



## Special Briefing on Bilateral Strategic Security Dialogue Talks

**John Rood, Acting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security**  
Washington, DC  
December 17, 2008

**MODERATOR:** We have with us here this afternoon Acting Under Secretary John Rood, who has just gotten back from his trip late last night, and happy to give us a readout about it. He'll have some opening remarks, and then we'll open it up to questions. We have about 30 minutes, give or take.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Well, thanks for everyone for coming. As he mentioned, I did just arrive back in the States late last night so – a little later than I expected, so I'm having a little bit of coffee to keep me going throughout the day.

I was in Moscow on Monday, and then Warsaw on Tuesday, and I'm here with you on Wednesday. The purpose of my trip to Russia was to continue the dialogue that we have had with our Russian colleagues for some time on a whole range of strategic security issues. Over the last couple of years, I've met with my Russian counterpart a number of times. By my count, we've had 10 of these sessions over the last year and a half or so, and this was the 11<sup>th</sup> in that series.

Of course, it's – I led a large U.S. interagency team and the Russians had a large interagency team on their side. Besides people from the State Department, different bureaus, we had European Affairs Bureau; International Security and Nonproliferation Bureau; Verification, Compliance and Implementation Bureau; and myself; people from the Joint Staff; the Missile Defense Agency; OSD; or the Office of the Secretary of Defense. And so it's a pretty broad group. Same thing on the Russian side.

Let me just give you the basic who, what, where, when, and then take your questions. So the Russian team was lead by Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov. It included other people such as General (inaudible) from the General Staff and a number of other participants. Our agenda was to cover strategic security issues like a follow-on treaty for the START treaty, missile defense, efforts to combat nuclear terrorism, to secure nuclear materials, and other efforts to combat weapons of mass destruction proliferation, and other related topics. We met for most of the day on Monday in Moscow at the Foreign Ministry facility.

With regard to the substance, we spent most of our time on two topics: the follow-on treaty to the START treaty and missile defense -- a short discussion of other subjects because those others ran over time.

As I mentioned to some of you, in late October, the United States transmitted to Russia the draft text of a treaty to follow START. In the U.S. draft, we would like it to set limits on strategic nuclear warheads. The draft contained a number of provisions in order to provide confidence and predictability about the direction of strategic forces. It did not contain all of the elements of the former START treaty, which is – for those of you that haven't had the pleasure to read it, it's the size of the Yellow Book. It's about 750 pages. It was quite detailed.

**QUESTION:** The old one or the new one?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** The old one. The new one is less than that length, but still a considerable length, far exceeding 50 pages in our draft. So --

**QUESTION:** That's all?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Well, we don't get paid by the page anymore. I suspect you don't either. (Laughter.) But nonetheless a weighty, serious document, we think.

So we had an extensive discussion about that. I think it's – this was the first meeting since the U.S. provided our draft treaty. We had conversations about various provisions and some of the substance of the treaty. Obviously, we didn't reach agreement on a treaty or something of that nature, and there was no – I would say, in general, there was no breakthrough on any particular topic, but nonetheless a useful discussion, I think.

Transitioning to missile defense, where we spent a considerable amount of time, I think it's fair to say the Russians still have significant concerns about the U.S. plans to place missile defense facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic. The United States had provided a proposal in November to Russia, a new proposal that talked about establishing a transparency and confidence-building regime that would include Russian officials working at the sites in Poland and the Czech Republic that would allow for technical monitoring of the sites, that would allow for certain conditions and other criteria that the U.S. thinks would clearly show that the stated purposes of the sites is, in fact, the real purpose.

We continue to think it's important to move forward in that regard, and we think our views are widely shared by our allies. As evidence of that, if you hadn't seen the foreign ministers communiqué from the NATO summit on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, I think it's significant in that regard. Just the key elements were: firstly, a clear statement that allies believe there is a threat to the alliance from missiles; secondly, that missile defense should be part of a broader response to that threat; third, that – an endorsement of the U.S. proposed system to be placed in Poland and the Czech Republic; and fourthly, I thought what was the new change from the heads of government communiqué in April, was a statement that as NATO develops options for an expanded architecture, all of those options are envisioned to include the U.S. system in Poland and the Czech Republic and other elements. This is seen as the backbone of a further NATO effort in this regard.

So with that as sort of an introduction – well, the one other thing I'll mention is that in the other areas that we discussed, albeit more briefly than START and missile defense, I think on things like the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, our Russian colleagues think that is going very well, that that's a true strategic partnership with the United States. We see it that way also. Since Presidents Bush and Putin announced that initiative two years ago, it now includes 75 countries and it's taking on some very serious, very substantial work.

So I say that as evidence of the fact that we – this is an important dialogue, it's important to have this relationship with Russia, especially post-Georgia conflict. And I think some areas of that relationship are going very well. Others, for obvious reasons, there are some differences of opinion that we still need to work on.

But that's just a brief introduction. I'd be happy to take any questions you have.

**QUESTION:** Can I ask you a question on START? You said there was no breakthrough. Does it look at this point like the U.S. proposal will just sort of lay fallow until the end of the Administration, or do you expect additional discussions or negotiations, actually?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I think we'll continue to have conversations and discussions with our Russian colleagues for the remainder of this Administration. The U.S. proposal, I think, was a good start to the discussions. The Russians provided us a paper at the meeting that we're translating and we'll study. They have told me that they

will provide some additional written views to us, and perhaps included in that, I suspect, could be some new proposals from – counter-proposals from the Russian side. So I think that that will continue.

The current START treaty expires in a year. I think it's important for us to continue to use the remaining time in this Administration to try to prepare the ground for the next administration to conclude an agreement before the START treaty expires in a year. That's a short period of time. These are complicated subjects, and so I think really it's important that we not lose time in that regard. And I think that one of the areas of progress at this meeting is we had a more detailed conversation than we have in the past about provisions in a START follow-on treaty. I have a significantly better understanding of what the Russian views are and what some of the elements in a treaty could be.

And so if you define progress as being able, firstly, to understand where there might be overlap in the positions and therefore to be able to potentially formulate solutions that both sides can agree on, I think in that sense progress was made. I don't want to overstate this. It's not as though, you know, we're down to a handful of brackets or something of that nature in the negotiation. That's a different form of progress. But what I'm saying is that I think because of this dialogue that we had, much more extensive dialogue, I'm hoping that we can therefore, when we have a chance to further study the Russian paper that they've given us and whatever documents they might provide in the future, that we can continue to have this conversation right up until the end of the Administration so that we hand this off to the next administration in, hopefully, the best shape that we can. It's unrealistic, I think, to expect an agreement to be reached in the remainder of this Administration, but that doesn't mean you can't make progress in a useful direction.

**QUESTION:** Does the U.S. proposal include further reductions below the ones that were agreed in the 2002 Moscow Treaty numbers, or just verification was mainly an issue?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I'm hesitant to play out all the specifics of the proposal in the press, but I think we would be open to looking at different levels of nuclear forces. But I think that the conversation hasn't yet gotten to the point where there's a – the main difference is over numbers of nuclear warheads or numbers of delivery systems, but it's still more conceptual in terms of what will the scope of the treaty be and what will the process be used by which you would – it would operate.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** John, two things. One, the Russian papers, the proposal or – how would you characterize it? And secondly, you talked about the Russian end of this trip but not the Warsaw end -- if you could elaborate a little on that.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** On the second point first, the second question first, the stop in Warsaw was to consult with our Polish colleagues about, first, my trip in Moscow, give them a debrief of the discussions; and secondly, to consult in advance of their own strategic dialogue that they will be having tomorrow, I believe it is, in Moscow. Deputy Foreign Minister Grudzinski will head that for the Polish side, and he'll meet with Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov, the same person I met with, and their teams.

And so we have been very closely coordinating our discussions with the Russians with the Poles and the Czechs, so this is just a continuation of that. We do have some other things on our agenda bilaterally between the United States and Poland in terms of defense cooperation and other matters, and so I met with officials – the foreign minister, the deputy defense minister, deputy foreign minister and others – in order to continue that work.

**QUESTION:** And just briefly on that point, do you expect the Poles and the Russians to discuss this issue of Russian observers at the proposed site, and –

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** And you would – are you in agreement – is the United States in the agreement – in agreement with Poland on how that should be done?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Yes, we have had significant discussions between the United States and Poland, and also with the Czech Republic, and I think it's fair to say that the three governments have closely coordinated their positions and are like-minded.

**QUESTION:** How should – if everyone's agreeing on it, what are you proposing?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** We've proposed to allow Russian liaison officers to come to the sites and work there to conduct monitoring both through physical observation and use of technical means to determine the status of the sites. We think that that is one means of providing confidence, not the only means. The other things we've talked to our Russian colleagues about is giving them assurances about the orientation of the sites and the conditions under which they would be activated. We've also talked to the Russians about providing regular briefings and updates on what U.S. plans are, what our budgets are, what our expectations are independent of this kind of access at the sites themselves.

The reason I think that's important is that part of the – a substantial Russian concern is not the initial sites, but what might they grow to become, how does that fit into the broader U.S. missile defense effort. And so I think giving this kind of transparency and predictability to the overall effort from our point of view promotes confidence, and therefore is desirable.

Now the other question you asked was --

**QUESTION:** The paper.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** On the paper, they have provided us reactions and commentary on the U.S. draft treaty. And so as you can expect, that's something we'll take very seriously. We'll translate it, we'll study it, we'll give it to our relevant experts to conduct analysis upon.

**QUESTION:** Would you please name the major disagreements, the areas of disagreements with Russia that you have? Is it – can you do that?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** On the follow-on treaty for START or more broadly?

**QUESTION:** The START treaty.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** With regard to the treaty, I think one of the principal differences is over the scope of the treaty. For us in the United States, we would like a treaty which sets limits on strategic nuclear weapons. Our colleagues in Russia would like a treaty with a broader scope than that, and they would like it to encompass conventional forces as well, conventional strategic forces.

**QUESTION:** Conventional nuclear?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Sorry?

**QUESTION:** Conventional nuclear forces?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** That's a contradictory term, conventional nuclear. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Well, there is such a – well, so is full tactical nuclear weapons. That's what I'm talking about. That's what I'm saying.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Tactical nuclear weapons form a nuclear weapon. I wouldn't call it a conventional weapon. But there are --

**QUESTION:** Are there long-range bombers, then, or something like that?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** No. You can have strategic conventional weapons. Long-range bombers that drop a conventional weapon would be one. Conventionally armed --

**QUESTION:** They're talking about – that they're talking about?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Yes, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** They'd like that sort of thing to become – conventionally armed missiles, other forms of conventional forces. And whatever means they would be, they would be strategic.

**QUESTION:** So when you say conventional, you mean not nuclear?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Do you mean submarines too? Would that be part of it?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Potentially. But in our point of view, from the American perspective, we would like a treaty that sets limits on strategic nuclear warheads. We think that's the appropriate focus, that's been the subject of previous arms control agreements, and that's what we'd like going forward.

I would say part of our reasoning for that is that we have a national policy that we have implemented to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons to the lowest possible level, and we are increasing reliance on conventional forces in the United States military. Therefore, we'd like to continue that transition. We think that's in our interest. Indeed, we think that's in Russia's interest that the United States continue with that evolution of its forces.

**QUESTION:** If I can follow up on Desmond's question about the Russian observers, do you mean that Russia is interested in sending observers now? Because they were reticent at first. They were not very (inaudible).

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I think the proposal that we discussed and the – envisioned Russian liaison officers working at the sites, and the Russians show some interest in that. I do think, though, that they are at a moment where they are evaluating their options on missile defense. Well, that's probably not the way to put it. A better way to put it is they have paused, I think, with the election of a new administration in the United States. And I think they are looking carefully at the position of the new team.

I think it's – my assessment is that the Russians intend to test the mettle of the new administration and the new president, and the future will show how the new administration chooses to answer that challenge.

**QUESTION:** You mean mainly on missile defense or beyond missile defense?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I think missile defense and other subjects will be among those that the Russians intend to determine what the new administration's posture will be.

**QUESTION:** Did they say as much in these talks?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** More of an impression that I'm left with as opposed to a direct quote.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, can you just – I mean, how are they testing the mettle? What are they doing that would lead you to that conclusion?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I think that the Russians' desire to continue to work with us on a resolution to the areas of concern such as missile defense, but I think in some ways, their position is less flexible than it was before. And I think that therefore, it leads me to the conclusion that they would like to determine the posture of the new administration.

**QUESTION:** Yet you're saying that you think that they have a better – they might have a better negotiate – they think they might have a easier negotiating partner in the new administration?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** You said that. (Laughter.) I didn't recall saying that. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Can you give an example of where they're less flexible now than they were before?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Sorry?

**QUESTION:** Can you give an example of where they're less flexible now than they were before, just for illustration's purposes?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I think that just – they showed less flexibility than in the past on the elements of an arrangement that would form a transparency and confidence-building regime, and what that would mean in terms of changes in Russian behavior. I don't want to spell out all the details because I think this is a high priority dialogue for us in the United States, and I don't think that putting all the details out will facilitate a resolution to it.

I think on – one thing that I am gratified about is that both countries view this channel and this dialogue and these kinds of issues as an extremely high priority, in general, for the bilateral relationship and based on our role in the world, showing leadership in these areas. So for example, while there is a difference of opinion on the START treaty particulars, there is not a difference of opinion on the objective. Both sides were very clear that we want to reach an agreement on a successor, an agreement for the START treaty before the expiration of the START treaty. The Russians stated and they have shown significant commitment to that objective. And I think on missile defense, they are committed to continuing a dialogue with the United States, or that's my impression. I can't speak for them, but that's what I take away from that.

And on these other subjects that I've mentioned, although in less detail, we are working well with the Russians. And I think their desire is to continue with that. That's our desire. So, you know, we'll stay after this for some time.

**MODERATOR:** Lach, did you have a question?

**QUESTION:** Do you have any contact at this point with anybody in the Obama group, briefing them on what the status of negotiations are, or anything as you're preparing the way for them?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I've met with members of the transition team here at the State Department, and on a number of occasions, including just prior to this trip. But we will – we'll certainly brief the transition team on the discussions.

**QUESTION:** Did you warn them about their mettle? (Laughter.)

**MODERATOR:** Lach, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow up on the missile defense. The Russians' military was quite dismissive in public before your meeting, maybe weeks ago. But in private, were they pretty much as dismissive, and that's why you think they're holding out for the next administration? I mean, were they really engaging you in the details of your proposals for a transparency regime? Did they show any interest in any way?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** We had a serious conversation over many hours about the substance of the U.S. proposals, what their particular concerns were, and – as well as we certainly expressed what ours were. So I think they were engaged. They participated in the discussion that we had. I mean, as I said, we didn't achieve a breakthrough, but I feel as though based on some of their comments in particular, including the military, I have a better feel for some of the particular concerns that the Russians have.

**QUESTION:** And did you discuss – sorry.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** You said the Russian flexibility was decreasing on some of these issues. The emphasis on conventional forces from the Russian position in the START negotiations, is that new? Is that an escalation of the – no?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** No, that's been a consistent Russian position that they would like the scope of a treaty to cover all strategic forces, including those that are conventionally armed.

**QUESTION:** What's the rationale, as you understand it, for that?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** While I don't share this view, I think that their view, it seems to me, is that all strategic forces are a whole that should be treated as a whole, and that to disaggregate them somehow reduces stability, that if conventional forces were left out of a framework that controlled their evolution, that that might produce some form of destabilizing solution. I don't share that view, because from our point of view, we think there is a real advantage to reducing reliance on nuclear forces and increasing reliance on conventional forces. And there are a number of missions that are critically important from the U.S. perspective such as combating terrorism and dealing with the threats we face from some so-called rogue states that conventional forces have great merit in that area.

And so we would like to, frankly, refocus our military forces away from these former Cold War-style missions to missions that we think are more appropriate for the challenges we face today. And therefore, we think that we're dealing with a legacy from the Cold War, which are these large nuclear stockpiles. We should have – we are prepared to have a framework that can deal with that. But on the conventional side, we see that as fitting into a different kind of paradigm.

**QUESTION:** Did you talk about Iran in your discussion about fighting terrorism?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** We talked a little bit about it, but not excessively. There have been a number of conversations very recently where – including Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Lavrov participating in those. And so in this channel, while Iran was discussed as a part of some other subjects, we didn't delve extensively into that subject.

**MODERATOR:** We have time for just a couple more.

Yeah, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I want to ask a question about the Nuclear Suppliers Group that's also in your portfolio, but not today's subject. The U.S. is thought to have wanted to get this new agreement on enrichment and reprocessing technology, tightened controls, and to have a meeting by the end of this week, I think the 19<sup>th</sup> -- Friday. What is the state of play on that? There seems to be a lack of agreement on going forward. And if that's the case, is it still doable during the Bush Administration (inaudible)?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I think it is achievable during the Administration. The – what he's referring to, for those that haven't followed it is, over the last four years, we have worked with other countries to try to establish tighter controls on enrichment and reprocessing technology in that this enriched uranium and plutonium being the two means to produce a nuclear weapon. And so these are the two processes by which you could do that.

We have pushed very hard, of late, to establish a set of criteria that the 45 countries of the Nuclear Suppliers Group would agree to follow. And I went to Vienna in late November for a meeting for that purpose. And we are closer today than we have ever been to an agreement among those countries. We are not there yet, though. We made significant progress at that meeting. Since that time, we've been having – a proposal was sent to governments to review as a result of that meeting, and we've been having very intense conversations bilaterally and in multilateral group meetings with a number of countries.

There's no particular meeting envisioned at the end of this week, as you mentioned in your question. The time of the next meeting remains to be determined by the people who chair them. But I'm cautiously optimistic that we're moving towards an agreement. Very difficult to predict exactly when 45 countries will agree by consensus to a new policy. And so even one state, if they chose to, could block the consensus. But I'm – we're making progress. And as I say, the key thing is we're closer than we've ever been to an agreement.

**QUESTION:** And what are the sticking points (inaudible)?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** There are some – well, let me respect the confidentiality rules of the NSG and not talk about some of the particular points, but they're obviously related to the specific means by which you would establish this criteria and the kinds of supply that would be – how that supply would be regulated.

**MODERATOR:** In the back.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) then nonproliferation regime is part of your portfolio, right?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Yes. My question would be on the deal that Russia recently announced about selling nuclear submarines to India. Have you heard about that?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** What I read about was an agreement to sell Russian nuclear reactors to India for power generation.

**QUESTION:** Not submarines? They recently announced about the submarines, and so my question would be how does it fit to your nonproliferation regime and –

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I think the Russian Government, while I'm not familiar with the particular report that you cite, but I think if the Russian Government chose to proceed with those kinds of sales, we'd certainly take a look at it. But I don't think that that's the central issue in the nonproliferation regime right now. The central issue, I think, in the future of the nonproliferation regime, is ensuring its continued viability. And I think it – the NPT regime is under some significant stress right now. And I think that the means by which the international community meets the challenge posed by Iran will say an awful lot about the future of the NPT regime.

Because while other challenges like North Korea affect the NPT regime, North Korea chose to stand outside the NPT regime. Iran is a member of the NPT treaties and, until the last couple of years, was a member in good standing. And all of the mechanisms envisioned under those treaties to enforce them are being used. So the United States and other countries went to the 35-nation IAEA Board of Governors after the IAEA released reports saying Iran had breached its obligations. And Iran was found by the IAEA Board of Governors formally to be in noncompliance with its treaty obligations. The enforcement mechanism for that treaty is referral to the UN Security Council. We have pursued sanctions resolutions at the UN and had several adopted successfully.

So the challenge will be: Can you use the tools envisioned in the regime itself to enforce compliance with the regime? And if you can't, if that should be found to not work, that poses a real threat to the future of the regime. And you know, I don't want to overstate that. I don't know what kind of change that would bring about. But I know I don't want to test that proposition. And I think there are other challenges as well. We talked about the enrichment and reprocessing. I think there's wide acceptance among nonproliferation experts in the world that that needs to be – controls on those matters need to be tightened. And one of the challenges before us is to do that in a way that's effective and efficient. And I could go on, but clearly the NPT regime is under some strain and it's important to try to shore it up.

**MODERATOR:** One last question.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Yeah. I just wanted to say – well, can we – well, just do a quick one? She hasn't had a chance to, I don't think, to ask a question.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** I just want to get some clarity on something, but go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I just wondered if you can just run down briefly, what is the U.S. position in terms of the – depending on how you count it, the number of – when you're talking about the START treaty, the relative number of warheads versus the relative number of delivery systems, which is, as I understand it, one of the issues and part of the reason that you want to go forward with warheads this time, instead of delivery systems.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** The START treaty sets a limit of 6,000 attributed nuclear warheads. This is perhaps a level of detail that not everyone will be interested in -- I find it interesting, but not everybody does – that the START Treaty does not limit warheads, it limits delivery systems and it attributes to each delivery system a certain number of nuclear warheads. So for a missile, there's a certain number of warheads assigned; for a bomber, a certain number, and so on. And then there's a particular math equation, if you will, that you produce an aggregate number of warheads. And that's the simplified version of how START operates.

However, that doesn't always correspond to the same number of nuclear warheads that you possess. As an example in this country – in the United States, we have retired B-1 bombers. But under the treaty, they still count as a certain number of nuclear warheads. And so some of our retired bombers in the desert in Arizona, they're declared, they're tracked, they're inspectable. They count in the math equation as representing a certain number of nuclear warheads. Our preference would be to move away from that to a limit on actual nuclear warheads.

**QUESTION:** Which explains why your treaty is much shorter. You don't have to explain all the math.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** We think a shorter treaty would be appropriate. We can do it in less than 750 pages today. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Just a last question. Just clarity on your earlier statement about your impression that the Russians intend to test the mettle of the next administration. You said it wasn't explicit; it was something that was an impression you got. Is this your – does your impression include that they would – this includes the kinds of things like expanding their presence, their military presence, in the Western Hemisphere or the possibility of them targeting Poland and Czech for the missile defense sites and that kind of thing? Either or both?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** It's – the Russians have undertaken some activities that I think are regrettable. I think the threats to target Poland and the Czech Republic with missiles frankly don't have a place in today's environment. I think that the countries involved, from my visits recently, both Poland and the Czech Republic, I found them relaxed about this issue. They obviously dislike this kind of rhetoric. But no one doubts the fact that NATO Article 5 would be a very substantial matter. And we're very relaxed about our ability to meet defense obligations to our allies. But I just think that's not only unconstructive, it's just really out of place in today's environment to use that kind of rhetoric. And we've told the Russians this in private.

With regard to their activities in the Western Hemisphere, I don't sense any particular concern on our part or my colleagues and other parts of the government.

**QUESTION:** Is that not the sort of the thing you were referring to when you made that comment about testing the mettle?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Well, I think – you know, flying some – just to finish the point, flying some old Blackjack bombers off the coast of Venezuela or doing naval patrols in the Caribbean is just not something that really causes the blood pressure to rise here in the United States right now. I think – as I said, it's more impressionistic on my part in terms of the Russian posture and what they are prepared to do and not do in that they want to determine the posture of the incoming administration. And –

**QUESTION:** In the (inaudible) of the missile defense dispute or in the START or across the board?

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** I think, in general, missile defense certainly falls in that category. There are other matters that I would also list, but certainly missile defense being one of them.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you all very much for coming. I think we're going to end it there.

**UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Okay, good. Thanks a lot.

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