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Statement on Nuclear Weapons Policy

**Senate Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities**

Mr. Chairman, I commend you, Senator Dole and your Subcommittee for your efforts to stimulate a thoughtful discussion over how we can improve our security and reduce nuclear threats to our nation and the world. I also want to thank Senators Levin, Warner, McCain, Byrd and Kennedy and my other former colleagues for their important work in this area over many years on the Armed Services Committee. I especially want to thank my friend Senator Lugar, who is providing outstanding leadership in the Senate to reduce nuclear dangers, and I am honored to be with him today. I thank the Subcommittee for the opportunity to discuss with you today the issue of U.S. nuclear weapons policy.

In 1948, at the dawn of the nuclear age, General Omar Bradley said, “The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.”

If he were alive today, it might surprise General Bradley to know that we have made it 62 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki without the use of a nuclear weapon. But that fact should not give us a false sense of confidence that we will make it the next 62, or even the next 20 years.

We have important efforts underway and some successes -- including the Nunn-Lugar threat reduction programs, the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, the G8 Global Partnership, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, the Proliferation Security Initiative, the rollback of Libya’s nuclear program and UN Resolution 1540.

President Bush has said we should do “everything in our power” to keep nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons out of terrorist hands. The 9/11 Commission called for a “maximum effort” to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, but at the end of 2005 gave the government a “D” for its progress in this area. In my view, the risk of a nuclear weapon being used today is growing, not receding.

- Countries like North Korea and Iran are pushing international will to the brink by developing nuclear weapons technology and – in the case of North Korea – nuclear weapons.
- A number of additional countries are considering developing the capacity to enrich uranium to use as fuel for nuclear energy – giving them greater capacity to move quickly to a nuclear weapons program if they choose to do so.

- Stockpiles of loosely guarded nuclear weapons materials are scattered around the world, offering inviting targets for theft or sale. We are working on this, but I believe that the threat is outrunning our response.
- Because of an explosion of knowledge and information throughout the world, the know-how and expertise to build nuclear weapons is far more available.
- Terrorists are seeking nuclear weapons for the same reasons terrorists seized airplanes on 9/11 – to use them to inflict on the world the greatest possible human suffering, economic loss, and geopolitical chaos.
- Some nations that have had nuclear weapons since the signing of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty are increasing their reliance on nuclear weapons.
- Some nations that have gained nuclear weapons outside of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty seek to legitimize their nuclear status.
- The good news is that the potential for conflict between the major powers, and in particular between the United States and Russia, has dramatically declined. Though both countries seem reluctant to act on it, we share many security concerns. The bad news is that there still remains a potentially deadly nuclear threat: both countries still deploy thousands of nuclear warheads on ballistic missiles that can hit their targets in less than 30 minutes – a short warning time, "hair-trigger" prompt launch capability that increases the risk of an accidental, mistaken or unauthorized nuclear missile launch.

Mindful of these rising threats and the eroding confidence in deterrence as we have known it, George Shultz, Bill Perry, Henry Kissinger and I published an article in January in the *Wall Street Journal*. We believe that we have arrived at a dangerous tipping point in the nuclear era, and we advocate a strategy for improving American security and global security.

Both nuclear “have” and “have not” states must think anew if we are to prevent a nuclear nightmare. Whether the world recognizes it or not -- we are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe.

Those of us who wrote and endorsed the *Wall Street Journal* piece believe that in order to deal effectively with this new and dangerous era, the United States and the international community must embrace the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and pursue crucial measures toward achieving that goal. We believe that without the bold vision, the actions will not be perceived as fair or urgent. Without the actions, the vision will not be perceived as realistic or possible.

We recommend actions by the five nuclear weapon states that are parties to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty; actions by those states with nuclear weapons outside the NPT;

and actions by nations who may have the capability – although hopefully not the intent today – to produce nuclear materials or nuclear bombs.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Dole and members of the Committee, we recommend the following specific steps:

1. We must secure nuclear weapons and materials around the world to the highest standards;
2. We should eliminate short-range “tactical” nuclear weapons, the bombs most likely to be targeted for theft or purchase by terrorists. In my view, we should start with transparency and accountability of these weapons between the United States and Russia.
3. Nuclear weapons should be reduced substantially in all states that possess them.
4. We must get control of the uranium enrichment process for civil nuclear fuel production, halt the production of fissile material for weapons and phase out the use of highly enriched uranium in civil commerce.
 - a. Last September in Vienna, on behalf of the Nuclear Threat Initiative and with the support of Warren Buffett, I advanced a proposal for establishing an international fuel bank. Legislation has been introduced in Congress to support the establishment of such a bank, which I hope members of this committee will encourage and support.
5. We must redouble efforts to resolve regional confrontations and conflicts. As this Committee well knows, this will not be an easy task, but it is an essential one if we are to stem the incentives for acquiring nuclear weapons in places like the Middle East, southwest Asia and the Korean peninsula. These are not simply regional conflicts. They create tensions and confrontations that shape world security.
6. We should work to bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force – in the United States and in other key states. I believe that we should use the report by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Shalikashvili and the safeguards that he recommends as a roadmap to ratification here at home.
 - a. I would note that former President Gorbachev, who has recently published his own essay in support of our *Wall Street Journal* piece, has advocated ratification of the CTBT and removing nuclear weapons from hair-trigger alert as two crucial steps that should be taken without delay by members of the nuclear club. I believe that the world should take up President Gorbachev’s challenge.

7. The United States and Russia should move to change the Cold War posture of their deployed nuclear weapons to greatly increase warning time in both countries and ease our fingers away from the nuclear trigger.
 - a. To accomplish this step, I urge the two Presidents to order the military and defense officials of each country to present to them a set of options to increase warning time on both sides. I believe that a front burner option should be to remove all nuclear weapons from hair trigger status, which would greatly increase warning time and reduce the danger of an accidental or unauthorized missile launch.
 - b. These officials should jointly determine which threats justify keeping thousands of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger status, and then recommend steps to eliminate those threats and thus end the justification for deploying nuclear forces in this posture. Other prudent ways to increase warning time for both countries should be developed by our defense leaders and presented for consideration.
 - c. The Presidents, in close consultation with the Congress and the Duma, should then jointly adopt an approach and a timetable to get the job done, and challenge other nuclear nations to follow this lead.
 - d. This increased warning time would improve the security of the United States and the security of Russia, and would set a powerful example for the world.
 - e. Chairman Reed, Senator Dole and members of the Committee, each day we should ask ourselves: "Is it in the United States' national security interest for the President of Russia to have only a few minutes to decide whether to fire his nuclear weapons or lose them in response to what could be a false warning?" I would hope that this question would be asked in reverse in Russia and that we would begin to ask it together.

8. I believe that we must enhance our verification capabilities, policies and agreements, once again restoring and elevating President Reagan's maxim of "trust but verify" as an essential component of our national security policy. In my view, we should put at least as much effort into verification as we do into missile defense.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Dole, members of the Committee, accomplishing these steps will require intensive work with leaders of the countries in possession of nuclear weapons to turn the goal of a world without nuclear weapons into a joint enterprise. This will require U.S. leadership.

I believe that we need a strategic reassessment of the role and purposes of nuclear weapons in the 21st century and an urgent change in direction with both vision and steps.

This new direction will require Presidential leadership and a consensus judgment in the Congress to sustain it. As this Subcommittee well understands, this discussion is just beginning.

In closing, I believe that the vision and actions must go together. We cannot defend America without taking these actions; we cannot take these actions without the cooperation of other nations; we cannot get the cooperation of other nations without embracing the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons – which every president from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush has reaffirmed through our nation’s commitment to Article VI of the Nonproliferation Treaty.

This cannot happen overnight. It will be a long process, done in stages. The United States must have its nuclear weapons as long as any other nations do. But we will be safer, and the world will be safer, if we are working toward the goal of deemphasizing nuclear weapons and ultimately ridding our world of them.

Nearly 20 years ago, Ronald Reagan was asked to identify the most pressing need in international relations. In response, President Reagan asked his audience to imagine that “all of us discovered that we were threatened by a power from outer space—from another planet.” The President then asked: “Wouldn't we come together to fight that particular threat?” After letting that image sink in for a moment, President Reagan came to his point: “We now have a weapon that can destroy the world -- why don't we recognize that threat more clearly and then come together with one aim in mind: How safely, sanely, and quickly can we rid the world of this threat to our civilization and our existence.”

Mr. Chairman, Senator Dole, members of the Committee: If we want a safer world for our children and grandchildren, our generation must answer President Reagan’s question.

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