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STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

ROBERT S. McNAMARA

BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON ATOMIC ENERGY  
ON THE NONPROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

7 MARCH 1966

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am very happy to be here today to present the views of the Department of Defense on Senate Resolution 179, which expresses the Senate's support of the President's efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons.

The President's January message to the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference reflects the commitment of the United States Government to stop the spread of nuclear weapons: The President said in part:

"The avoidance of war and particularly nuclear war is the central, common concern of all mankind.

"My country is dedicated to this end. The effort to control, and reduce -- and ultimately eliminate -- modern engines of nuclear destruction is fundamental to our policy. We have, with all mankind, a common interest in acting now to prevent nuclear spread, to halt the nuclear arms race, and to reduce nuclear stocks."

The President drew attention to the resolutions introduced in both houses of Congress endorsing the Administration's program to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. He said these resolutions "are an indication of the importance that the people of the United States attribute to such measures..." He said that he fully shared these views.

When I appeared before the Committee on Foreign Relations in August 1963, supporting the Limited Test Ban Treaty, I stated:

"...The possibility of the further diffusion of nuclear weapons poses a severe threat to our national security.

"Proliferation of nuclear weapons capability would:

1. Increase the likelihood of accidental detonation of a nuclear weapon;
2. Increase the risk of small nuclear wars which could catalyze a big one between the two great powers;
3. Cause important and destabilizing shifts in regional power balance."

I continue to hold this view. The Department of Defense strongly supports the President's efforts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. I am, therefore, happy to endorse the Senate resolution.

At this time I will discuss the security implications of this issue for ourselves and other nuclear powers, for nations incapable of building nuclear weapons, and, finally, for those nations which can, but have not built nuclear weapons. I will then comment briefly on the President's nonproliferation program.

Today there are five countries in the world which have exploded a nuclear device. Four are capable, and one will in a few years be capable, of independently deciding to attack another with nuclear weapons. It is not in our interest or in the interest of any other nation to have that number increase. The US national interest in nonproliferation is clear -- any increase in the number of nations independently controlling nuclear weapons is an increase in the threat to our security.

Some people argue that nuclear proliferation has already occurred and that therefore our policies are doomed to failure. To be sure, after World War II we sought to remove nuclear energy from the military field because we believed that even one nuclear power was too many. Today Communist China has tested two atomic devices and become the fifth nuclear power, and she cannot be expected to agree to our efforts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons in the immediate future. However, this is no reason for us to pursue nonproliferation with any diminished sense of urgency. It was in the US interest in 1964 to attempt to hold the number of nuclear powers to four and it is now in our interest to attempt to hold it to five. In the immediate future, the more nuclear powers there are, the more there are likely to be. The more there are, the more unsettling will be the too-rapid shifts in often-delicate power balances and political relationships. And the more there are, the greater will be the risk of an accident or miscalculation. I do not believe that circumstances will arise in which it is in our national interest to increase the number of nuclear powers, whatever that number may be. All of the other nuclear powers share this interest with us - any increase in the number of nuclear powers is an increase in the danger of nuclear war.

What are the interests of those nations who do not have, and are not likely to get, nuclear weapons? They too share an interest in stopping nuclear spread. These countries know that nuclear spread can only result in increased expenditures for arms at the expense of their aspirations for improved economic and social conditions. The interests of these nations lie in the growth of a peaceful and stable world in which emphasis can be placed upon development rather than destruction.

In between, there are two other groups of non-nuclear nations: Those who are capable of undertaking independently the development of nuclear weapons over the next five to ten years, and those who might wish to build nuclear weapons but who would need outside help to develop them. These "threshold" nations - nations who can build weapons and have not done so - are the crucial factor in any program of nonproliferation. It is relatively easy for the United States to arrive at the conclusion that limiting the spread of nuclear weapons is in our best interests, and the best interests of the world at large. But the decisions on this matter will not be made only in Washington, Moscow, London, Paris and Peking. They will be made in the capitals of these "threshold" countries.

The decision on this question is a national decision resting upon each individual nation's estimate of its own interests. The decision by a potential nuclear power to forego the development of a nuclear capability is a difficult one involving questions of international prestige, national security and domestic politics. The United States cannot make this decision for another country. We in conjunction with other nations, can only influence the decision.

I believe that it is most important that we have clear in our own minds how we and other nations can work together to stop nuclear spread. Our task is to create international restraints and an international climate which would make it possible for these countries to decide for themselves that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is not in their national interests.

This is not a simple task.

It cannot be achieved by the United States alone. And it will not be achieved in any single agreement on nonproliferation, although such an agreement would certainly make a valuable contribution to our objective. A treaty against nuclear proliferation imposes important legal, moral, and political restraints upon the signatories. However, if a country is

faced with a situation in which it believes that possession of nuclear weapons is essential to preserve its vital interests, international treaties are but one factor on the scales of decision.

Successful efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons therefore depend upon the development of a comprehensive program designed both to make it difficult for proliferation to take place and to create an international atmosphere in which potential nuclear states will realize that acquisition of nuclear weapons will decrease their security, and they therefore will choose not to develop them. Such a program must have three elements:

1. It must provide security and protection to the legitimate interests of non-nuclear states.
2. It must deny the utility of nuclear weapons for any state with aggressive purposes.
3. It must not permit the acquisition of nuclear weapons or a nuclear test to increase the prestige, political influence and power of a nation above and beyond the influence which it is due because of its political and economic position.

In other words a successful nonproliferation program must assure non-nuclear states that they can achieve their legitimate objectives without acquiring nuclear weapons. Such a program must put potential aggressors on notice that possession of nuclear weapons will not make their aggression either easier or less dangerous. It must make clear to great nations such as India, Japan and Germany that they need not acquire nuclear weapons to have the status of a major world power.

The evolution of such a program is a complex and difficult task. It is clear that there is yet much to be done. This Administration's program is constantly being reviewed, expanded and improved to make it more effective.

The first element in our program is, of course, the nonproliferation treaty which we have developed and tabled at Geneva. This draft treaty is consistent with our continuing efforts to bring our NATO allies into a closer relationship with us with respect to the nuclear defense of the West. We intend to continue these efforts. Our intentions should not be misunderstood by our allies or by the Soviet Union.

There is no conflict between our nonproliferation policy and our discussions within the NATO Alliance concerning the role of our European NATO partners in the strategic nuclear mission. We believe our mutual safety demands that the strategic nuclear forces, like the theater nuclear forces, must be controlled under a single chain of command.

The targets against which strategic weapons would be used must, as a practical matter, be viewed as a single system. Because of the tremendous destructive potential of a strategic nuclear exchange and the great speed at which it could take place, decisions must be made and executed very quickly. Targets must be allocated to strategic weapons in advance (of course, with options), taking into account both the character of the targets and the character of our weapons.

Under these conditions, a partial uncoordinated response could be fatal to the interests of all the members of NATO. That is why in all our discussions of the various plans to enlarge the participation of our NATO partners in the strategic nuclear offensive mission we have consistently stressed the importance of ensuring that the Alliance's strategic nuclear forces are employed in a fully coordinated manner against an indivisible target system. The essential point here is that we must avoid the fragmentation and compartmentalization of NATO strategic nuclear power which could be dangerous to all of us.

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In all of our discussions with our NATO partners, we have made it clear that any new arrangement we enter into must reinforce our basic policy of nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. In this connection, in any NATO nuclear sharing arrangement, the consent of the United States must be obtained prior to the firing of any of the nuclear weapons if plans were to be developed under which those weapons were jointly owned and controlled by the participating nations. Thus, these plans are designed to help prevent proliferation, not to promote it.

We will continue to seek an acceptable alternative to the unilateral development of nuclear weapons by other NATO nations. As President Johnson has made clear, we are not seeking to force our own views on our NATO partners. Rather, we are seeking to find a way of responding effectively to the largest possible consensus among them.

If Soviet attacks on NATO nuclear arrangements are an attempt to use the nonproliferation issue to divide and weaken NATO, it will fail - we will not surrender legitimate NATO interests which are wholly consistent with our nonproliferation program. If, on the other hand, the Soviet attacks are based upon a misunderstanding of our policies, then we are anxious to make every effort to explain both our nonproliferation and our NATO nuclear sharing policies and to demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt that there is no conflict between them.

Discussion of the nonproliferation treaty has also focused upon a second part of a comprehensive program - it is the question of the application of IAEA safeguards to peaceful nuclear programs of signatory states. The US has supported wider application of IAEA safeguards. We

believe that it is desirable to press for the application of international safeguards in the treaty. Such obligations are an important factor in the international climate we must attempt to develop.

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Since the nonproliferation treaty is essentially an act of self-denial on the part of potential nuclear states, we cannot expect potential nuclear powers to accept these restraints upon themselves unless we take steps in a third area: We too must be willing to accept both restraints and obligations. The United States has taken a number of initiatives in this area. We have proposed a verified comprehensive test ban, a verified halt in the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes, the transfer of large quantities of this material to peaceful uses and a verified halt in the production of offensive and defensive strategic nuclear delivery vehicles.

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A fourth and final part of the comprehensive program is a strengthening of the United Nations and other international security arrangements. Pending achievement of the international climate which these measures are designed to create, the President has stated that "nations that do not seek the nuclear path can be sure that they will have our strong support against threats of nuclear blackmail." *Who has?*

As you know, we have been giving careful consideration to the problem of further assurances to the non-nuclear powers. We have discussed this matter with other states, soliciting their views and presenting the views of this government.

I believe that we must continue to try to work out with other nuclear powers appropriate arrangements to guarantee non-nuclear states against nuclear attack.

*Germany?*

As I have previously stated, the problem of halting the spread of nuclear weapons is a first priority task. It is not a simple problem -- it cannot be resolved by any single government or any single agreement -- it requires a broad program of obligations by both nuclear and non-nuclear powers to accept restraints upon their actions.

In conclusion, Mr. Chariman, I would like to say that I have three fundamental convictions: First, it is in our national interest to pursue the President's policy of nonproliferation with all the imagination and energy at our disposal. The spread of nuclear weapons will only be stopped if we and other nations, both nuclear and non-nuclear, recognize our long-term common interests in creating an international atmosphere in which potential nuclear powers can decide that their national interests are better served by maintaining their status as a non-nuclear power. Second, every part of this comprehensive program has military implications. Each part of it must be examined carefully to ensure that we keep our

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total security interests in mind at each stage. And third, while we continue to pursue this comprehensive program aimed at the creation of a world in which the further proliferation of nuclear weapons is unnecessary, we must not delude ourselves that such a world exists here and now. We and our allies must continue to maintain our strength and security as the solid foundation upon which our nonproliferation efforts must rest.

Thank you.