



**Lawyers Alliance for World Security
Committee for National Security**

1901 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 201, Washington, DC 20006
tel: (202)745-2450 fax: (202)667-0444 e-mail: disarmament@lawscns.org

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“Canadian Leadership Will Make a Difference”

**Remarks by Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr., before a Joint Meeting of
the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the
House of Commons and the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs**

Ottawa – March 10, 1999

It is an honor to be invited to address this joint meeting of these two distinguished Committees on the subject of the Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade entitled “Canada and the Nuclear Challenge: Reducing the Political Value of Nuclear Weapons for the Twenty-First Century”. The Standing Committee in this Report has made an important contribution to the security of Canada, the security of the United States, the NATO Allies and the entire world community. This Report addresses one of the central issues for international peace and stability in the years that lie ahead.

Nuclear weapons were given an exceedingly high political value during the Cold War. The Cold War passed into history nearly a decade ago, yet this high political value remains. The Nuclear Weapons States are coterminous with the permanent membership of the Security Council. This is an accident of history rather than deliberate design, yet it is a fact. The Prime Minister of India, after the nuclear weapon tests last May, said in effect, India is a big country now

that we have the bomb. Many states see a direct link between the status of a country and whether or not it possesses nuclear weapons. In the House of Commons in London in 1997 a Conservative Party spokesman in addressing plans to reduce further the United Kingdom's Trident force declared that this force cannot be reduced further, otherwise Britain would cease to be a first class nuclear power and would lose its permanent seat on the Security Council with the right of veto. Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger asserted in a newspaper column in 1997, that nuclear weapons are central to United States security and we must stop saying bad things about them. To paraphrase the 1991 NATO Strategic Concept Document, it describes nuclear weapons as the "essential link" between North America and Europe, "the supreme guarantor" of NATO security and "unique" to peace.

If we, as the world community do not find a way to reduce the political significance of nuclear weapons, if we cannot break the link between status and possession of nuclear weapons, the long-term viability of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (the NPT) will be in serious jeopardy. These weapons will simply be too attractive politically, and the 1945 era technology on which they are based too simple, for many states in the world to continue to forswear them, and widespread nuclear proliferation is the likely result. The Report of the Standing Committee sets forth fifteen recommendations as to how Canada can begin to help the world community move away from the high political significance attached to nuclear weapons and strengthen the NPT regime. Of particular significance in the nuclear weapon field are Recommendations 1,2,3,5,6,9,10,14, and 15. With respect to the proliferation of other weapons of mass destruction, Recommendation 11 is

important. They are buttressed with thoughtful argument and deserve careful consideration by the Canadian government. This Report is a most important contribution to world peace and security comparable to the release of the Report of the Canberra Commission in 1997, on which my two colleagues represented the United States and the 1997 Report of the United States National Academy of Sciences on “The Future of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy.” The recommendations in the Report of the Standing Committee should be carefully considered by the Government of Canada and I hope acted upon.

The Cold War is over and the principal threat to the world community is the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The civilized world’s principal defense against the proliferation of nuclear weapons to irresponsible states, terrorist organizations or criminal conspiracies is the NPT regime.

Concluded in 1968, the NPT is the legal framework that establishes the international norm against nuclear proliferation and serves as the foundation for all other efforts to control weapons of mass destruction. When it was being negotiated, many predicted that there could be as many as thirty nuclear weapon states by the end of the 1970s, and who knows how many today, if the trend toward nuclear proliferation had been left unchecked, The NPT gave the world a thirty year respite from further proliferation. While three countries – India, Pakistan, and Israel – remained aloof from the Treaty they were careful not to openly defy the regime, until India and Pakistan did so last year.

Overt nuclear proliferation in South Asia, amid fervent denunciation of the NPT as a discriminatory and even racist regime, and other ominous developments,

now threatens to upset the delicate balance on which both nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament depend. The original NPT signatories in 1968 – and all of the countries that have joined since to form a nearly global non-proliferation community—agreed that the number of nuclear weapon states in the world should be limited to the five states that already possessed nuclear weapons. The nuclear arsenals of the five were not approved by the NPT, they are specifically challenged by Article VI and their reduction and ultimate abolition is mandated by the Treaty. However, the performance of the nuclear weapon states in moving toward nuclear disarmament has been insufficient in the eyes of many non-nuclear weapon states. Many of those that have voluntarily foresworn the nuclear weapon option on the conditions that only five states would have nuclear weapons, and that those five would work toward disarmament, may reconsider their own commitments in light of changes in these conditions. Many have said as much, and if any leave the Treaty regime, more would surely follow.

And the NPT regime is indeed in trouble. In 1995 at the time of the indefinite extension of the NPT, to which Canada contributed greatly, the NPT parties, including the Nuclear Weapons States committed themselves to a Statement of Principles and Objectives for Non-proliferation which among other things called for vigorous pursuit of nuclear weapon reductions. This Statement was an integral part of the extension decision, yet we are likely to reach the 2000 Review Conference with no further progress in negotiated nuclear weapon reductions. Also as a central underpinning of the now permanent NPT, the five Nuclear Weapon States, pursuant to a Resolution of the United Nations Security Council in 1995, committed

themselves never to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states parties to the NPT now some 181 countries – virtually the entire world. The only exception to his commitment was if one of those states attacked a nuclear weapon state in alliance with another nuclear weapon state; there was no exception for chemical or biological weapons. This commitment, referred to as a Negative Security Assurance, was found to be legally binding by the World Court the next year in its 1996 decision.

So how do we strengthen the NPT regime our principal defense against the most serious threat that faces us? How do we reduce the political value of nuclear weapons? The Report of the Standing Committee has shown the way with the 15 Recommendations. Beyond this, it is imperative for the five Nuclear Weapon States to move to levels of nuclear weapons as low as possible consistent with security and stability. START II is stalled in the Duma, it may never come into force. The United States and Russia need to move past START II and attempt to negotiate an agreement to a reduction to say, 1000 strategic weapons (a level where the Russians soon will be anyway for financial reasons). This agreement could contain a commitment to a further reduction to 1000 total weapons. Once this level is reached, the stage would be set for a Five Power negotiation to ensue which would address the arsenals of the five Nuclear Weapon states with account taken of India, Pakistan and Israel. An appropriate end point of the negotiation could be 300 weapons each for the United States and Russia, 50 each for the United Kingdom, France and China with India, Pakistan and Israel going to zero and joining the NPT, but retaining their fissile material on their territories under International Atomic Energy Safeguards – as did

South Africa – as a hedge against failure of the agreement. This would be the residual level until the world has changed sufficiently to permit the negotiation of a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

There is a second part to this effort to reduce the political value of nuclear weapons. The five nuclear weapon states should agree to limit the role of nuclear weapons to the core deterrence function of simply deterring their use by others. Nuclear weapons should not be given other roles such as deterring chemical and biological weapons either overtly or implicitly. To do so would be at least inconsistent with and likely would be a violation of the centrally important 1995 Negative Security Assurances which support the NPT to which I referred earlier. This means that the five nuclear weapon states should declare that they would not be the first to use nuclear weapons in future conflicts. In this regard, the language in the 1991 NATO Strategic Concept Document seems singularly out of place, it extols the value of nuclear weapons rather than downplays their significance. It contributes to the high political value of nuclear weapons and hopefully will be revised at the April summit. Beyond this, of the greatest present importance in the effort to lower the political value of nuclear weapons and strengthen the NPT regime would be for NATO to decide to limit the role of nuclear weapons to the core deterrence function of deterring their use by others – in other words a pledge by NATO that it will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into future conflicts – that it will adopt a no first use policy. The rationale for the current policy of retaining the option to use nuclear weapons first—the conventional strength of the Warsaw Pact—has long since

passed into history. Hopefully, the concept of a NATO policy of no first use will be seriously studied by NATO as part of a review to commence after the April Summit.

Widespread nuclear weapon proliferation would place security beyond the reach of any nation. No amount of retaliatory power will protect human civilization from the miscalculations, accidents and misdeeds that nuclear arms in the hands of many would make possible. The prevention of nuclear weapon proliferation must be our highest priority. In the Report of the Standing Committee, Canada has shown us the way toward the road we must follow. I commend all of the 15 Recommendations and I hope that the Government of Canada, to the extent possible, will decide to act upon them.