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**The U.S. Political Process and NATO States:
The Impediments to Abolition**

Remarks by:
Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr.
President, Lawyers Alliance for World Security
to a symposium entitled "The Way Forward: Developing Legal and
Political Strategies to Abolish Nuclear Weapons"
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Good morning and thank you for coming today. Without discussions such as these by people such as yourselves, I am certain that the arduous task of moving toward the abolition of nuclear weapons would remain indefinitely beyond the horizon. The topic of this session, the political process in the United States and its impact on abolition, is central to the development of a strategy because, as you are aware, without the United States, nuclear disarmament cannot be effective. If Washington is not committed to disarmament, then Moscow, Beijing, Paris and London will not disarm and more Delhis and Islamabads are certain to emerge.

The actions of the United States are indeed watched around the world and the rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the U.S. Senate earlier this month was no exception. This Congress, which some have referred to as the most conservative since the Second World War, demonstrated its predisposition against non-proliferation and disarmament by striking a severe

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blow to the non-proliferation regime. When the Senate was asked to take the lead in demonstrating the U.S. commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, it instead demonstrated its commitment to maintaining a large nuclear arsenal, which of course sends a damaging message to non-nuclear weapon states around the world.

The link between the test ban and the nuclear non-proliferation regime is an explicit one. The Preamble of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) expresses the desire of the states parties, now 186 nations, to see the completion of a comprehensive test ban. When the indefinite extension of the NPT was negotiated in 1995, something the United States very much wanted, an associated consensus agreement called the Statement of Principles and Objectives specifically called for the completion of the test ban by the end of 1996. This was the only objective given a specific timeline for achievement, a fact that underscores the importance of the test ban to the health of the NPT regime.

Indeed, non-nuclear weapon states have long regarded the CTBT as a litmus test as to whether the nuclear weapons states would live up to their half of the basic NPT bargain. Through this bargain now 181 NPT non-nuclear weapon states have agreed in the Treaty to never acquire nuclear weapons in exchange for a commitment by the nuclear weapon states to eventually relinquish their nuclear arsenals. While the CTBT was completed in 1996 as the Statement of Principles and Objectives required, Senate rejection of the Treaty could be seen as an act of bad faith by key non-nuclear weapon states freeing them from their commitments to a permanent NPT.

Senate rejection of the CTBT is tantamount to a statement to potential proliferators that, although the United States has not tested in seven years and has no intention of testing in the foreseeable future, you have the green light. The door may have been opened to the gradual disintegration over the next five to ten years of the NPT and the resultant widespread

proliferation of nuclear weapons. Once opened, that door will be difficult to close. This would create a nightmarish situation for U.S., Canadian, and international security. Nations such as North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia and Egypt eventually may test nuclear weapons. Should any of these states test nuclear weapons, it is probable that many other states such as Japan, South Korea, and others would reconsider their status as non-nuclear weapon states. This would of course completely destroy the NPT regime, which, because of the delicate compromise it contains, could never be revived. The Clinton administration correctly has reaffirmed that CTBT ratification is a principal priority of the United States, and the nuclear weapon states should bolster the NPT regime by working to bring the CTBT into force as early as is possible.

As President Chirac of France, Prime Minister Blair of the United Kingdom and Chancellor Schroeder of Germany noted in an October 7th New York Times op-ed, “as we look to the next century, our greatest concern is proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and chiefly nuclear proliferation. We have to face the stark truth that nuclear proliferation remains the major threat to world safety.” If the next century is to be more secure than the last and if the world is to be freed from the dangers of nuclear weapons, the international community must cooperate to strengthen the NPT regime. This demands that, as a first step, the nuclear weapon states work to bring the CTBT into force.

Unfortunately, the current U.S. Senate, instead of leading U.S. and international arms control and non-proliferation efforts, seems intent on reversing the progress made over the last two decades. One need look no further than the CTBT and Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty to determine that congressional attitudes are not favorable to arms control and disarmament. Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin have both referred to the ABM Treaty the “cornerstone of international arms limitation,” but some in Congress are seeking deployment of national missile defense systems that would seemingly require U.S. violation or abrogation of the Treaty.

off attack from rogue states, would cause them to expand rather than contract their nuclear arsenals. It is important to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts that the viability of both the ABM Treaty and the START processes be preserved.

If deployment by the United States of a limited national missile defense against so-called “rogue states” is judged to be necessary, any damage to arms limitations and non-proliferation that could be caused by such a deployment should be minimized by carefully revising the ABM Treaty through negotiations and cooperatively developing limited NMD systems with Russia, Europe and to a lesser degree China. Such cooperation would help to alleviate suspicions in Russia and elsewhere regarding the intended target of a unilateral U.S. NMD deployment, enable the pursuit of strategic reductions, and likely promote transparency between the nuclear weapon states, which is important to strategic force reductions.

In addition to the great importance of preserving the viability of the ABM Treaty in this process and bringing the CTBT into force, the nuclear weapon states should adopt policies that reduce the role of nuclear weapons. The U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the Canberra Commission and most recently the Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament have all concluded that the only role for nuclear weapons is deterring the use of other nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, some commentators in nuclear weapon states continue to argue for new roles for nuclear weapons such as deterring or responding to the use of chemical or biological weapons. A less overt variant of such a policy, commonly referred to as a doctrine of “calculated ambiguity” because it suggests that uncertainty in the minds of potential aggressors about the nature of response to a chemical or biological attack would deter the use of these weapons, is also advocated by some.

Supporters of the “calculated ambiguity” concept suggest that veiled threats to use nuclear weapons in response to a chemical weapon attack deterred the use of chemical weapons

by Saddam Hussein during the Persian Gulf War. While we will likely never know if this is true, revelations in memoirs by senior policymakers that the United States was bluffing and never had any intention of using nuclear weapons, even in response to a CBW attack, have ensured that “calculated ambiguity” probably will not be effective in the future. Rather, it is likely that such a bluff would be called, with potentially devastating consequences. Instead of relying on calculated ambiguity, the United States and NATO should declare that they would under no circumstances introduce nuclear weapons to a conflict and agree instead to rely on their overwhelming conventional superiority to deter or respond to the use of chemical and biological weapons. Such a policy, referred to as a “no first use” policy, would be consistent with the findings of the Canberra Commission, the Tokyo Forum and the National Academy of Sciences, and would reduce the perceived value of nuclear weapons.

The government of Canada has taken a lead on this issue with Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy himself intervening at the NATO Summit in April to assure that the Alliance agreed to conduct a review of its nuclear weapons posture. I commend the Canadian government and Minister Axworthy for these efforts and urge them to continue pressing for NATO to include nuclear weapon use doctrine on the agenda of the formal review to be announced by Ministers in December and ultimately to adopt a no first use policy. It is of the greatest importance that nuclear weapon use doctrine be included on the agenda of the NATO review that could be established in December, at this time by no means a sure thing. Not to even include nuclear doctrine on the agenda at the Ministerial, against the backdrop of the U.S. Senate rejection of the CTBT, the threat to the viability of the ABM Treaty and stalled U.S.-Russian strategic nuclear reduction negotiations, this will have a seriously negative effect on the April 2000 NPT Review Conference and the future of the NPT.

Germany and to lesser extent the Netherlands, Italy and others have expressed support for a NATO no first use policy and other allies such as the Czech Republic for example, have indicated that they are interested in such a policy but are unwilling to alienate the United States. At the same time, there are some elements within the United States that support NATO adoption of a no first use policy but are unwilling to take the lead without a clear demonstration of support from the European allies. If this dilemma is to be overcome efforts like those of Minister Axworthy and others in Canada must continue.

Recent challenges to the regime—nuclear and missile proliferation in South Asia, missile tests by North Korea, and continued Iraqi recalcitrance—demonstrate that the prestige value of nuclear weapons is a primary driver of nuclear and missile proliferation and remains too high. I believe that the key to removing the demand for nuclear weapons among would-be proliferators is reducing the perceived value of these weapons. After India conducted its nuclear tests in May 1998, its Prime Minister declared that India was a big country now that it had nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are of limited realistic military use, but statements such as this reflect the political attractiveness of nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapon states must take steps to strengthen the NPT regime and signal to would-be proliferators that nuclear weapons do not add to the political status of a nation.

If the nuclear non-proliferation regime is to be preserved in the long term and the abolition of nuclear weapons is to ever be possible, the nuclear weapon states should pursue the steps I have mentioned as well as deep cuts in the numbers of nuclear weapons. Ratification of the CTBT should remain a priority for the United States and every effort must be made to bring it into force as soon as possible. The ABM Treaty should be preserved and any NMD deployment should be done in a cooperative manner that ensures the viability of the nuclear arms reduction process which in the medium term should become a five-power process aimed at

reductions down to the low hundreds for the United States and Russia and less for the other three nuclear weapon states. Finally, the nuclear weapon states and NATO should adopt policies that reduce the prestige value and limit the role of nuclear weapons. If the 21st century is to be safer and more secure than the 20th, then this is the path I believe we must follow. Thank you for your attention.