General Kehler, thank you for the opportunity to speak to STRATCOM’s 2012 Deterrence Symposium. It has become the place to talk about U.S. deterrence policy and deterrence relationships. I see a lot of Washington rainmakers in the room, along with their usual talents, I am glad they’ve brought some rain to Nebraska. There’s one other unique thing about this conference: this is the first time I’ve seen two Rose’s as plenary speakers. Is Rose McDermott [i] still here? Good on ya, STRATCOM. Now to get serious - this year, I would like to focus on our extended deterrence relationship with our European allies and partners.

But to begin with, I’d like to update you on New START, which has now been in force for 18 months. I am pleased to report that the implementation process is going extremely well. For this Treaty year, which began in February, each side has already conducted nine inspections and the overall number of Treaty notifications is over 2700. The New START Treaty’s robust verification regime is providing the predictability and mutual confidence that will be essential to any future nuclear reduction plans.

When President Obama laid out his vision for the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons in Prague in 2009, he made it clear that we will need to maintain our deterrence commitments, while also taking into account the threats of the 21st century. The President knows that the road from Prague will be long. Success will only be reached through a step-by-step process in which we maintain and support a safe, secure, and effective stockpile - sufficient to deter any adversary and guarantee the defense of our allies- at the same time that we pursue responsible reductions through arms control.

We are now spending a lot time thinking about next steps in deterrence, stability, and arms control. I sometimes refer to it as a homework period, which is not a bad term for what we are doing. We are looking at fundamentals and lessons learned, as we work to develop new policies to advance our security.

For arms control, that means pulling back to the basic level. Simply put, arms control contributes to international security by committing nations to submit voluntarily to regimes that limit the development, production, stockpiling, and deployment of weapons. Because arms control is based on reciprocity and is typically accompanied by verification, confidence building and transparency measures, it helps to build predictability into relationships. Limiting force levels and establishing a regime through a mutually verifiable agreement creates boundaries, promotes standard operating procedures, and fosters predictable behavior – these are the building blocks of trust. The relative improvement of trust between parties can help increase stability, in particular when this improvement is underwritten by verification mechanisms. This process can shift a relationship from one based on coercive formulations of deterrence to one based on mutual restraint.

Mutual restraint does not remove the need for deterrence, but it does reflect a shared interest in limiting strategic competition. Mutual restraint, along with the stability provided by arms control agreements, can help prevent escalation during crisis by reducing the imperative to go first. It can also create the conditions for further nuclear reductions.

The State Department’s International Security Advisory Board, or ISAB, is helping us with some “big thinking.” This Federal Advisory Committee was established to provide the Department of State with a continuing source of independent insight, advice, and innovation on scientific, military, diplomatic, political, and public diplomacy aspects of arms control, disarmament, international security, and nonproliferation. The ISAB was asked by former Under Secretary Ellen Tauscher, who is well-known by many of you, to undertake a study of how the United States could pursue and manage a transition from a world of mutual assured destruction to a world of mutual assured stability, characterized by increasingly interdependent states having incentives to cooperate on political, military, and economic issues, thereby reducing the need for adversarial approaches to managing security challenges. Among the topics that the ISAB was asked to examine and assess in this area were the possible components of mutual assured stability. What would the United States need to see happen to have the confidence to consider very low numbers and, eventually, agree to the elimination of nuclear weapons? Their report is forthcoming and when it is released, I encourage you all to take a look.
Reducing the Salience of Nuclear Weapons

In addition to exploring new ideas and concepts of deterrence and arms control, this President and his Administration are committed to reducing the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy. We are not developing new nuclear weapons or pursuing new nuclear missions; we have committed not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations; and we have clearly stated that it is in everyone’s interest to extend forever the more than 65-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons.

As we continue to reduce global nuclear stockpiles and include additional categories of weapons in that process, the importance of verification and transparency will only grow. Having confidence in what other states are doing is critical for creating conditions for further progress in arms control and disarmament, which is why we made our 2010 Nuclear Posture Review public and revealed the size of our stockpile – 5,113 weapons as of September 2009.

As part of the implementation of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the U.S. Government is currently reviewing its nuclear deterrence requirements to ensure that they are aligned to address today’s threats. What we already know, as President Obama said in Seoul back in March, is we have more nuclear weapons than we need. This study will help shape our next negotiations with Russia.

Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons

Both the President and the Senate – in the New START Resolution of Ratification – have placed a priority on seeking to initiate new negotiations with the Russians on nonstrategic nuclear weapons (NSNW).

Over the course of the past few years, the Administration has taken a number of steps towards this goal. We have been conducting our own internal reviews, while also reviewing this matter with our Allies through the Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR) and we’ve also been engaging with the Russians in a strategic stability dialogue. We have also been consulting with our allies.

In approving the Deterrence and Defense Posture Review at Chicago this past May, the Allies determined that NATO’s current posture meets the criteria for an effective deterrence and defense posture. NATO has already dramatically reduced its holdings of and reliance on nuclear weapons, but has indicated that it is prepared to consider further reducing its requirement for nonstrategic nuclear weapons assigned to the Alliance in the context of reciprocal steps by Russia, taking into account the greater Russian stockpiles of NSNW stationed in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Allies have supported and encouraged the United States and Russia to continue their mutual efforts to promote strategic stability, enhance transparency, and further reduce their nuclear weapons in every category.

NATO Allies look forward to developing and exchanging transparency and confidence-building ideas with Russia with the goal of developing detailed proposals on and increasing mutual understanding of NATO’s and Russia’s non-strategic nuclear force postures in Europe.

Conventional Arms Control in Europe

While we continue to work on nonstrategic nuclear force issues, it is important to keep in mind the importance of European security overall. As Secretary Clinton stated in 2010, “[a] strong Europe is critical to our security and our prosperity. Much of what we hope to accomplish globally depends on working together with Europe.” In this context, predictable conventional force structures in Europe will contribute to enhancing European security and strengthening trust, including between NATO Allies and Russia.

Our conventional arms control agreements in Europe – the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE), the Open Skies Treaty and the Vienna Document confidence-building measures – are vital to providing a foundation for stability in our strategic relationships. NATO confirmed the importance of conventional arms control at the Chicago Summit:

Reaffirming the importance of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, Allies remain committed to conventional arms control and to preserving, strengthening, and modernizing the conventional arms control regime in Europe, based on key principles and commitments.

Modernization is the key word here. We have made a serious investment in building the current security architecture in Europe. We must devote adequate resources to keep the regimes going strong. However, we must adapt and improve our efforts to meet our current and future security needs, and do it in a way that is efficient and effective for all countries for all countries involved. We need some new thinking, and we have been devoting a lot of time to this task.

If we look back over the course of the CFE treaty’s implementation, the regime has been a historic success story. Since its entry into force, more than 72,000 pieces of Cold War military equipment – tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters – have been eliminated. Under CFE, thousands of inspections have taken place at military sites all over Europe, dramatically increasing confidence and military transparency on the continent by providing a means to verify data exchanges.

Despite these achievements, the earlier success of the treaty is proving difficult to replicate. In November 2011, the United States, along with 23 other parties to the treaty, ceased carrying out certain obligations under the CFE Treaty with regard to Russia. This was a legal countermeasure in Russia’s step in late 2007, when it suspended implementation of the Treaty.
This was a legal countermeasure to Russia's step in late 2007, when it suspended implementation of the treaty.

While ceasing to implement an arms control obligation is not something that the Administration usually sees as a positive step, in this case there was a silver lining: the November 2011 decision has allowed us to embark upon a ground-up reexamination of the entire conventional arms control enterprise.

We're asking fundamental questions: What are the security concerns in Europe in 2012 that a conventional arms control agreement should address? And, taking into account the lessons learned from the implementation of CFE and other existing agreements, what kinds of arms control measures could address those concerns and uphold core principles of European security?

The fact is, the basic problem that the original CFE Treaty was meant to resolve—the destabilizing surplus of conventional arms on the continent—has been resolved, in no small part through implementation of this important treaty.

Today, for the most part, quantities of conventional armaments across the continent are way below the negotiated ceilings, and are likely to continue to drop.

While the problems of 1989 are no longer, it is my view that conventional arms control, done right, can significantly improve security on the continent by helping to address today's concerns. It can provide confidence regarding the military forces and intentions of neighbors, especially in sensitive areas. We need to spend our stretched defense budgets wisely. Arms control can help us do that, for the more predictable our relationships, the better we can plan our defense spending.

Moving Forward

With that, I would like to stop and take some questions, but I will leave you with a final thought. Our extended deterrence relationship with our NATO allies is made up of many facets, as was recognized in the Deterrence and Defense Posture Review. Nuclear, conventional and missile defense capabilities all contribute to extended deterrence, and they all require constant tending. One more vital facet is the arms control relationship with Europe that has been in place since the Cold War—and that includes Russia. If that relationship goes begging, then we will be the worse for it—and that, too, includes Russia.

Thank you.

[Dr. Rose McDermott] is a Professor of Political Science, Brown University. At the STRATCOM 2012 Deterrence Symposium, she delivered a keynote address covering perspectives on deterrence.