Estrada's refusal to answer questions that many prior judicial nominees—both those nominated by Democratic and Republican Presidents—have answered as a matter of course.

As I have mentioned before, this refusal is particularly perplexing, given that this same individual admitted that he asked similar questions of candidates for a clerkship with Justice Kennedy in order to ''ascertain whether there are any strongly felt views that would keep that person from being a good law clerk to the Justice.'' This is exactly what my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee sought to do with respect to Mr. Estrada. If this type of information is relevant to the process of hiring a Supreme Court law clerk, isn't it infinitely more important to the process of appointing an appellate judge—someone who has a lifetime appointment to the bench?

It may be the case, that if this information were to be made available, I would support Mr. Estrada. I have voted in favor of 100 of the 103 nominees that President Bush has sent forward to the Senate since he took office. In many of these cases, I did not agree with the nominee's views on many issues. Nevertheless, I had enough information to determine that they were not out of the mainstream of American jurisprudence. I believe we have the right to have access to the information that we need to make that judgment on this nominee.

It is unfortunate that before I finish that I feel I must respond to the allegations of some that the debate surrounding this particular nominee relates to his ethnicity. This is a preposterous notion. It is a smoke and mirrors argument designed to cloud the legitimate debate about the nominee's qualifications for the bench.

To infer—or to outright state as has been the case—that my colleagues would be motivated by the fact that Mr. Estrada is Hispanic is outrageous. One need only look to recent history to see just how wrongheaded that notion is. During the last Democratic administration, over 30 Hispanics were nominated for judgeships. I supported all of them. Unfortunately, approximately one-third of them were not confirmed—and some didn't even get the courtesy of a hearing—due to opposition from some of my Republican colleagues. It was, in fact, during the last Democratic administration that the first Latina to serve at the district court level was confirmed. She continues to serve in my State.

By contrast, this administration has nominated a total of eight Hispanics. Six of them have already been confirmed and are now serving on the bench and the other nominee is expected to move ahead as soon as the necessary paperwork is in order. That leaves only Mr. Estrada, and I have stated the reasons I feel it is inappropriate to go forward with his nomination.

The debate in this case is about preserving the Senate's constitutional role in judicial nominations. It transcends this particular nomination because if we were to proceed to a vote after this nominee has refused to answer routine questions about his views and his judicial philosophy, and after the administration has refused to respond to a routine request for samples of this nominee's work product, we would essentially be conceding that the Senate's role in judicial nominations is that of providing a rubber stamp to the President's nominations. This is clearly not the role envisioned by the Framers of our Constitution.

MOSCOW TREATY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now resume consideration of the Moscow Treaty and that Senator FEINSTEIN be recognized in order to offer an amendment. I would simply add the chairman is tied up in a committee hearing, but I know he would want the Senator from California to go ahead.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolution of Ratification to Accompany Treaty Document 107–8, Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 251

(Purpose: To provide an additional declaration)

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I send an amendment to the desk on behalf of Senators LEAHY, WYDEN, HARKIN, and myself.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from California [Mrs. FEINSTEIN], for herself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. HARKIN, proposes an amendment numbered 251.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I ask unanimous consent the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end of section 3, add the following new declaration:

(7) STAND-DOWN FROM ALERT STATUS OF FORCES COVERED BY TREATY.—Noting that the Administration has stated that ''[t]he first planned step in reducing U.S. operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads will be to retire 50 Peacekeeper ICBMs, remove four Trident Submarines from strategic service, and no longer maintain the ability to return the B-1 to nuclear service,'' the Senate—

(A) encourages the President, within 180 days after the exchange of instruments of ratification of the Treaty, to initiate in a safe and verifiable manner a bilateral stand-down from alert status of all United States and Russian Federation nuclear weapons systems that will no longer be operationally deployed under the Treaty, but which the United States and the Russian Federation may keep operationally deployed under the Treaty until December 31, 2012; and

(B) expects a representative of the executive branch of the Government to offer regular briefings to the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate regarding—

(i) the alert status of the nuclear forces of the United States and the Russian Federation;

(ii) any determination of the President to order a stand-down of the alert status of United States nuclear forces; and

(iii) any progress in establishing cooperative measures with the Russian Federation to effect a stand-down of the alert status of Russian Federation nuclear forces.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to offer this amendment. I recognize that the leadership is not accepting amendments. I accept that. I am a supporter of the treaty, and I am happy to cast my vote for it.

But there is one significant omission from this treaty, and I want to point out that omission. That omission is that we have literally thousands of nuclear missiles on hair trigger alert. The Russian Federation has thousands of nuclear missiles on hair trigger alert. This treaty does not take that into consideration and does not urge or does not certify a reduction of the alert status of these missiles. I believe if we fail to address this issue, we risk the lives of millions of people over what may turn out to be a simple miscalculation.

People hearing me might say, how can that possibly happen? I would like to explain how it can happen.

On the morning of January 25, 1995, the Russian military initially interpreted the launch of a U.S. weather rocket from Norway as a possible nuclear attack on the Russian Federation. That is just 8 years ago. Thankfully, the true nature of the launch became known and a catastrophic mistake was averted. Nevertheless, then-President Yeltsin and his advisers had only minutes to decide whether the launch of a weather rocket was a surprise attack because Russia, like the United States, maintained and continues to maintain thousands of nuclear weapons on high alert status, ready to be launched at a moment's notice.

This was not the only instance in which both countries have come close to the unthinkable. On at least two occasions in the United States and at least one occasion in Russia, false alarms could have led to the accidental launch of nuclear weapons.

Today, Russia and the United States are entering into a new era of relations. We do so with the advent of this treaty. A deliberate nuclear strike by either side is unthinkable. In fact, the administration states the brevity of the Moscow Treaty and the lack of verification, timetables, and a list of specific weapons to be destroyed, is due to the fact that Russia and the United States are no longer strategic competitors but today we are strategic allies. So fear and suspicion have been replaced by trust, cooperation, and friendship.

It is surprising, then, that the United States and Russia continue to maintain their nuclear arsenals on this high

alert status. It is surprising the Moscow Treaty, a symbol of the new relationship, in the words of the administration, does not address this issue. In the past, President Bush has recognized the dangers of high alert status and the need to reevaluate our nuclear weapons. As a candidate, he stated in a speech on May 23, 2000:

> Keeping so many weapons on high alert may create unacceptable risks of accidental or unauthorized launch.

Experts on nuclear weapons issues have expressed similar concerns. In his testimony on the Moscow Treaty before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, former Senator Sam Nunn stated that the alert status:

> . . . may well be more important to stability and security than the actual number of nuclear weapons.

He likened the issue to two families who have agreed to reduce the number of high-powered automatic weapons aimed at each other in several years' time but in the meantime decide to keep the weapons loaded with a finger on the trigger.

Former Secretary of Defense William Perry testified that the Moscow Treaty's failure to address the alert status of the United States and Russia's nuclear weapons represented a significant missed opportunity. He concurred with retired Air Force GEN Eugene Habiger, former commander in chief of the U.S. Strategic Command, who recommended that the United States take a first step by immediately standing down all nuclear weapons systems that will not be operationally deployed under the Moscow Treaty.

If you will note, the amendment I have sent to the desk does not say this should be unilateral, on our part only; it says a bilateral reduction of alert status of operational nuclear weapons deployed today.

I believe we should take the words of the general, of the very respected Senator Nunn, and former Defense Secretary Bill Perry and take some action. A miscalculation, in Senator Nunn's scenario, would result in the loss of a few lives from these automatic weapons in a family feud situation, but a miscalculation between Russia and the United States could result in the loss of millions of lives. De-alerting will give the leaders of the United States and Russia sufficient time to evaluate fully a situation before making a decision on a nuclear response in a matter of minutes or seconds, and it would greatly reduce the possibility of an accidental nuclear launch due to false alarm and miscalculation.

The amendment I sent to the desk encourages the President, within 180 days of exchange of instruments and ratification, to initiate in a safe and verifiable manner a stand-down from alert status of all nuclear and Russian nuclear weapons systems that will not be operationally deployed under the treaty.

In other words, the treaty calls for removing the operational deployment. But in the meantime all these missiles remain on high alert status—hair trigger alert status.

The amendment would urge the President to call on the Russian Federation to reciprocate in kind, and the amendment asks that a representative of the executive branch of the Government offer regular briefings to the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate on three specific topics: First, the alert status of the nuclear forces of the United States and Russia; second, any determination of the President to order a standdown of the alert status on the U.S. nuclear forces; third, any progress in establishing cooperative measures with Russia to effect a standdown of Russia's nuclear forces.

There is a precedent for de-alerting our nuclear weapons and prompting the Russians to do likewise. In 1991, as the Soviet Union began to crumble, then-President Bush ordered a unilateral standdown of the U.S. strategic bombers and de-alerted some missiles scheduled for deactivation under the START treaty. Soviet President Gorbachev at that time reciprocated with similar measures, and the world breathed a little easier during those turbulent times. So there is precedent for their de-alerting missiles. And I believe that this Moscow Treaty, which is based on friendship, trust, and cooperation, necessitates an increased de-alerting status of the literally thousands of nuclear weapons that remain in their silos on a hair trigger alert.

The amendment is simple and straightforward. We can take it very easily. I very much regret that we are in a no-amendment scenario. What I hope to do and my cosponsors hope to do is enter into a colloquy in the RECORD indicating support for this measure and, second, we will draft a letter and try to get as many signatures from other Senators as we can.

I believe this treaty, which should be ratified by this Senate today, has this significant oversight. I believe that to leave these missiles on hair trigger alert status when we enter into this treaty really downgrades the treaty. If we truly trust, if we truly want to be cooperative, and if we truly are friends, friends don't aim loaded guns at each other with the triggers pulled back.

I am hopeful that the administration would respond and begin a discussion between President Putin and President Bush to see if we cannot reach a bilateral de-alerting of the literally—probably more than—10,000 missiles that will remain with nuclear warheads on hair trigger alert.

AMENDMENT NO. 251 WITHDRAWN

I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be withdrawn.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the amendment is withdrawn.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I take the opportunity to make some comments regarding the ratification of the Moscow Treaty. I do it with some reservation. I think the treaty is both a ''good news'' and ''bad news'' story.

Right now, roughly speaking, the United States and Russia each deploy 6,000 nuclear warheads. The treaty would require the U.S. and Russia to reduce these levels to 1,700 to 2,200 ''operationally'' deployed strategic nuclear weapons on each side by December 2012.

The good news is that this treaty is a positive step—long overdue, but a positive step nonetheless. Over 10 years ago, in January of 1992, when U.S.-Russian relations were the warmest in years, President Yeltsin of Russia proposed that the U.S. and Russia reach a strategic arms control agreement that set the levels at 2,000–2,500 in a START II agreement.

If former President Bush had agreed back then, we could be close to the levels today that the Moscow Treaty envisions for 10 years from now.

At the time former President Yeltsin made his proposal for deep reductions, Defense Department officials, especially Defense Secretary CHENEY—now our Vice President—opposed them.

As a result, the START II agreement, signed in January 1993, only limited the number of strategic nuclear warheads to 3,000 to 3,500 on each side. And due to wrangling over national missile defense the START II agreement never entered into force.

So I am glad to see that the administration and Vice President CHENEY now support cuts to levels first proposed by President Yeltsin in January 1992. This support for stronger strategic arms control steps is long overdue but welcome.

A second chance to achieve greater reductions came 6 years ago in 1997. President Clinton agreed with President Yeltsin at Helsinki that a future START III agreement would entail reductions to 2,000–2,500 strategic warheads on each side. Most likely, the START III agreement would have overlapped with the START II agreement, finishing implementation at the end of December 2007.

The START III levels of 2,000 to 2,500 are essentially the same as those embodied in the Moscow Treaty. The START III would have counted several hundred warheads on systems in overhaul; the Moscow Treaty will not.

Unfortunately, because START II never entered into force, START III negotiations never began. In addition, after 1994, our Republican colleagues deliberately made it more difficult to make progress on reducing strategic nuclear arms.

Starting with the fiscal year 1995 Defense authorization bill, a provision was regularly added forbidding the President from reducing U.S. strategic forces below the START I levels of 6,000 strategic nuclear warheads. In time for this treaty, this provision has been repealed.

So I am pleased to see that my Republican colleagues now support cuts to the levels envisioned by President Clinton and President Yeltsin in March 1997. It is a welcome change of heart, even though it is long overdue.

The bad news, however, as many have noted, is that the treaty is but a modest step forward. Many have argued it has several major shortcomings.

First, the 10-year implementation period is too long and includes no benchmarks for progress or verification measures. Theoretically, as the treaty now stands, both sides could wait until the last moment to make their reductions, right before the treaty expires.

Second, only some of the warheads removed from missiles and bombers will be dismantled. The rest would merely be put into storage, where they could be redeployed. Thus, there will not be a real reduction in the United States or Russian strategic nuclear arsenals. Moreover, the security of thousands of stored weapons will remain a matter of major concern, especially during this era of heightened terrorism.

Third, the treaty could have reduced the strategic arsenals of the United States and Russia even further.

Fourth, the treaty does not cover the thousands of small tactical nuclear weapons that are a major concern for theft by terrorist groups. And they are weapons of great power, great destructive capability.

Since this treaty is so long overdue, and such a modest accomplishment, we must work hard through the Bilateral Implementation Commission to improve it in the coming years. We also need to take steps beyond the scope of this treaty to reduce our nuclear arsenals even more.

So I strongly endorse the call in the Foreign Relations Committee Resolution of Ratification for the President to ''accelerate'' U.S. strategic force reductions so they can be achieved before December 31, 2012. We should aim to accomplish this by the end of 2007.

We should also seek to dismantle the 4,000 or so warheads that will be removed from launchers—not just put them in storage. Otherwise, this treaty is more of a nuclear ''shell game'' than a true disarmament measure. Warheads taken off missiles today could be put back tomorrow.

We should begin new discussions to reach new lower levels of strategic nuclear weapons. I strongly support the Resolution of Ratification's call for the President to continue reductions in strategic nuclear warheads. President Putin wanted each side to decrease to levels of 1,500 warheads. There isn't any reason we can't reduce to levels of 1,000 to 1,500 in the next 5 to 10 years.

There are other problems relating to tactical nuclear weapons and transparency and security of nuclear arsenals that need to be addressed and that many have touched upon today. The Senate needs to be active in addressing these questions. I look forward to seeing the reports required by the Resolution of Ratification so we can monitor the progress of the treaty and act accordingly.

We have waited too long for this treaty. We cannot let the long implementation time of the treaty sweep these important questions from our agenda for the next 10 years.

With the assumption that the Senate will remain active on these questions and the administration will follow through with the provisions of the Resolution of Ratification, I give my reluctant advice and consent to this treaty and look back and see how much more we could have accomplished. Nevertheless, let's get on with what we have in front of us and start reducing the size of the nuclear forces out there.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I wanted to come to the floor just to give our colleagues a brief report on the status with regard to amendments to the treaty legislation. Senator BYRD has indicated he wishes to offer an amendment. Senator CONRAD has an amendment. Senator FEINGOLD may have an amendment. We are trying to verify whether he still intends to offer it. And then Senator LEVIN has an amendment.

I had indicated to the distinguished majority leader that we felt we could accommodate these amendments today and vote on final passage tonight. He has indicated that if that were the case there would be no votes tomorrow.

I hope our colleagues can accommodate that schedule to come over and offer their amendments, and perhaps we can even agree to a timeframe within which these amendments can be considered. We have been in a quorum call now for about an hour. Obviously, if we want to finish at a reasonable hour today, it would be very helpful if our colleagues could come to the floor to offer their amendments. We will have to do it sometime today. It seems to me the sooner we get on with this debate, the sooner we can offer those amendments and the sooner we can complete our work and do so in a way that will accommodate other schedules which I know Senators have tonight and tomorrow.

I make that report. I make that plea. I hope our colleagues can allow us to finish our work on this legislation so that we can move on to other matters.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Democratic leader for his thoughtful comments. I encourage amendments to be offered as soon as possible and that we be prepared to debate those amendments and work with both leaders to finalize actions on the Moscow Treaty today. I appreciate very much the specific amendments that are out there. I hope we can identify those amendments and work with the offerers of the amendments.

Mr. President, while I have the floor, I would simply indicate that the Moscow Treaty before the Senate today is very important for several reasons. Some of these were outlined by Senator BIDEN, myself, and others yesterday.

But let me reiterate the fact that this treaty arose from a very important meeting that President Bush had with President Putin of Russia last May. During the course of that time, both leaders identified the fact that both countries were in the process of thinking through how to reduce the number of nuclear warheads that are still on missiles aimed at each other. These leaders identified thousands of such warheads and the dangers of leaving things where they were. Our President has indicated that he had already reached a determination with his advisers. It would be in our best interests, if necessary, to unilaterally change our situation; that is, to think through carefully how many warheads the United States needs to defend itself against all potential adversaries and to move to that number. That would save a great deal of expense for the taxpayers in perpetuity—every year that these warheads were no longer required. Furthermore, and more obviously, it would relieve the anxiety of people all over the world who see the cold war still manifested in a very large number of nuclear weapons on missiles that could convey them.

The Russians have had the same idea. They have budget stringencies that are much more severe than our own. Therefore, the two leaders came to a conclusion that an agreement was useful, and, furthermore, it would illustrate what both characterized as a new relationship between Russia and the United States in a very visible and tangible way.

Some advisers of both President Bush and President Putin may have believed all of this might be done without a treaty; that is, both countries simply taking action would seem to be in the self-interest of the two countries. Others clearly believed it would be best to codify this in as simple an agreement as possible. The Moscow Treaty was the product of that effort. It is a short treaty, as many have pointed out.

As I mentioned yesterday, many of the critics believe it is far too short;

that it should have covered a great number of areas in much greater detail, including verification procedures and a number of aspects that have been part and parcel of previous arms control agreements between Russia and the United States, and/or the United States and other parties. Nevertheless, the treaty that was adopted does speak clearly to the aim by the year 2012. Both of our countries will, in fact, have reduced the number of warheads that are viable vehicles of destruction from a level of roughly 6,000 apiece now to somewhere in the 1,700-to-2,200 range.

We will do this on our own schedules, and we will have the protocols of START before us through 2009 and the cooperative threat reduction activity—at least the very visible form of cooperative activity and verification—through that means.

I mention all of that because some Senators have asked both on the floor and off the floor, Is this important to President Bush now? Why is the Moscow Treaty coming up at this particular moment?

I would respond to those questions by saying from the very first meeting the President had with Senator BIDEN, then-chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and me, he encouraged us to move as rapidly as prudent. And we have done so. We pledged to the President that day that hearings would be held. In fact, they were held last year. They were extensive. We have mentioned that hearings were held also in the Armed Services Committee and there were behind-closed-door hearings in the Intelligence Committee, and that both of the other committees shared with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the product of those hearings.

Senators have been on the floor of the Senate as members of those committees and have already testified to the efficacy and the importance of the treaty.

This is the first period of time available on the calendar of the Senate. The majority leader has given this time to our committee with the full cooperation of Senator DASCHLE and Democratic leaders of the Senate. I treasure that fact because I think it is important and it is keeping the faith not only with our President but with the relationship that our President and President Putin have been attempting to forge.

I would simply point out that we have just concluded in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee another extensive hearing on North Korea. There we talked about the importance of a relationship between Russia and the United States. That is a very important relationship. The United States is counting upon Russian friends to be forthcoming with regard to their understanding of the risks that are involved in the Korean peninsula, the risk to Russia, the risk to the United States, and the risk with regard to nuclear weapons throughout the world in which Russia and the United States have perhaps the greatest responsibility and the greatest stake.

The Moscow Treaty is timely with regard to dialog and diplomacy with the United States and Russia with regard to North Korea. Many hope it may be relevant still with regard to our dialog on the question of Iraq and Resolution 1441 at the United Nations or its successor.

I mention those aspects not with prediction but simply with the relevancy and the timeliness of this debate. I think it is important for us to proceed, if we can, to have a successful conclusion of the debate and a vote on the Moscow Treaty today.

The distinguished Democratic leader has indicated that he perceives this as in the best interests of the Senate. I know our leader feels the same. I simply invite Senators to come to the floor to come forward with their amendments, and we will try to proceed.

I finally add, both Senator BIDEN and I indicated yesterday it would be our hope that amendments would not be adopted to the text of the treaty or its annexes at this point. We believe passage by the Duma, as well as passage by the Senate, in a timely manner is very important.

We understand there are many Senators who wish the treaty had been longer, more extensive, more intrusive with regard to Russian procedures as well as our own, but we have attempted to achieve a great deal. We have much further to go as we negotiate with our Russian friends. Therefore, I hope Senators will not call for bridges that are too far on this treaty and thus jeopardize both its passage here and its implementation by both countries.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I am advised there will not be speakers offering amendments for some time, therefore, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:59 p.m., recessed until 2:00 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. ALEXANDER).

MOSCOW TREATY—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I believe we are considering the Moscow Treaty.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. CRAIG. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for no longer than 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CRAIG. I see my chairman here. I want to make sure it is OK with him. It is.

(The remarks of Mr. CRAIG are printed in today's RECORD under ''Morning Business.'')

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 252

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, in a few moments, I will send an amendment to the desk. Before I do so, I will make some general comments on the Moscow Treaty which is before the Senate.

I first wish to congratulate and commend our good friends from Indiana and Delaware for their great work on this treaty. As on so many other issues, they have worked together well in the national interest. The document which is before us, as well as the Resolution of Ratification, represents a lot of significant work on their part. I applaud them for it.

The treaty before us is a modest but a positive step in the United States-Russia relationship. It is particularly important we have this treaty. At some point it was suggested the agreement not be in the form of a treaty. As a matter of fact, the administration finally decided—I think wisely so, and I believe with the support of the chairman and ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee—that we have a legally binding treaty rather than relying on unilateral steps that are not binding on future administrations and can be easily changed.

Having a treaty ensures that the Senate is going to be able to fulfill its constitutional role, giving due consideration of any treaty and providing advice and consent before ratification.

I view this treaty as a starting point for further nuclear arms reductions and a useful boost to our new and developing and evolving relationship with Russia. There is much more work to be done to continue to improve our mutual security with Russia, and that work includes further reducing our reliance on nuclear weapons, reducing nuclear proliferation dangers, and improving confidence, transparency, and cooperation with Russia on nuclear weapon matters.

This treaty, while important, is also somewhat unusual. Its central obligation is that both nations will reduce their operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to a level between