



JAMES MARTIN CENTER FOR NONPROLIFERATION STUDIES

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Verification of Nonproliferation and Disarmament Measures

A Report of the Monterey Nonproliferation Strategy
Group

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I. Introduction

The Monterey Nonproliferation Strategy Group is an international body of distinguished nonproliferation analysts and veteran policy practitioners working to craft responses to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threats around the world. The Strategy Group has a focused and action-oriented agenda with a view to find and strengthen common ground in the nuclear nonproliferation sphere. The Strategy Group aims to identify the basis for forging consensus or near-consensus on creative but realistic approaches that address key nuclear proliferation challenges.

In late August 2009, the Monterey Nonproliferation Strategy Group and a number of other leading experts in the field met in Monterey specifically to discuss two issues of immediate importance in nuclear nonproliferation; the possibilities of a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East and the Verification of Nonproliferation and Disarmament Measures.

This summary report reflects the MNSG discussions on the Verification of Nonproliferation and Disarmament Measures that took place in Monterey under the Chatham House rule; participants spoke on a not-for-attribution basis in order to encourage open and lively discussion and debate. Care has been taken not to identify individuals with the views expressed, although a selection of the papers written for and presented at the meeting will be published at a later date.

The 2009 Meeting of the MNSG was funded by the generous contributions of the Governments of Ireland, and Norway, the Ploughshares Fund and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Recognizing that for the issue of nuclear disarmament, a political window is currently open that may not stay open for very long, MNSG members make the following general observations and recommendations:

It's about politics, not just technology

It was clear to all participants that complete nuclear disarmament will require a transformation of the international order, such that those states now depending on nuclear weapons for their security feel safe in abandoning them provided others do likewise. In conceptualizing verification regimes, we must recognize that in the future thinking may

be vulnerable to changed [political] circumstances; two examples being potential trending between unilateralism and multilateralism or a breakdown of the non-use taboo.

We need to get verification and compliance right today, even as we look ahead

The IAEA, the UN Security Council, and the international community are establishing a poor record, particularly with the cases of Iran, Syria, and the DPRK. There are serious problems with perceptions of the legitimacy and authority of the UN Security Council. The IAEA already operates in a system where compliance must be demonstrated, not assumed. It has tools such as special inspection and arbitration that must be exercised and tested today; otherwise there can be little confidence in a future system that relies on similar tools.

Don't make a hard, complex problem even more complex

Seeking to fold all WMD or long-range ballistic missiles into nuclear disarmament or insisting that NNWS play a role in warhead-level verification may add to the political and technical complexity of the problem in an unconstructive way. However, it is important to note that sometimes a broad approach is the only way to address the interests of all stakeholders, and that multiple zero sum games can be turned into a non-zero sum solution. In general, governments, think tanks, and NGOs need to be sure they are identifying problems and proposing effective solutions as opposed to carrying out research for its own sake, however inherently interesting they may be.

Don't dismiss progress in nuclear arms control and disarmament, even if it is incremental

The START follow-on treaty will be modest in terms of reductions but it will begin to rebuild a habit of U.S.-Russian cooperation. Strong statements can be made during the signing that lay the groundwork for the next bilateral treaty. This second treaty could aim for low ceilings, incorporate tactical nuclear weapons, and address broader security concerns. It will require that technical work be initiated now in order to facilitate direct, warhead-level verification.

Avoid a debate over perfect verification

The issue is not whether there are risks in verifying abolition – there are always risks whatever the course of action. Rather the question is whether those risks are less than the risks of continuing with the present system. How to assess those risks depends a great deal on the verification technologies available and an open discussion on their effectiveness and inherent uncertainties.

Focus on the building blocks (political and technical) of a disarmament framework

Some concrete proposals include:

1. Establish dedicated and sustained investment in verification R&D, especially in national laboratories. The U.S. Strategic Posture Commission recommended \$100 million annually. Key research areas include, but are not limited to information barriers, chain of custody, verification choke points, and standards of certainty. Outside organizations including NGOs could play a helpful role in observing and evaluating such work.
2. The U.S. national labs need to be reinvested with a leadership-driven sense of mission. This was pronounced during the Cold War but is absent today. Emphasizing the role the labs will play in creating the conditions for a nuclear weapon-free world is a possibility, but vision and purpose will have to come from the highest levels of government.
3. Increase the IAEA safeguards budget and push for universalization of the Additional Protocol. The costs of verifying a nuclear free world will be a linear extension of this trend.
4. Work now to build confidence in a “baseline.” It is hard to consistently sustain a lie; therefore, confidence in declarations will grow over time. Germany has long proposed creating a nuclear weapons register for this purpose, this could be revisited.
5. Work to make IAEA special inspections more routine. The new Director General should immediately begin exercising this authority, perhaps in a Western country initially. We need to change the paradigm in which a special inspection that turns up no evidence of non-compliance is a “failure.” The DG should also request a special inspection in Syria. If Syria refuses, the system of arbitration established in INFCIRC/153 par. 21-22 can be tested. As noted above, we need to get verification and compliance right today if we expect a future system to rely heavily on similar tools.
6. The U.K. and Norway should move rapidly to consider follow-on measures to their joint verification exercise so that momentum and infrastructure are not lost. A detailed report of the exercise would be a very valuable contribution to the field. A future goal could be verification of the dismantlement of an actual warhead.
7. More research must be done on the financial costs of nuclear disarmament. This includes establishing reasonable definitions of success and irreversibility. Not every facility needs to undergo a multibillion dollar conversion to a radiation free environment. Costs should always be viewed relative to the growing security risks of not moving in the direction of a nuclear weapon-free world.

8. Much work needs to be done in defining and measuring latency/reconstitution capabilities. A future verification regime will likely need to monitor some degree of “hedging.” A major challenge will be incorporating the elements of both technological capabilities and political intents.
9. Policy makers must do a better job connecting nonproliferation with constraints on nuclear energy. Regardless of any ideological position on the desirability of an expansion of nuclear power, the development and incorporation of proliferation resistant technologies must be emphasized as critical for the long-term sustainability of the commercial nuclear sector.