



THE MOSCOW TREATY: ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), signed in Moscow on May 24, 2002, is a positive but modest first step toward breaking the stalemate that has plagued the START process.

SORT should be viewed primarily as a de-alerting measure. However, if followed by additional treaties, as recommended by Secretary of State Colin Powell, or amended in other ways, SORT can play a significant role in achieving permanent reductions in U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals.

To enhance the effectiveness of SORT, the U.S. Congress and the Russian Duma, through the treaty ratification process, can play an important role in achieving the following measures.

I. SORT and future treaties should be made to conform with NPT obligations.

Within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to which 187 States Parties are bound, the U.S. and Russia have agreed to “increased transparency” and to apply “the principle of irreversibility ... to nuclear disarmament.” In SORT they reiterated their disarmament obligations under the NPT, under which they committed to “an unequivocal undertaking ... to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.” The following points II-V list practical steps both parties need to undertake to meet their NPT commitments.

II. The principle of irreversibility should be explicitly required.

SORT is not a permanent treaty. In fact, SORT could be misconstrued by future leaders to require the U.S. and Russia to have between 1700 and 2200 operational strategic warheads *on one day only*: December 31, 2012. The treaty does not explicitly require strategic weapons to be permanently dismantled. Language could be subsequently added to the Treaty to clarify the requirement for irreversibility.

Additionally, START I, which entered into force in 1994, is scheduled to expire in 2009. It should be indefinitely extended, and it should be agreed that the reductions accomplished by START I should be permanent and irreversible.

III. The United States and Russia should conduct serious negotiations on transparency.

“Trust but verify” was a sound policy during the Reagan administration, and it makes just as much sense in the post-September 11 security environment.

A protocol providing future transparency could be added to SORT.

IV. The U.S. and Russia should negotiate a framework to fully de-alert and irreversibly reduce their nuclear arsenals.

The de-alerting aspects of the Moscow Treaty should be applauded, and taken to the next level. Both sides should agree on a framework for de-alerting and irreversibly reducing those strategic and tactical weapons that will remain.

V. Tactical nuclear weapons should be included in reduction and de-alerting measures.

Highly portable short-range *tactical* nuclear weapons are far more valuable to terrorists than fissile materials or warheads. Yet these weapons – despite the fact that they are of limited military use – are neglected by SORT.

Tactical nuclear weapons should (1) be constrained by legally binding, verifiable accounting and safeguard measures, and (2) subject to the same irreversible reduction regime recommended for strategic weapons.