

Obama, Medvedev sign new START treaty

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WASHINGTON, April 8, 2010 - President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Prague today, with both countries pledging to reduce their deployed, strategic nuclear weapons stockpiles.

The so-called "New START" sets new limits on ready-to-use, long-range nuclear weapons and establishes comprehensive verification procedures for both countries to verify which weapons the other possesses.

"Today is an important milestone for nuclear security and nonproliferation, and for U.S.-Russia relations," Obama said at today's signing ceremony, where he was joined by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and National Security Advisor James L. Jones Jr

While setting significant reductions in the nuclear weapons both nations will deploy and reducing their delivery vehicles by about half, the president said, the treaty recognizes the deterrent value these weapons play.

"It enables both sides the flexibility to protect our security, as well as America's unwavering commitment to the security of our European allies," he said in his prepared remarks.

Today's ceremony represents a step toward fulfilling the long-term goal Obama expressed a year ago in Prague of stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and ultimately eliminating them.

"I believed then ? as I do now ? that the pursuit of that goal will move us further beyond the Cold War, strengthen the global nonproliferation regime and make the United States, and the world, safer and more secure," he said today in Prague.

Obama called the spread of nuclear weapons to more states and nonstate actors "an unacceptable risk to global security." New START, along with the new Nuclear Posture Statement released earlier this week, demonstrates the United States' commitment to stopping proliferation, he said.

The new treaty also makes good on his commitment to "reset" U.S. relations with Russia, Obama said, so the two countries can build trust as they work together for the benefit of both nations and the world.

"This day demonstrates the determination of the United States and Russia ? the two nations that hold over 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons ? to pursue responsible global leadership," he said.

"Together, we are keeping our commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which must be the foundation of global nonproliferation."

The new START treaty sets the stage for talks about further reducing both countries' strategic and tactical weapons, including non-deployed ones, he said.

Obama and Medvedev agreed in Prague to expand their discussions about missile defense, including regular information exchanges about threat assessments and a joint assessment of emerging ballistic missiles.

"As these assessments are completed, I look forward to launching a serious dialogue about Russian-American cooperation on missile defense," Obama said.

Obama emphasized that nuclear weapons are not just an issue for the United States and Russia.

"They threaten the common security of all nations," he said. "A nuclear weapon in the hands of a terrorist is a danger to people everywhere."

He noted that representatives of 47 nations will meet in Washington next week to discuss concrete steps that, if taken, will secure vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in four years.

After Congress ratifies it, the New START treaty will replace the previous treaty that expired Dec. 5.