

## **By Baker Spring**

The White House plans to submit the April 8, 2010, the Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms Treaty (New START) between the Russian Federation and the United States of America to the Senate for ratification today. The Senate should focus less on the text of the Treaty, its Protocol and Annexes because these documents were made available to the Senate and the public earlier. Instead, the Senate should focus more on the two documents that will accompany today's submission and that have so far not been made public. The first is the section-by-section analysis of the Treaty. The second is the so-called Section 1251 report.

New START is a long and complex agreement. It contains a number of ambiguities that the section-by-section analysis may serve to clarify. These include the exact nature of the limits the Treaty imposes on the missile defense options of the U.S., exactly what types of missile launchers will be subject to limits and whether the Treaty will really limit both sides to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads, just to name three. If these kinds of ambiguities are not cleared up in the section-by-section analysis or by some other means, the Obama Administration will be asking the Senate to consent to the ratification of the Treaty with an inadequate base of knowledge regarding its implications for national security.

The Section 1251 report is named after a provision in the fiscal year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act that requires the Obama Administration to provide to the Senate a detailed ten-year plan on how it will maintain and modernize the nation's nuclear arsenal. Subjects that must be covered include delivery systems and the weapons themselves, the nuclear weapons stockpile and the nuclear weapons complex. It is also to include the necessary funding requirements to meet these needs.

The Senate should pay close attention to two aspects of this required report. The first is to determine whether the Administration's plan is adequate to maintain an arsenal of sufficient size and quality to protect the US, as well as its allies and vital national interests. The second is to determine whether both the Administration and Congress will be bound by the plan for the full ten-year period.

There is a considerable danger that both the Administration and Congress will simply walk away from the plan following the ratification of New START. Ultimately, the Senate needs to recognize that the U.S. cannot afford to reduce its strategic nuclear force under New START if it does not have a force, along with the stockpile and nuclear weapons complex, to back it up.

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