



Keynote Remarks From Sen. Jim DeMint (R-SC)

Senator DeMint argued that we must evaluate not only the details of the proposed START agreement but also its context, and, in the current context, the agreement makes little sense. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russia has not, as was hoped, adopted a democratic political system and free market economy. Instead, the rule of law is increasingly eroded in Russia, while the regime seeks to exert control over border nations and undermine American interests in other parts of the world.

Russia, said DeMint, was a protector of none and a threat to many. America, in contrast, is a protector of many and a threat to none. Our nuclear umbrella serves as a stabilizing force and discourages proliferation. Russia, however, has persistently sought to expand its power, as in Georgia, and is a destabilizing force.

Thus nuclear parity with Russia—the START treaty's primary assumption—is in no way desirable. The treaty does not require Russia to reduce its forces but does mandate reductions in U.S. capabilities. These reductions will only encourage further proliferation, as nations depending on the U.S. nuclear umbrella may no longer feel secure.

Instead of focusing on parity, the U.S. should concentrate its efforts on building a robust missile defense system. DeMint advocated the construction of a system capable of defending against threats from major nuclear powers like Russia and China and not merely rogue states. This represents the best defense of the American people, according to DeMint, whereas the START treaty would be a return to mutually assured destruction. Because the Russians have stated that they would withdraw from the treaty if the U.S. were to develop a missile defense system of the sort proposed by DeMint, he believes the treaty is not in the interests of America's security.

DeMint closed by noting that he would welcome good relations with Russia, but that diplomacy must be backed up by strength in order to achieve results and that the U.S. should use every available technological resource to defend against missile attacks.