

## Further Reductions in Nuclear Forces

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### Summary

The United States and Russia have about 95 percent of all nuclear warheads. There is scope for further immediate reductions. Recent doctrinal statements by the United States and Russia suggest (i) that it should be possible to make further substantial reductions in strategic nuclear weapons, and (ii) that there is no reason why their strategic nuclear forces should be “operationally deployed.”

The paper sets out four stages in the reduction of nuclear weapons to very low levels. Three criteria are used to assess those stages: strategic stability; monitoring and verification; contribution to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

The paper outlines reductions that start with a feasible option (stage one) and end with a conceivable one (stage four). In stage one the United States and Russia could reduce the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 1000. That number could be inserted into the Moscow Treaty in place of the current target of 1700-2200. The parts of the START Treaty that are relevant to verification and monitoring should be maintained in one form or another beyond December 2009. An additional undefined number of warheads would remain in a responsive force.

In stage two the United States and Russia would each retain 500 operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads plus 500 more in the responsive force.

The next step to stage three would be a more radical one of limiting the two countries to a strategic nuclear force with 500 warheads, all in a reserve force with zero operationally deployed.

Recognizing the diminishing distinction between strategic and non-strategic weapons as their numbers decrease, a conceivable stage four would be a configuration in which no state in the world has more than 500 (or 200 in a variant) nuclear warheads of any type with zero operationally deployed. As reductions are made, strategic stability becomes more complicated, while verification and monitoring become more difficult.

Reductions are complementary to other approaches; compared with de-alerting, they have the advantage, as long as the warheads are disassembled, of irreversibility. Missile defenses could be accommodated within the process of disarmament only if they were pursued cooperatively.

Sooner rather than later, the other nuclear powers will need to be brought into the process of disarmament. Three commitments will be required from them: not to increase their nuclear forces; to agree to greater transparency; and not to have their nuclear forces operationally deployed.

Some thoughts are offered on the transition to a world with no nuclear weapons.