

As prepared for delivery

Statement by
Jeffrey L. Eberhardt,
Member of the U.S. Delegation
to the First Committee of the General Assembly
in the panel discussion "Nuclear Weapons"
October 17, 2007

Thank you and good afternoon. I am pleased to be taking part in this panel today. Events such as these provide an excellent opportunity to engage in a dialogue on important security issues and, I hope, provide greater clarity with regard to U.S. policies, and perhaps even dispel some of the enduring myths surrounding those policies. The United States is pleased to have the chance to participate, and we thank the organizers of this event for their willingness to provide this important forum.

Earlier this week, Mr. Thomas D'Agostino, Administrator of the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), Mr. Will Tobey, a Deputy Administrator at NNSA, and Mr. Andy Semmel, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Nonproliferation at the Department of State, gave a detailed briefing on the United States record of accomplishment with regard to Article VI of the NPT. We were very pleased to have such high-level representation from NNSA in presenting that briefing, for they really are the U.S. experts on nuclear weapons. NNSA is the agency within the U.S. Government responsible for developing, building, maintaining, and dismantling our nuclear weapons. It manages our nuclear weapons industrial infrastructure, and oversees the U.S. National Laboratories, such as the famous Los Alamos facility which designed the first atomic weapon. Today, NNSA supervises the process of dismantling the large numbers of nuclear weapons that we are retiring from service, oversees the conversion of former nuclear weapons materials to alternative uses, and operates cooperative programs for the securing and disposition of former nuclear weapons material from our former Cold War adversary.. The briefing on Monday was the most recent example of ongoing United States efforts at diplomatic dialogue on disarmament.

I would not wish to duplicate that briefing, but for the benefit of those unable to attend that event, I will note some of its highlights relating to our efforts to reduce both the size of our nuclear weapons stockpile and – more important – the modern role of nuclear weapons in U.S. deterrent strategy. That done, I will focus the bulk of my remarks on the larger issue of how the international community can create the conditions that would allow for the achievement of our shared goal: a world without nuclear weapons.

The stockpile reductions achieved by the United States, including both weapons and the fissile material to produce those weapons, have been dramatic. When we reach our Moscow Treaty numbers, the United States will have reduced its operationally deployed nuclear weapons by 80 percent from our Cold War high. This will be the lowest number of weapons in the stockpile since the Eisenhower Administration – in other words, since before many of those in this room were born -- and since well before the Nuclear Nonproliferation-Proliferation Treaty came into force. Commensurate with these

reductions, the United States continues to make dramatic reductions in nuclear weapons delivery systems, including the elimination in 2005 of the last of our most modern ICBM, the Peacekeeper, and the upcoming retirement of all our nuclear-tipped advanced cruise missiles.

As the NNSA experts emphasized just days ago, contrary to an oft-heard criticism, the United States is not simply putting warheads on a shelf. We are, in fact, dismantling large numbers of warheads – and dismantling them at a faster rate. The Department of Energy has accelerated its warhead dismantlement program by nearly 150%, and looks to maintain – and, hopefully, further increase – this higher rate of dismantlement. As for the fissile material to produce weapons, the United States ended its production of highly enriched uranium (HEU) for weapons in 1964, and the production of plutonium (Pu) for weapons in 1988, shutting down our last reactors for producing plutonium in 1989. Even more significantly, the United States has removed 374 metric tons (MT) of HEU and 59 MT of Pu from its defense stocks. Most of this material will be converted to produce fuel for civilian reactors.

These facts only begin to tell the story of U.S. accomplishments, and do not recount the billions of dollars that the U.S. has spent to assist Russia in securing and eliminating its fissile material stocks. All of this has been made possible by President Bush's commitment to "achieving a credible deterrent with the lowest possible number of nuclear weapons consistent with our national security needs, including our obligations to our allies." In keeping with the President's direction, the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (or NPR) reduced our reliance on nuclear weapons, outlining a strategy that places greater reliance on conventional weapons and defenses. Pursuant to the NPR, we seek to rely less and less on nuclear weapons for strategic deterrence.

Having reviewed briefly the "disarmament math," let me now turn to the larger issue of how disarmament progress can be sustained. That is to say, how we can achieve the global security environment envisaged by the NPT that will allow for the elimination of nuclear weapons. There seems to be great interest these days in the thorny questions that arise when one attempts to think seriously about this. One of the best-known manifestations of this new interest came from outside government circles, with a January 2007 op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* by former U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, former Defense Secretary William Perry, former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and former Senator Sam Nunn. From the other side of the former Cold War, former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev also has spoken out.

Current U.S. Government officials also have spoken publicly on these subjects. Our comments have tended to focus less upon building laundry lists of traditional arms control steps than upon the more subtle and serious challenges of creating the strategic conditions in which it would become both possible and desirable for nuclear weapons possessors to abandon their arsenals. The new U.S. emphasis, in other words, is not so much upon *what* would have to be done to control and eliminate nuclear weapons as upon *the circumstances under which* such comparatively mechanical or technical tasks would become realistic – that is, upon the practical challenges of making nuclear disarmament the most stabilizing, deliberate policy choice.

As one example, our Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, Christina Rocca, has called upon her colleagues to think realistically about how to "create an environment in which it is no longer necessary for anyone to rely upon nuclear

weapons for security,” and offered some thoughts on what this might mean. The United States also released a detailed series of papers on disarmament issues in advance of the 2007 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting that not only lay out for public view the U.S. record and position on disarmament, but also begin to sketch a vision for how the international community might achieve and sustain a world free of nuclear weapons.

These pronouncements focus on the need to make greater progress in the vital task mentioned in the NPT Preamble – that of easing tensions and strengthening trust in order to facilitate the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons and their elimination. Clearly, it is important to reduce those competitive dynamics between nations that may make the development (and the retention) of nuclear weapons seem a prudent course in reaching the goal of complete nuclear disarmament. The United States continues to stress that other factors are also important: ensuring solid adherence to nonproliferation obligations; the suppression of WMD-related trafficking; the elimination of *other* forms of WMD against the use of which nuclear weapons might provide a useful deterrent; the development of ways to meet strategic deterrent needs by *non*-nuclear means; the role of ballistic missile and other defenses in containing the dangers of “breakout” from a disarmament regime; and the importance of creating a system capable not merely of detecting, but also of deterring (and, if necessary, responding to), such “breakout.” By focusing less upon the more frequently debated “how-to-do-it” questions of controlling fissile material, verifying reductions, or physically eliminating weapon systems, and more on the “why-to-do-it” questions of how to create the underlying conditions that would make disarmament a reasonable policy choice, I believe that these U.S. initiatives make important contributions to the disarmament debate.

Indeed, there seems to be growing interest in more realistic and practical studies of how to achieve disarmament. In one of her last official acts as British Foreign Secretary, for example, Margaret Beckett delivered an address in June that cited the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, welcomed recent United States disarmament initiatives, and called for new “vision and action,” aimed not only at reducing warhead numbers, but also at “limit[ing] the role of nuclear weapons in security policy.” Beckett stressed the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures in strategic relations, and called for more progress in what she described as “the hard diplomatic work on the underlying political conditions – resolving the ongoing sources of tension in the world” in order to help build a “new impetus for global nuclear disarmament.” Foreign Secretary Beckett also called attention to work getting under way in the “think tank” community, in part funded by the British Government, with the aim of helping “determine the requirements for the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons,” and addressing what she described as “perhaps the greatest challenge of all – what path [we can] take to complete nuclear disarmament that avoids creating new instabilities potentially damaging to global security.”

Such work clearly is to be welcomed to the extent that it attempts sincerely to grapple with the many questions that disarmament raises. The fact that people now seem to be trying to address such challenges is greatly encouraging. Indeed, I suspect that even those who think that nuclear disarmament is impossible can find common cause in at least one important respect with those who seek to achieve disarmament. Specifically, both groups should encourage serious attention to the practical policy challenges that necessarily would arise in creating and sustaining a world free of nuclear weapons. I

imagine that disarmament skeptics would expect that serious study of these questions would highlight the difficulty of answering them, and – if such skeptics are correct in their assessment of disarmament’s impossibility or undesirability – such serious attention presumably would help undercut disarmament enthusiasm by disarming the disarmers, as it were. Conversely, for disarmament’s ardent advocates, studying these questions is vital because answering them in a pragmatic and realistic manner is the only way ever to achieve the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. Both the “pro” and the “anti” camps perhaps can agree on the importance of giving realistic and practical attention to the requirements for disarmament. It is only the *un-serious* supporters of disarmament – the sophists who care about it as an instrument of political coup-counting against the nuclear weapons states, rather than as a means of accomplishing anything constructive – who should dislike asking and struggling with these issues.

In closing, let me say again how pleased I am to be here today. Whatever else one might say about U.S. nuclear policies, in our willingness to engage in dialogue on these issues and provide a wealth of information on our nuclear forces and infrastructure, the United States is second to none.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you very much.
