

Remarks on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty March 26, 2010

Good morning, everybody. I just concluded a productive phone call with President Medvedev, and I'm pleased to announce that after a year of intense negotiations, the United States and Russia have agreed to the most comprehensive arms control agreement in nearly two decades.

Since taking office, one of my highest priorities has been addressing the threat posed by nuclear weapons to the American people. And that's why, last April in Prague, I stated America's intention to pursue the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, a goal that's been embraced by Presidents like John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan. While this aspiration will not be reached in the near future, I put forward a comprehensive agenda to pursue it, to stop the spread of these weapons, to secure vulnerable nuclear materials from terrorists, and to reduce nuclear arsenals. A fundamental part of that effort was the negotiation of a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia.

Furthermore, since I took office, I've been committed to a reset of our relationship with Russia. When the United States and Russia can cooperate effectively, it advances the mutual interests of our two nations and the security and prosperity of the wider world. We've so far already worked together on Afghanistan. We've coordinated our economic efforts through the G-20. We are working together to pressure Iran to meet its international obligations. And today we have reached agreement on one of my administration's top national security priorities, a pivotal new arms control agreement.

In many ways, nuclear weapons represent both the darkest days of the cold war and the most troubling threats of our time. Today we've taken another step forward by—in leaving behind the legacy of the 20th century, while building a more secure future for our children. We've turned words into action. We've made progress that is clear and concrete. And we've demonstrated the importance of American leadership and American

partnership on behalf of our own security and the world's.

Broadly speaking, the new START Treaty makes progress in several areas. It cuts, by about a third, the nuclear weapons that the United States and Russia will deploy. It significantly reduces missiles and launchers. It puts in place a strong and effective verification regime. And it maintains the flexibility that we need to protect and advance our national security and to guarantee our unwavering commitment to the security of our allies.

With this agreement, the United States and Russia, the two largest nuclear powers in the world, also send a clear signal that we intend to lead. By upholding our own commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we strengthen our global efforts to stop the spread of these weapons and to ensure that other nations meet their own responsibilities.

I'm pleased that, almost 1 year to the day after my last trip to Prague, the Czech Republic, a close friend and ally of the United States, has agreed to host President Medvedev and me on April 8 as we sign this historic treaty. The following week, I look forward to hosting leaders from over 40 nations here in Washington as we convene a summit to address how we can secure vulnerable nuclear materials so that they never fall into the hands of terrorists. And later this spring, the world will come together in New York to discuss how we can build on this progress and continue to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime.

Through all these efforts, cooperation between the United States and Russia will be essential. I want to thank President Medvedev for his personal and sustained leadership as we worked through this agreement. We've had the opportunity to meet many times over the last year and we both agree that we can serve the interests of our people through close cooperation.

I also want to thank my national security team, who did so much work to make this day possible. That includes the leaders with me here today: Secretary Clinton, Secretary

Gates, and Admiral Mullen. And it includes a tireless negotiating team. It took patience, it took perseverance, but we never gave up. And as a result, the United States will be more secure and the American people will be safer.

Finally, I look forward to continuing to work closely with Congress in the months ahead. There's a long tradition of bipartisan leadership on arms control. Presidents of both parties have recognized the necessity of securing and reducing these weapons. Statesmen like George Shultz, Sam Nunn, Henry Kissinger, and Bill Perry have been outspoken in their support of more assertive action. Earlier this week, I met with my friends John Kerry and Dick Lugar to discuss this Treaty, and throughout the morning, my administration will be consulting Sena-

tors from both parties as we prepare for what I hope will be a strong, bipartisan support to ratify the new START Treaty.

With that, I'm going to leave you in the able hands of my Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, as well as Secretary of Defense Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mike Mullen. So I want to thank all of you for your attention.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretaries of State George P. Shultz and Henry A. Kissinger; former Sen. Samuel A. Nunn; and former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry.

Statement on Bangladesh Independence Day *March 26, 2010*

I join the American people in sending my best wishes to those abroad and here at home that are celebrating Bangladesh Independence Day. Thirty-nine years ago, the people of Bangladesh earned their independence, and since then, our two nations have shared a commit-

ment to democratic values and created an enduring friendship. Here at home, those Americans that can trace their roots to Bangladesh continue to be active in all industries and are an important part of our communities. On this independence day, I wish them all the best.

The President's Weekly Address *March 27, 2010*

This was a momentous week for America. It was a week in which, together, we took bold new steps toward restoring economic security for our middle class and rebuilding a stronger foundation for our future. It was a week in which some of the change that generations have hoped for and worked for finally became reality in America.

It began with the passage of comprehensive health insurance reform that will begin to end the worst practices of the insurance industry, rein in our exploding deficits, and, over time, finally offer millions of families and small businesses quality, affordable care and the security and peace of mind that comes with it. And it ended with Congress casting a final vote on another piece of legislation that accomplished what we've been talking about for decades, leg-

islation that will reform our student loan system and help us educate all Americans to compete and win in the 21st century.

Year after year, we've seen billions of taxpayer dollars handed out as subsidies to bankers and middlemen who handle Federal student loans, when that money should have gone to advancing the dreams of our students and working families. And yet attempts to fix this problem and reform this program were thwarted by special interests that fought tooth and nail to preserve their exclusive giveaway. But this time, we said, we would be different. We said we'd stand up to the special interests and stand up for the interests of students and families. That's what happened this week. I commend all the Senators and Representatives who did the right thing.