, even though I gave a cue.

Q: Greg Tillman, Arms Control Association. Your remarks are as insightful and provocative as usual. Thank you. I wondered if you could give us a little bit more insight into thinking on the Russian side about the curious bomber warhead counting rule in the new START agreement. One would have thought that the Russians would be concerned about the American ability to exploit bomber uploading, given the greater historical American reliance on the bomber leg of the triad – the lack of the, kind of, infliction of all kinds of problems on Russian heavy bomber aviation during the 1990s for resource problems. Can you tell us any more about why the Russians apparently pushed for this provision?

MR. ARBATOV: Let me start with the second question, okay? Well, in my talks to those Russians who were actually doing negotiations, or elaborating the negotiating position, of course they were not very happy about such counting rules. But the fact is that neither Russia nor the United States have presently nuclear weapons actually loaded to bombers. They are all de-alerted, in this sense. All their nuclear weapons are in depots at the airfields, so they are not operationally deployed.

Under Putin and Bush terms, Russians did not want to agree to the principle of operationally deployed weapons as the criterion for counting rules. Now, the major Russian concession was to agree to that principle. I think that Medvedev played a great role – and Lavrov – in persuading Russian military and all those who might be opposed to that that it’s in the Russian interest to accept it. Why? Because it will permit Russia also to deploy more warheads on missiles within the set ceiling.

If the bombers are counted as one warhead and one launcher, then there is more space for deployment of warheads on submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Russia eventually will bring its Bulava program to the end. I’m sure it finally will be successful and will be deployed. Moving mobile ground, mobile missiles – and possibly introducing a new silo-based heavy missile – will provide Russia with a lot of available warhead deployments. And from this point of view, this very liberal bomber counting rule is maybe favorable to Russia.

MR. PERKOVICH: Before you answer Paul’s question, just to add – I mean, talking to people here, right. If the category is operationally deployed, the more accurate number would have been zero, which is less acceptable and then also starts to raise the question: Well, if it’s zero, then why do you have them? You know, which cuts the other direction, so – and reflects the reality that we’re not going to use them, anyway. They’re not first-strike weapons. They’re not destabilizing and so it reflects a reality that isn’t necessarily an accounting reality, an arms-control reality, but is more or less a political reality, that they’re kind of useless, but you don’t want to say that and don’t want to say there’s zero, so let’s say it’s one.

MR. ARBATOV: And it’s really not deployed on bombers, unless by mistake. (Laughter.)

MR. PERKOVICH: Right. Yeah, that’s a good point. So, actually, it should be six, I guess. On average, six. But answer Paul’s question about verification.

MR. ARBATOV: About verification? About ratification, sorry, ratification. I think that, first of all, it’s important that ratification does not take too long a time. You remember that the START II treaty, and I was in the
Duma at that time, took seven years for Russia to ratify. I think that opposition to the new treaty would not be weaker than opposition to START II. Maybe it will be even stronger to the new treaty. So a lot depends on how decisive the president and prime minister are in making ratification go through in a relatively short time.

There will be a big campaign against the new treaty. And it’s already started, as I have mentioned. It’s important that the new treaty becomes a ground for better relations between Russia and the United States rather than an arena for mutual recriminations and suspicions and accusations. It quite easily may happen that it will be that. In this case, the new treaty will not – at least, will not improve relations as far as public opinion and parliaments are concerned. And that would be very bad. That is to be avoided.

And lastly, the new treaty should not be ratified at the expense of accelerating other weapons programs, by way of trade-offs. For the United States, the obvious candidate is ballistic-missile defense program, which, probably, will be used by the Republican Party as a bargaining chip. In Russia, it will be the heavy missile, new system, and some other programs. And that also would be detrimental to our relationship. I think that in Russia, Prime Minister Putin is to be engaged by the United States to help ratification of the treaty. Up to now, he has kept silent on the negotiations and on the new treaty, never publicly supported it.

I think that it’s important for the United States to directly contact him and ask him to do whatever he can to accelerate and ensure ratification of the treaty. You have to remember that it’s not President Medvedev who is the head of the party of the majority in the Duma. That’s Putin. And Putin has enormous influence over all military and power institutions, public opinion and the party of the majority in both chambers of parliament, so he has to be on board – or, if you put it like, in the tent – within the tent. And that would be very conducive to ratification of the treaty.

MR. PERKOVICH: Two questions. This gentleman here and then way in the back, and then we'll come to Terry.

Q: Harry Blaney, Center for International Policy. It seems to me that that discussion you had about both Russia and America moving towards not only ratification, but some kind of a future vision – one of the things you talked about was some things America could do that would be helpful. But I thought there was need for, on the other hand, for Russia itself to take some vision of that. Perhaps at the signing of the treaty, or somewhere else, where both, either together, or maybe even initiating a vision of where you want to go both on the reductions and for the relationship itself. And if you had some ideas, what could Russia do that would both help, if you would, the ratification here to provide that vision and, three, make the Russian, if you would, elite see it as a positive?

MR. PERKOVICH: Great question. Let’s take the one in the back and then you can address both.

Q: Wayne Merry, the American Foreign Policy Council. I’m afraid my question is somewhat parallel. Alexei, as usual your statement was very informative and very perceptive, but in listening to it, I had the feeling that if you had given that statement before the U.S. armed services committee, or foreign relations committee, that it would not have helped ratification on the American side. And I would like to hear: If you were asked to testify here in Washington for ratification, not on the basis of what the Obama administration would argue, but in terms of what you would argue are in the interest of the United States, to skeptical Democrats and Republicans, what would you say to that Senate committee?
MR. ARBATOV: Well, I think that, first of all, Russia has to be much more constructive on the subject of joint ballistic-missile defense. Up to now, Russia has proposed some agreements, some cooperation, but there is a widespread impression that this group on assessment of threats and whatever is done on joint ballistic-missile defenses, for Russia, is a kind of lever to put a brake on American program, rather than genuine avenue of Russian-American cooperation.

I think that it is time to come out with new proposals, maybe using what Putin proposed on joint usage of radars, the revival of a joint data center on missile launchers, but also move forward to present the solution to some of the important issues. For instance, Putin and Medvedev proposed that we have to have joint ballistic-missile defense with the United States and the European Union – trilateral. Well, my question is, how about Russian people living in Asia, beyond the Urals? Are they entitled for some protection or not? There are not too many now. A lot of people are going away from that, but still: If we are to have ballistic-missile defense coverage in Asia, and America certainly would like to have the one to cover its Asian allies, then there is the question of China.

I think that both Russia and the United States, not jointly, but in bilateral format, in parallel, should start serious consultations with China on ballistic missile defense so that China doesn’t become an obstacle to Russian-American cooperation on that. To persuade China that it’s not against China – if it is really not against China on the American side, of course.

Americans have to be clear on some important issues. First of all, is China entitled for its own nuclear deterrent against the United States, like Russia is? Is China entitled to treatment as a superpower? Is China entitled to some information and consultations, like the United States is doing with Russia, on ballistic-missile defense in the Far East? Providing information, talking about Chinese concerns, trying to find solutions, like it was between the United States and Russia, so that the missile does not threaten China?

That’s important. But so my first recommendation to Russia, to the Russian government, would be to start being very practical and technical on ballistic-missile defense. It would be very difficult now to come with a grand design of strategic ballistic-missile defense because we still have a balance of offensive forces, which are targeted at each other. But I think that that is something – we have to start, at least, with theater ballistic-missile defense to take care of rogue states, of the most urgent threats.

I think that Russia should be tougher on Iran. I think that Iran has overplayed its cards. Iran is treating Russia like the tail which is wagging the dog. That should not be permitted. And I think that Russia should take a much more tough position on sanctions against Iran, for two reasons: first of all, because Iran has crossed too many barriers, too many red lines; and secondly because this is the only alternative to a new war in the Persian Gulf. Because even if it’s not the United States, Israel would not tolerate Iran getting anywhere close to a nuclear threshold.

So this is the argument that I would use in Russia and this is the argument which I would use in the United States parliament – that the new treaty should be a basis for much greater cooperation on defense and on Iran. And it can be like that. I think that the very fact of signing and ratification of the new treaty will already affect Iranian policy. They are very touchy on the question of Russian-American relations. Whenever we have better relations, Iran makes concessions. Whenever we have contradictions and controversies, Iran toughens its position.
immediately. But also going further with our cooperation on preventing Iran from continuing its road to a nuclear threshold.

MR. PERKOVICH: Terry, and then Mr. Mitchell.

Q: Terry Taylor from the International Council for the Life Sciences. Thank you for your lucid presentation. My question, you’ve partially answered it with your comments on Iran. I was going to ask you, given your view that this nuclear agreement, if it’s ratified, is a big – choosing my adjectives carefully – a big political deal, rather than a military one – and I was looking for your views on the, really, the political ripples arising from this and strength and cooperation between Russia and the United States.

You gave your view that there should be closer cooperation between Russia and the United States on Iran and, perhaps, one could also add North Korea to that list. But how do you think that the leading political establishment would respond to the view that you expressed on Iran? Do you think there’s a real prospect of closer collaboration between Russia and the United States from the Russian perspective, or not?

MR. PERKOVICH: Nima?

Q: Thanks. Dr. Arbatov, a quick question: It seems to me that you reference, predominantly, if I understood you correctly, the perceptions of what we might call the elites in Russia on this issue and this cluster of issues. And my question is, to what extent is the popular opinion in Russia, A, concerned about the specifics of a nuclear arms agreement, number one; and number two, to what extent is popular opinion concerned about the gap between actual and perceived power in the world, between the United States and Russia?

MR. ARBATOV: Again, let me start with the last one. Of course, the popular opinion is less fixed on nuclear balance and new strategic arms agreement. It is presently shocked by the terrorist acts and this is the problem number one, as far as people are concerned about security, physical security. With respect to nuclear weapons, I already mentioned that public opinion, in general, is confused about that because there is a quite spread, commonly accepted notion that nuclear weapons are the only remaining pillar of Russian special status in the world.

Because the balance of power, in particular economic power, is not in Russian favor and we have a lot of foreign policy problems, serious problems with our allies. And secondly, that it makes up for Russian inferiority in other military – in other aspects of military balance. So it will take a lot of persuasion and, hopefully, a clear stance by Prime Minister Putin to make Russian public opinion complacent about the new treaty. And certainly, Russian public opinion is enormously concerned about Russian vulnerability: economic vulnerability, financial vulnerability, its vulnerability to terrorism, its vulnerability to NATO and, in prospect, to China.

It recently has come to the foreground of Russian public debate and there is much greater concern, which is openly expressed about China and about the way China treats Russia and about the way things may change in 10 to 15 years with respect to China. But for many people, this is an additional argument that we do not – we have to avoid estranging China and making China an enemy because, obviously, the balance is so much in China’s favor and changing more and more, every year, in China’s favor. And we have 5,000 kilometers common border with China, where Russian defense infrastructure was virtually dismantled.
With respect to Iran, I think that Russia will support sanctions with some exemptions. The ban on weapons transfer will not be supported. Russia certainly would provide defensive weapons to Iran and not so many, after all – Iran is not our primary partner any longer – but this ban would not be supported in Russia. Some other things which are not proposed, but may come into debate, like doing something with Bushehr project – Russia will certainly not agree to that. I think that Russia may agree to other sanctions and in particular the embargo on supplies to Iran of oil products, gasoline and others. That will meet no objection from Russia.

The main problem, I think, here, is to have Germany firmly on board and to persuade India to join. With India it would be very difficult because India’s own geopolitical game in the Indian Ocean makes Iran its primary ally. And India is building a military port facility in Iran, competing with China. China’s placing its emphasis on Pakistan and Myanmar, primarily. So for India, that would be part of a much bigger geopolitical and economic, geo-economic game, so it would be not easy to have India on board.

The main argument, which I often hear in Russia about sanctions against Iran, is that in principle there should be sanctions, but the sanctions should not be at Russian expense. The most effective sanctions would be oil embargo. And that is a subject for the United States to negotiate not with Russia but with Europe, Japan, China and India. I think that in principle after the new wave of sanctions it would be well advised to revise our policy towards Iran. I think that the previous policy – no enrichment, full IAEA safeguards – has not worked and it will not work unless there is a real threat of oil embargo or a real threat of military operations. I think that, maybe, we should change the emphasis to put the primary emphasis on IAEA safeguards – Iranian acceptance, ratification of the 1997 Additional Protocol, so that we know for sure what’s going on in Iran.

The second approach, with respect to enrichment, might be to shift the emphasis on making Iran agree to withdrawal of low-enriched uranium elsewhere – not keeping the stock of low-enriched uranium – while having the permission to continue operating its existing cascades of centrifuges. So I think that some nuances are needed with respect to enrichment, instead of stating clearly, once again, for the sixth time: No enrichment, or else. Or what else? Nothing. We should say: Okay, you have a certain number of centrifuges. You can keep them, you can continue operating them, but do not expand that number further and agree to withdraw the low-enriched uranium to Russia and France, where it will be converted into fuel rods and returned to you for your research reactor and for the Bushehr reactor.

Maybe that would be a more effective approach. And then Iran would be able to say: We’ve achieved a great victory. The West agreed that we have the right to have industrial enrichment, or however they call it. But on the other hand, enrichment without stocks of low-enriched uranium makes the lead time between political decision and nuclear weapons much longer than if Iran kept the stocks and just stopped the centrifuges for some time.

MR. PERKOVICH: Let me ask, going back to the earlier question and different things you said about NATO and the number-one threat perception in Russia being NATO, and so on. And so let me ask the question, maybe, a five-year-old would ask, which is: What is it that Russian security elites and others think that NATO would do to Russia? I mean, it’s fine to say, NATO’s a threat. But what exactly is it? What is it that Russia has that NATO wants? What is the military action that NATO would take against Russia that causes all of this concern?

MR. ARBATOV: Well, Russian new military doctrine is something like what is said about Wagner music: It’s not as bad as it sounds. (Laughter.) It says that globalization of NATO and movement of NATO
infrastructure to Russian borders is number-one military danger, not threat. And Russians make a difference. Threat is something which is already here, which threatens war. Danger is something which potentially might lead to war. So in the list of dangers, this is number one, but it’s not in the list of threats. There is a special list of threats and NATO is not mentioned there. So that’s number one.

Secondly, NATO moving military infrastructure – I’m not saying moving alliance to Russian borders – that’s, kind of, very – maybe this is hairsplitting, but it’s different from saying NATO movement to Russian borders. So Russia is primarily concerned about infrastructure: ballistic missile defense sites, brigades in Romania, modernization of airfields in Lithuania. Russia cannot understand why it is going on. There’s no terrorist threat, no rogue states. So that is about NATO.

In principle, there are two political-psychological biases with respect to NATO and NATO expansion. It’s seen from Russia as the West taking advantage of Gorbachev’s Soviet Union and Yeltsin’s democratic Russia’s decision to liberate those countries from the Communist rule, which happened, basically, in two ways: Gorbachev decided to liberate Central Europe from Communist rule and Yeltsin decided to liberate the neighboring Soviet republics from Communist rule. And neither Gorbachev nor Yeltsin expected NATO to move to take this space.

Russia considers post-Soviet space as the area of its legitimate interests and it really is. The only problem is that Russia does not formulate its interests in any tangible and clear way. And that was my argument with Russian authorities for many years. I was trying to persuade them that if you formulate, in a very precise way, what are your economic, defense, security, other interests in each particular neighboring country, the West might look at it in a much less hostile way, rather than when Russia says: This is our area of national interest, which is perceived as a postimperial or neoimperial attempt to dominate.

So nevertheless, Russia doesn’t want NATO to take all this post-Soviet space, under whatever pretext, and deprive Russia of its legitimate interests – transit and Russian ethnic minorities and economic investment and everything that Russia has – and transparent borders – with respect to that space. Also there is concern that some conflict in Crimea, which now is much less, of course, likely, in the Caucasus, which still remains quite likely, may bring Russia and the West into direct confrontation. And then all the huge military advantages of NATO would come into play and would be used to apply political pressure, a position-of-strength policy against Russia, if NATO comes right to Russian border from the west and from the south. That is why Russia’s against it.

But in the new military doctrine, it’s formulated in a very cautious way, actually, just like the formulation on nuclear weapons. I didn’t mention it; I think it’s worth mentioning here because, in some short time, the United States will come with its Nuclear Posture Review. Russians waited and waited and waited for this posture review to come with their own military doctrine. Then they decided not to wait any longer and came with this military doctrine, but certainly this military doctrine was affected by the thrust of President Obama for nuclear disarmament, by the information that we have that the posture review was delayed because Obama wanted to have some less traditional formulation, and certainly by negotiations and resetting of the relations.

Because since 1993, when the first Russian military doctrine was formulated, we have never had a doctrine which would be so cautious, so conservative on nuclear weapons as the present one. Basically, it formulates only two situations under which Russia may use nuclear weapons. One, in retaliation for a nuclear or chemical,
biological attack on Russia and its allies. Second, to prevent or to repel overwhelming conventional aggression, which would put into doubt the very existence of the Russian state.

This is such a tall order that I cannot think of anything more liberal than just unequivocal no-first-use pledge. This comes very close to unequivocal no-first-use pledge because the first condition, retaliation, is basically a weapons of mass destruction no-first-use pledge. It’s already a weapons of mass destruction no-first-use pledge. Second, the very existence of Russian state – it’s difficult to think what should happen to put into doubt the very existence of the Russian state. Maybe an American default on all our investment, American banks – (laughter).

MR. PERKOVICH: Or closing Swiss banks, or – right, right. No, that’s an important point, though, about the doctrine because I don’t think it’s been reported here or discussed here – either that language, or its meaning, and also that it’s different than it seemed like it was going to be months ago or a year ago.

[1:13:10]

MR. ARBATOV: Yeah, a lot of people, in particular some high officials, were improvising on the subject, probably not with sufficient knowledge of the subject. And there was a lot of speculation – preventative strikes, preemptive strikes and so on, selective strikes. Nothing of that is in the new military doctrine. It’s a very conservative – the previous one said that Russia might use nuclear weapons in case of conventional aggression in critical situations. But that is a very amorphous term. The present term is, I would say, very conservative.

MR. PERKOVICH: A couple more questions. Let’s go to these two gentlemen here and then, Jayantha, did you have one? Okay.

Q: Paul Kawika Martin with Peace Action, formerly SANE/Freeze. Thanks, George and Alexei, for this good conversation. The U.S., I think, is behind on its commitments for dismantling nuclear weapons and in fiscal year 2011 the Obama administration has significantly increased funding for the labs. Some would argue some of this funding is not necessarily needed for surety and reliability needs. How do Russian negotiators view these increases and backlog of disarmament, or dismantlement, and does it affect any future negotiations after this START treaty?

MR. PERKOVICH: You, sir, and then we’ll go with Jayantha and then see how much time we have left.

Q: Hugh Hascal from the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research. I have a slightly different version of the question from the 5-year-old. Given that NATO was created primarily as a buffer against Soviet aggression – presumed Soviet aggression – now that the Soviet Union no longer exists and, presumably, the threat of Russian aggression is at least substantially reduced, why do we even have NATO?

[1:15:11]

MR. PERKOVICH: It’s great to ask a Russian that question. So let’s have those two and then we’ll do enough time so that we have a question from Jayantha, at least, and perhaps more.

MR. ARBATOV: I’ll leave the second question to you. Why do you have NATO?

MR. PERKOVICH: (Chuckles.) Well, no, I’ll turn it around. Why do you think we think we have NATO? (Laughter.)
MR. ARBATOV: Well, with respect to laboratories and the budget for stewardship and these things, it is taken in Russia in a very complacent way. Nobody is seriously concerned about it. Weapons in storage is terra incognita and it’s something which will have to wait for many years before nuclear disarmament comes to that.

But when it does, that would be a real hardcore nuclear disarmament because now we are dealing with ceilings, launchers, delivery systems. It’s peripheral disarmament, even as low as we go with reducing missiles and bombers and submarines. So those Russians who are responsible for watching Americans, they probably would interpret that as a way to pacify Republican opposition in Senate, beginning of horse trading on ratification of START-1, and even more on future CTBT.

MR. PERKOVICH: Well, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy – Russians are good at reading things and so that’s a pretty good interpretation, I would say.

[1:16:44]

MR. ARBATOV: Now, with NATO, Russians were not against NATO in the early ’90s. When NATO stayed where it was and the Soviet Union agreed for German reunification within NATO alliance, Russians looked very well at NATO. They considered NATO to be, really, an alliance of democratic states and wanted to have good relations. And there was a lot of talk of the possibility of Russia eventually joining NATO. You remember Yeltsin once even made a very conspicuous statement saying that Russia will put the question of joining NATO in the foreseeable future. But then it produced such a reaction that they corrected it in a few days, saying that the typist made a mistake: that Russia will not put the question.

MR. PERKOVICH: (Chuckles.) He missed a word, missed a word.

MR. ARBATOV: But then the etiquette towards NATO started to change. And a crucial turning point was NATO bombing of Serbia and Kosovo. That was a crucial turning point. After that, Russia started to see NATO as an aggressive alliance, which will use force arbitrarily out of national security – out of United Nations Security Council framework, out of framework of international law, at will – and what is more important, it didn’t change so much the official attitude towards NATO, but the grassroots Russian attitude towards NATO.

[1:18:29]

I lived most of my life – at least half of my professional life was in the Soviet Union and I do not remember ever seeing such an outcry of anti-NATO, anti-Western moods at the grassroots level of Russian public as in 1999. In the time of the Cold War, the more official propaganda was coming against NATO, the more Russian people liked NATO. But that changed dramatically after 1999. And then Russians started to judge NATO not by the nature of the states which are NATO members, whether democratic or not quite democratic, but by NATO’s actual functions, by NATO’s actual operations.

And then, of course, the operation in Iraq, which was not formally a NATO operation, but in which the United States, with a number of NATO allies, intervened without obvious, clear reason, all was taken already in a very hostile manner. So now the predominant opinion in Russia is that NATO is an alliance which, first of all, tries to take the ground which was liberated and left by the Soviet Union and by Russia – to come, to encircle Russia, to come to Russian borders and to prevent Russia from using, from exercising its legitimate interest in the post-Soviet space. Second is that NATO wants to become global and to, in many respects, to elbow away or to substitute United States as the operational body for peacekeeping, peace enforcement, or interventions, whenever NATO decides to do that.
MR. PERKOVICH: Before I turn to Ambassador Dhanapala for the last question, I was reminded – and it’s a point that you’ve made a number of times in response to questions – that, first of all, the only nuclear-arms-control experience in the world is between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and the U.S. and Russia, and that the treaties and the experiences we’ve had thus far have never actually verified the part that goes boom. It’s always been the delivery systems and I was reminded of this as you were talking because I remember briefing some members of Congress a few months ago.

[1:21:08]

And I realized that they didn’t realize that arms control had never dealt with the part that goes boom. And that was how I explained it to them: I said, there’s the part that flies the thing and then there’s the part that goes boom. And we’ve always just counted the parts that fly the thing and we’ve destroyed those things, but we’ve never dealt with the parts that go boom. And he says, you’re kidding. And then I said, yeah, but there have been weapons that were dismantled, warheads that were dismantled. It just wasn’t verified or counted and, in fact, many of the lights – when you turn on your lights – in your state, if it has nuclear power, are supplied by the fuel from that. He also – his reaction was, you’re kidding me.

MR. ARBATOV: You are talking to your children this way?

MR. PERKOVICH: I was talking to a member of Congress. (Laughter.) And so, so I think it really is important that, at some point, when the experience of arms reduction – if it ever goes beyond the U.S. and Russia, or if it goes further with the U.S. and Russia – what you were saying is, we will be into this new domain of actually trying to count warheads and verify warheads, which never has been done and raises all of these issues that are very complicated and intrusive that you were referring to. Including the people of South Carolina visiting Russians to come and inspect their naval bases. And Charleston’s a lovely place, so I’m sure that’ll work great. Ambassador Dhanapala, the last question to you. Hold on one second, grab –

[1:22:34]

Q: Alexei, there’s a lot of attention being focused on the approaching NPT review conference. And apart from the traditional P-5 statement, which has never really helped to achieve a consensus in these review conferences, is there anything that the Russian Federation is planning, or that you would recommend, as an initiative that would help achieve consensus at this review conference? For example, at the last PrepCom there was a Russian proposal with regard to converting the Middle East into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

MR. ARBATOV: Well, you are a great authority on that and I feel a little bit awkward discussing the subject of NPT review. However, as far as I know, Russia will not come with any surprise at the NPT review. Nuclear-free zones, IAEA safeguards, multinational fuel cycles – that will be the usual menu of the things which are to be discussed.

If you’re asking me what I would recommend to Russian government, my response to that is that I would recommend to Russian government and to the P-5 governments to concentrate on one issue and to push it through, instead of discussing 10 issues and having another document of very general, very general character. And that would be possible on the basis of this achievement of the new START treaty because the political position of the P-5 will be fortified. My choice, of all the issues, would be universalization of the 1997 Additional Protocol, to make it a number-one issue and concentrate all resources.
Let’s leave the general discussion of all other issues to others, but let’s target this particular subject and try to pull through a resolution that would recommend to nuclear suppliers’ group to link all future deals on nuclear transfers, technology transfers and material contracts to signing and ratification of the Additional Protocol by the recipient state. I think that would really mean going one important step forward in strengthening the regime then just having another general discussion of all the great problems which are associated with the regime.

[1:25:37]

MR. PERKOVICH: Thank you, Alexei. I want to thank all of you for coming. I think Russia is lucky and the world is lucky to have someone as talented, as thoughtful as Alexei Arbatov. I think you understand why I say that.

MR. ARBATOV: That’s the cooperation of the year.

MR. PERKOVICH: Yeah, we’re very grateful that you appeared with us today and enlightened us. And so I want to thank you and I want to thank all of you for coming. (Applause.)

(END)