

TESTIMONY FOR U.S.ENERGY SECRETARY BILL RICHARDSON
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY
WASHINGTON, DC
OCT. 7, 1999

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Next week the United States Senate has an historic opportunity to make our nation more secure and to make the world a safer place. I am here to ask the Senate to approve the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. And I am here to tell you that the Department of Energy's Stockpile Stewardship program is working, right now, for our nation's nuclear deterrent.

As Secretary of Energy, I have no responsibility more serious, no duty more grave, than to ensure this country's nuclear stockpile is safe, secure and reliable. Our security, the security of future generations, our very lives may depend on it.

In the past year, I have visited each of the Department's three weapons laboratories and the production plants. I have met with other experts both inside and outside of government. On this they agree - the Stockpile Stewardship program is working. It is maintaining our nuclear deterrent without underground testing. We can enter into the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty armed with the knowledge that our nuclear arsenal is reliable.

And it will continue to be so, thanks to the hard work and dedication of thousands of people at the national labs, at the plants and in government who do this-work for love of country.

This treaty is the sum of years of effort on the part of government agencies, the National Laboratories, and the Congress. There has been, and there continues to be, overwhelming public support for such a treaty.

The public knows this treaty improves our national security and their security. They know it will help halt the spread of nuclear weapons. They know it will contribute to the drawing down of nuclear arsenals. And they know it will make them more safe in an uncertain world.

The end of the Cold War affords the opportunity to ratify this treaty. The threat of nuclear weapons proliferation makes it imperative that we do so. The scientific achievements of our national laboratories in Stockpile Stewardship, built on more than 50 years of experience, has given us the confidence to forego nuclear tests. To prevent other countries from testing and deploying nuclear weapons is clearly in our interests.

To reject the treaty is to deprive us of our best means to stop nuclear testing and monitor for violations. It would signal the world's would-be nuclear powers that it is open season for atomic development and testing.

It would announce that the United States refuses to lead on this issue. And it would be an abdication of our responsibility to help create a more secure world.

The treaty helps us put the brakes on emerging nuclear programs in rogue states and proliferating countries and yes, terrorist organizations, as well as a new arms race involving unpredictable actors_Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and others that may today be unforeseen. It can be crucial to curbing the dangerous, helter-skelter expansion of the nuclear club.

And if, as we suspect, China may have used stolen American secrets in developing prototype nuclear devices, the treaty can limit any further damage by making it difficult for China to resume weapons testing and push the boundaries of its nuclear capability.

Seven years after our last underground test our stockpile of nuclear weapons is safe and reliable. Three times since 1996 the Secretary of Energy and the Secretary of Defense have certified this to the President. And I have in recent days received letters from the three weapons lab directors that our stockpile is sound. Our nuclear deterrent will continue to be safe and reliable under the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The Stewardship program is working on today's stockpile. We have successfully placed in our nuclear arsenal the B0961 Mod 11 earth-penetrating bomb_certified and without nuclear-testing. We are updating the Peacekeeper warhead to be reliable well into the next century. And this is now in production.

Our Stockpile Stewardship program uses supercomputers, high-powered lasers and other scientific advances to gauge the safety and reliability of our nuclear weapons without exploding them underground or elsewhere. And the program is advancing along with our technology. For instance, our Accelerated Strategic Computing Initiative is on track. The supercomputer we use today is thousands of times faster than those of only a decade ago and provides the leading-edge simulation capabilities needed to assist certification requirements without nuclear testing.

The national laboratories are providing the scientific know-how to address weapon safety, reliability, and performance, and are developing new tools and methods to analyze; and put to use the mountains of information they are receiving.

Our subcritical experiments at the Nevada Test Site are providing invaluable data_we performed one just last week, and it was a success. Several other advanced experimental facilities are coming on line over the next few years. For instance, the first arm of the Dual Axis Radiographic Hydro Test facility_known as DARHT_is now running. This facility will analyze the effects of implosions during mock nuclear blasts. We will keep developing superior technology such as this to ensure we have the tools we need to meet future challenges.

It is not just supercomputers or other high-tech equipment that is making Stockpile Stewardship a success.

At our National Laboratories, some of the world's sharpest scientific minds are focused on its challenges. And they, in turn, are training the next generation of scientists and engineers to maintain the safety and reliability of our nuclear deterrent into the next century. The same sort of hard work and training is under way at our production plants.

Critics claim we can't verify whether other countries are adhering to the treaty. That isn't the case. The treaty gives us the right to request challenge inspections, and provides for international monitoring. Under the treaty, we will deploy a network of more than 300 sensors, blanketing the globe, that can detect a nuclear explosion and can help us identify nations that have acquired nuclear capabilities.

During my discussions with Minister Adamov in Russia last Saturday, he agreed to resume talks on transparency measures related to the Treaty.

Even in advance of its entry into force, such cooperative measures can build our mutual understanding of how the Treaty monitoring regime will operate, and build mutual confidence in the verification measures that will be involved in its implementation. I've opened a window to work on this with the Russians, and we should take advantage of it.

And finally, let me stress that the President, in consultation with Congress, can withdraw from the treaty if a high level of confidence in the safety and reliability of a nuclear weapon critical to our nuclear deterrent cannot be certified. As Secretary of Energy, I will not hesitate to so advise the President in the event it becomes necessary for our country to conduct tests. The test site is up and running and ready_while we are capable of fielding a well instrumented test in 18 to 24 months, my scientists tell me we, if pressed, could conduct a simple test.in less than one year.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is one of the Presidents top national security priorities, and the Stockpile Stewardship program is essential to the treaty's success. Let me assure you again that the program is working. Our nuclear arsenal will continue to deter aggression, to help us fulfill our security commitment to our allies, and to discourage those who would develop or steal nuclear weapons of their own.

We have to lead on this issue, for the sake of our own security and for the security of an uncertain world. The United States conducted the First nuclear test. Through this treaty, we can help ensure we will see the last. Scientists at our weapons labs gave birth to the atom bomb more than 50 years ago, and helped put an end to the bloodiest war in history. They now work to ensure the success of the Stockpile Stewardship program and the Test Ban Treaty and perhaps the peace of the world.

Through those decades, through this mission, those scientists, our plant workers and this Department, demonstrate their commitment to national security.

The Test Ban Treaty is fundamental to the national security interest of the United States. it will rein in nuclear weapons development by states that want the bomb, and dampen the development of more advanced weapons by current members of the nuclear club. The American people want peace of mind. This treaty can help give it to them. Thank you. I will take your questions.