

Panel: The Utility of Nuclear Weapons

Opening Remarks by Daryl G. Kimball
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Good morning and welcome. I am Daryl Kimball with Arms Control Association. We're pleased to have the chance to organize this panel to help provoke renewed thinking and debate about what is perhaps the oldest and most fundamental of all nuclear weapons issues: what purpose do nuclear weapons serve today, if any?

In organizing this session, I have asked each of the speakers to respond to several key questions:

- how should the role of nuclear weapons be defined in the context of U.S. foreign and military policy or that of other nuclear-armed states?
- under what circumstances should the use of nuclear weapons be considered or ruled out, and why?
- what are the nonproliferation and global security implications of such policies?
- and, what are the implications for nuclear force structure, numbers, and deployments of the nuclear arsenals of U.S. and other nuclear arsenals?

To discuss this core issue, we have tried to bring together a variety of perspectives from some very thoughtful and experienced individuals:

First, we will hear from **General Eugene Habiger**, who is currently a distinguished fellow with the Center for International Trade and Security at the University of Georgia, and is perhaps better known as the former Commander-In-Chief of United States Strategic Forces from 1996 To 1998.

Next, we will hear from **Ambassador Henrik Salander**, who is currently the Secretary-General of the WMD Commission headed by Hans Blix. Ambassador Salander has served as Sweden's representative on disarmament and nonproliferation in a wide variety of international fora.

Frank Miller is currently vice president with the Cohen Group and previously served as special assistant to President Bush and senior director for defense policy and arms control at the National Security Council from 2001-2005. He has

also held numerous senior positions at the Department of Defense under the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations.

Ivan Oelrich is director of the strategic security project at the Federation of American Scientists and is the author of the 2005 report titled "Missions for Nuclear Weapons After the Cold War."

Before I turn the floor over to the panel, I would like to use the chairman's position to offer some of my own observations on the topic, which I hope will provoke your thinking.

Recall that in the summer of 2002 when it appeared that Pakistan might be tempted to use nuclear weapons to counter India's overwhelming conventional forces, Secretary of State Colin Powell told the leaders of both states, "Nuclear weapons in this day and age may serve some deterrent effect, and so be it. But to think of using them as just another weapon in what might start out as a conventional conflict in this day and age seems...to be something that no side should be contemplating."

Despite such common sense statements, the past two U.S. nuclear weapons policy reviews since the end of the Cold War and reviews by the other nuclear-armed states, their nuclear arsenals and doctrines essentially unchanged since that of the late Cold War era.

Current U.S. strategy calls for improving conventional strategic strike capabilities, but it also calls for maintaining approximately 2,200 deployed strategic warheads, with more in reserve, as well as hundreds of tactical weapons through the year 2012. The main mission remains deterring Russia's nuclear arsenal and to "provide credible military options to deter a wide range of threats, including [weapons of mass destruction] and large-scale conventional military force." The review calls for contingency plans for nuclear strikes against non-nuclear weapon states or in conflicts with nuclear-armed states that may begin as conventional wars. It calls for new nuclear weapons capabilities to destroy targets, such as deeply buried bunkers.

However one feels about current U.S. policy, it is apparent that far too few policy-makers and politicians, let alone the public has been willing or able to carefully examine these policies and the deeper question of what purpose these weapons serve in today's world and how they affect the overriding mission of preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear use by others.

If they were to do so, I think most would begin to understand the wisdom of Powell's words and realize it is time for a radical shift away from current plans for maintaining a large U.S. arsenal and using nuclear weapons for such a wide range of roles and missions.

Consider that initiating even a limited nuclear strike or threat to use nuclear weapons against a nuclear-equipped opponent risks escalation, miscalculation, and suicide. And, given overwhelming U.S. conventional superiority and the indiscriminate effect of nuclear weapons, using these weapons against a nonnuclear enemy is militarily unnecessary, morally repugnant, and politically indefensible.

The implication of this logic is to observe a no first use policy designed strictly to deterring the use of nuclear weapons against other nuclear-armed states. And, as Jim Goodby and Sid Drell argue in their 2005 Arms Control Association report, it suggests we can and should further slash the size and reduce the readiness posture of the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

As Republican Congressman David Hobson of Ohio said earlier this year, “I think it is time for a thoughtful and open debate on the role of nuclear weapons in our country’s national security strategy.”

Let us begin this morning’s discussion with General Habiger.