Time to START Standing Up for America

by Phyllis Schlafly September 3, 2010

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Among the dangers lurking in Congress's fall session and Lame Duck Session will be Obama's demand that the Senate rush to ratify the treaty called New START, which he signed with the Russians in Prague last April. This treaty is not only a bad idea; it's downright dangerous to U.S. national security.

For the first time in the long record of U.S.-Russian treaties, New START links offensive and defensive weapons. Obama's advocates of ratification say that doesn't matter because the link is only in the preamble and that doesn't bind us.

But this interpretation hasn't been cleared with the Russians, who assert that the preamble puts a binding limit on the U.S. missile defense program. The Russian government issued a statement that the New START treaty "can operate and be viable only if the United States refrains from developing its missile defense capabilities quantitatively or qualitatively."

The Russians are salivating at the thought that the New START proclaims their victory in their long-running battle to kill U.S. missile defenses. For decades, Russia's primary goal was to stop the United States from building any anti-missile capability.

Ronald Reagan's adamant refusal to give up his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was the principal reason he won the Cold War (without firing a shot, as Margaret Thatcher said). But now Barack Obama is casually willing to abandon our right to build defensive weapons.

Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC) accurately warns that New START revives the Cold War policy known as MAD, a label that famously served as a double entendre. The acronym stands for Mutual Assured Destruction, the policy that was supposed to deter nuclear attack because of the threat that the United States was committed to retaliate and dump massive destruction on the Soviet Union.

In the years of the Cold War, we assumed we were dealing with a rational enemy who, even though dedicated to world conquest, dared not risk such devastating retaliation. That may not be true of today's potential adversaries, who have trained their younger generation to believe that suicide is noble and their key to Heaven.

New START doesn't make nukes obsolete; it just tries to ensure that the U.S. and Russia have an equal capacity to destroy each other. Most important, New START does nothing whatever to protect us from a nuclear Iran or North Korea or Syria or even China.

The U.S. Constitution gives the Senate "advice and consent" power over treaties. But the Obama administration refuses to let Senators review the treaty's negotiating documents.

Whatever happened to transparency? Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asserts that it's not customary to allow Senators to see the records, but Senator DeMint cited the precedent of two previous U.S.-U.S.S.R. treaties that disprove her claim, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the 1972 ABM Treaty.

New START bars the U.S. and Russia from deploying more than 1,550 strategic warheads and 700 launchers. To achieve that goal, we will have to destroy some of our missiles and not modernize the ones we keep because the treaty locks us into a permanent comprehensive nuclear test ban.

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The State Department admits that Russia has consistently cheated on all its arms-control treaties including the 1991 START I treaty right up until it expired last December. Russia admits that it cheated on the famous 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, from which President George W. Bush finally (and thankfully) withdrew the United States.

U.S. intelligence analysts have raised questions about whether Russian cheating can even be detected. But a State Department report to Congress claims that potential Russian cheating on the New START nuclear-arms treaty would not be significant because the benefits of cheating would be "questionable."

Senator John McCain (R-AZ) said we're all wasting a lot of time if the State Department admits that Russia has consistently cheated on all arms-control treaties as a matter of course and that cheating doesn't matter anyway. McCain believes that cheating does matter.

Another provision where the New START treaty favors Russia is that it fails to limit Russia's massive tactical nuclear weapons for use on the battlefield. They outnumber U.S. tactical nukes by a ratio of 10 to 1, and can be launched from rockets, submarines and bomber planes.

The New START treaty is based on Obama's foolish notion that the United States can create "a world without nuclear weapons." We have power only to create a world without American nuclear weapons, a condition that would make us a sitting duck for countries that have evil nuclear objectives.

The New START treaty is a big victory for Russia and defeat for the United States. The Senate should reject it.