Statement by Mr. Joseph S. McGinnis
Acting Head of the U.S. Delegation to the
First Committee of the 57th Session of the UN General Assembly

Friday, October 18, 2002
First Committee discussion on
“Related matters of disarmament and international security”

U.S. Resolution on “Compliance with arms limitation and
disarmament and non-proliferation agreements” (L.54)

Mr. Chairman,

I take the floor this morning to introduce resolution L.54 on “Compliance with arms limitation and disarmament and non-proliferation agreements.”

This Committee and the UN General Assembly last addressed compliance issues when the U.S. offered a resolution on this subject in 1997. Since then, much has happened to emphasize even more urgently the need for compliance with arms limitation and disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. My remarks will focus on this heightened need to insure compliance with such agreements as an important way to insure international security and stability.

As Assistant Secretary Rademaker said in his address to this body on October 3rd, this is a time of great danger. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is an increasing reality along with the realization of the threats we will all face if terrorists gain access to such weapons. In this regard, the U.S. believes that every country in the world should be a party to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, and the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also believe that every country that has signed and ratified these agreements should comply fully with their provisions, and that States Parties must hold each other accountable and take appropriate steps to deter violations. The international community must use all means at its disposal to ensure not just that key multilateral arms limitation and disarmament treaties are complied with, but also that we keep weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery out of the hands of terrorists and states which may support terrorists.

The key means by which this is accomplished within the framework of such treaties and other agreements is by ensuring full compliance with their terms. The resolution I am introducing on behalf of my government seeks to reinforce that crucial fact. While the language in the resolution is based on previous versions of the resolution, it has been updated to reflect the new international security imperatives that we face today. In this regard, while compliance with all agreements is to be reinforced, special emphasis must be placed on compliance with non-proliferation agreements as a way to keep weapons of mass destruction from becoming a part of the arsenal of terrorism. We all would suffer grievously were this to happen.
I wish to emphasize that the sole purpose of the United States in presenting this resolution is to focus the attention of member states of the UN on the continuing need – now more urgent than ever – to comply with arms limitation and disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. As in previous years when this resolution was offered, and in the future when it is offered again, our objective is and will be to address compliance, pure and simple. No other resolution does this, and it is vital to consider this resolution in that light.

Mr. Chairman,

The U.S. resolution on Compliance, L.54, was tabled last week with only the United States as the sponsor. Since then we have been open to ways to improve the text and have made modifications that reflect the views of other delegations. We now seek widespread co-sponsorship of L.54. We firmly believe that co-sponsorship of this resolution will signal more effectively the collective will of this body to enhance compliance with arms limitation and disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. Co-sponsorship would also underline the importance that delegations attach to compliance with such agreements as an integral part of international security. This is indeed the fundamental focus of the resolution, and we hope that all members of the First Committee will agree and support it on that basis.

For this reason, Mr. Chairman, it is also the hope of my delegation and my government that this resolution will - as in the past - be adopted by the First Committee without a vote. We believe the essential message of the resolution speaks for itself, and we think the First Committee should send this resolution forward to the General Assembly with every delegation’s support, thus underlining our mutual efforts to ensure our common security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman