



The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty)

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Press Availability Prior to Extraordinary Conference on the CFE Treaty
Hofburg Congress Centre, Vienna, Austria
June 12, 2007

[Remarks to Press Following Opening Session of Extraordinary Conference on the CFE Treaty](#)

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, I can scarcely think of a time in the past ten years when the CFE Treaty generated as much interest as it is today. And I must say this makes my colleague, Jennifer Laurendeau, who is the U.S. Government's greatest expert on the treaty very happy.

But it is a difficult moment because the CFE Treaty is under some pressure right now. It is the intention of the United States and our NATO and other European allies to defend the CFE Treaty regime and help it remain what it has been since 1990, which is a great, a major, success and a cornerstone of European security. It is so successful that its elements have long been taken for granted and forgotten by many in the general public, who have learned to take for granted the security of Europe from conventional military threats.

The CFE Treaty came into existence at the end of the Cold War. In its original form, it still reflected the Cold War structure of Europe: that is, it had two blocs, East and West. In 1999, it was adapted to reflect the fact that the bloc division of Europe no longer existed, and the so-called adapted CFE Treaty modernized the regime, while allowing its most successful provisions -- in a somewhat modified form -- to continue.

The adapted CFE Treaty has not been ratified because at the time of signature NATO countries and Russia developed a package of measures. And, in that package were some commitments that the Russians agreed to make with respect to their troops in Georgia and Moldova and some ammunition depots in Moldova and breakaway Transnistria region.

And in '99, the Russians said that they would essentially pull their troops out of Georgia and Transnistria by a date certain. That has not yet occurred although it is fair to say that the Russians have made considerable progress in pulling their troops out of Georgia; they are almost there. They made progress until the last few years reducing their forces and the large ammunition depots in Transnistria, but that's stopped.

Nevertheless, my government looks forward to ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty, as do all other NATO governments. We want to see the CFE regime modified and the adapted CFE Treaty, which takes care of a lot of Russian concerns, put into effect as soon as possible.

Now, the Russians have called this conference to deal with a number of concerns, and over the next week -- the next several days to the end of this week -- NATO countries working together, but working with Russia and other CFE signatories, will make every effort to address Russian concerns seriously and creatively, but we will also keep faith both with our own principles and countries like Georgia and Moldova, and we will try to find a way forward that respects the commitment we have made and addresses Russian concerns.

Now, can we do that? I don't know. I do know that we will try. There is no point in returning to a rhetorical arms race and every point in maintaining and strengthening this very successful arms control regime, which has done so much good for Europe for so many years. So, I am realistic about the difficulties, but certainly hopeful that with goodwill and political will on all sides progress can be made. That is certainly our hope.

Now, again I can scarcely imagine another CFE conference in many years that has generated so much interest, but I understand why. The context is itself interesting. With that I will stop and happily take questions.

Moderator: Once again, please, identify yourself by name and organization when you are recognized to ask a question.

Question: The Russian head of delegation yesterday spoke at length about the restrictions on the Russian military in their territory. He spoke of CFE flank restrictions as "humiliating" for Russia. Is some adaptation of the treaty on the negotiating table from your standpoint regarding the Russian military's freedom of movement in its own country and the so-called "flanking" provisions within the treaty?

Assistant Secretary Fried: For those of you who are not familiar with the language of CFE, first you can be forgiven. It is a complicated treaty. Uh, the so-called flank restrictions were in the original CFE Treaty and in the Adapted CFE Treaty and they are not -- they limit not just Russia -- but they limit other countries as well. And the northern flank is basically Norway, the southern flank is near Turkey and the Caucasus, and the principle was to avoid a concentration of conventional heavy equipment -- tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery -- in a particular geographic area. That was the theory.

The Adapted CFE Treaty that the Russians want to see ratified continues the flank restrictions. It's also true that in the 1990's, on I think at least two, possibly 3 occasions, we re-negotiated some of the details of the flank restrictions to meet Russian concerns. Now this conference is not dealing with those issues directly, that is we're not here to negotiate that. And you can't renegotiate language in a treaty that is signed and not ratified. Once the Adapted CFE Treaty comes into force, then it is certainly legitimate for the Russians to ask that the issue of the flank be addressed. And if it is addressed, the concerns of other countries, not only Russia, but the concerns of let's say Turkey, which is a CFE signatory, have to be taken into account.

The CFE Treaty and the Adapted CFE Treaty are a package. Everyone gave something; everyone got something. And so if the Russians want to address this, we are willing to talk, but it can't be a one-way street; there's got to be a real negotiation and a balance here. But, the first thing that has to happen is that the treaty has to go into effect. And for that to happen, we need Russia to fulfill its Istanbul commitments. Again, it's a complicated issue, but you asked and there is a way forward, but I suspect it is somewhat along the lines I mentioned.

Question: The Russians say that there are no unfulfilled commitments from Istanbul that should hold up ratification of the adapted treaty. Is this so?

Assistant Secretary Fried: No one else thinks so. The Russians have done a great deal to fulfill them in Georgia. There were, I believe, four Russian bases in Georgia, three of them have been verifiably closed. One remains; it is in Abkhazia, the so-called Gudauta base. The Russians say they've pulled out; the Georgians say they have not, and currently it seems to us the best way to discuss that is to send in a neutral, objective fact-finding team to look at the base and make assessments. So they are almost there with respect to Georgia.



With respect to Transnistria, no, I'm afraid, they're not there. There are Russian forces still in Transnistria, not many, but they are still there. And there are large ammunition stockpiles. We need to think of a creative way forward here, and the Russians sometimes argue that their forces are in Transnistria, performing a legitimate and peaceful peacekeeping function. Well, if it is a peacekeeping function, maybe we ought to consider how a modest peacekeeping function can be properly internationalized. Maybe the Russians could be part of it. In other words, there may be a way forward, a creative compromise, which would allow the Istanbul commitments to be met, but would be seen as acceptable to Russia.

Now, we're hopeful that some creative way forward can be found. We're open to suggestions; that is, we don't have a "made in Washington" formula. There are some useful ideas floating around. We need to be creative and find a way forward. Judy.

Question: Will this special U.S.-EU plan over Transnistria be put on the table over the next couple of days as a *quid pro quo* for Russia, as you say, to internationalize it? Is there the possibility that an arrangement of this kind could be worked out at this conference, or does the issue of the Transnistria conflict have to be kept separate?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, this conference is not really the place to get into that kind of detail. However, we certainly would like this idea to be out there, partly to show that we're serious about finding creative ways forward and not simply repeating a mantra.

We do want to find a way ahead, and with sufficient goodwill on all sides I think there is a way ahead. Now, there is not, you said the plan was vague, which is another way; the way I would put it is that we do not have a detailed blueprint. The trouble with detailed blueprints is sometimes they lock you in. Maybe the Russians have a way forward; maybe the Moldovans have some ideas. So let's take the ideas, discuss them in an open and non-polemical manner and see if there is a way we can make some progress on this issue.

And you know, if we manage to solve the Transnistria troops issue, and we clear up the last Georgian base, then you go to the Adapted CFE Treaty, you ratify as fast as we can, then you get to the issue of addressing the flank limits. So let's march forward in a constructive way to address these concerns, which is a far better way of doing things than lurid statements and wild headlines, and the language that belongs to, you know, my youth long gone.

Question: The conference is taking place in the context of chilly East-West relations, possibly the worst since the Cold War. How much is this going to affect the work of finding a solution to the issues raised?

Assistant Secretary Fried: There obviously is a context that you are referring to, and there has been a period of some rhetorical excess. We hope that that is over and that we can work in a systematic way on problems. We saw at the G8 in Heiligendamm, the Russians surface an interesting proposal on missile defense, which as you know we have welcomed as perhaps opening a creative way forward, and we find it hopeful because the Russians acknowledge that there is a problem and that defensive systems are a legitimate way of dealing with the problem. With respect to missile defense, we are now going to start talking about the ways and means ahead. Now that is far better than where we were even a few weeks ago.

I hope that we can similarly start talking in practical ways about the way forward on the CFE. That's far preferable. You're right, of course, about the rhetorical climate, we -- we the United States, but I also think we as in NATO -- want to go from rhetoric to progress and deal with issues in a systematic way and make progress wherever we can. That's certainly our hope.

Question: I want to ask about

Assistant Secretary Fried: And you're from

Question: Can you comment on the Russian contention that the planned U.S. military deployments in Romania and Bulgaria -- the Russians call them substantial military forces -- violate treaty provisions? Are they going to be part of the talks in Vienna and is the U.S. considering maybe a new position concerning these troops?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, facts here are important. There are, in fact, no significant deployments at all nor do we plan any significant deployments. What we have done with the Bulgarians and Romanians -- and I was in Bulgaria yesterday with President Bush -- is to arrange for joint training facilities at which there will be few or no permanently stationed U.S. forces at all, but merely rotational forces coming in for very limited periods for training purposes. And these forces will not be massive in any event.

So the charge or the impression that somehow this is a major permanent, Cold War-style base is simply wrong. These are much more modest facilities. As I said, the permanent footprint is tiny. There will be some pre-positioned equipment, but basically you won't have -- it's not a Cold War base with massive numbers and PXs and the usual footprint that you've seen.

The Russians, of course, have raised concerns about this; we have told them exactly what we have in mind, and we will continue to be transparent about it. And we intend to go ahead. It has not come up yet; the conference hasn't started. But if it comes up, we will simply explain to the Russians what I have explained to you now. It's hardly a threat to Russia, which is in any event far away, and these modest training facilities shouldn't be a problem, shouldn't be seen as a problem.

Question: Aren't there a series of European security issues all rising up at the same time, that are really related together in a larger context?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, it is easy to take a look at all of the issues which have cropped up this year -- you know there is missile defense, and there's CFE and there are the troop deployments -- and I can understand why a newspaper or newspapers would put them together. But, at this conference we are going to be dealing with the issues systematically as they come up, and it is our objective to look for a way forward so that we protect this highly successful CFE regime.

And, by the way, since CFE came into existence, the number of conventional weapons -- tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery -- in Europe has declined drastically. Drastically. That's quite an achievement. As arms control treaties go, this is one of the world's most successful, and it is so successful that, as I said, many have forgotten its existence, and it is our intention that it be made so successful that it will be relegated to the realm of skilled specialists and not have to attract so much attention.

Question: What is your position if this extraordinary meeting does not address Russian concerns? Do you think Russia will suspend its implementation of the CFE treaty?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, ultimately, you will have to ask them. They have not yet suspended. It is our hope that they will work constructively to resolve the problems in a professional way. There is no provision in the CFE Treaty -- which is a treaty, by the way; it's not a political agreement, it is a treaty -- there is no provision in the CFE Treaty for suspension. We would regard that as unfortunate, to say the least, but we're not there yet; we hope we don't get there. We think this highly successful multilateral arms control regime can be preserved, updated, and made useful into the 21st century.

Question: To come back to Transnistria and Moldova. The Russians clearly said that your proposals in Brussels are not on the table here, that this is a peacekeeping force. Will you still discuss it? And, second of all, if by any chance, the Russians accepted here or elsewhere, would the NATO countries then ratify automatically the Adapted Treaty?

Assistant Secretary Fried: The Russians here have said that they are not the right people to discuss the details, but they have made clear that they have not rejected this. We hope that we can work on this proposal with the Russians. As I said, the Russians are almost there with respect to fulfillment of the Istanbul commitments on Georgia, very close. If this last remaining issue with Georgia were cleared up, and if we had a satisfactory way forward on the small contingent in Georgia, in Transnistria,

and in munitions, I don't see any obstacles to moving ahead quite promptly with the Adapted CFE Treaty. I cannot speak for European governments, but my impression is that they would also move quite promptly, and you could be in a situation where after years of no movement, there was very rapid movement. Certainly, it is the position of my government that we want to move as fast as we can to adapt the CFE Treaty, and once we have that, then we can discuss the next set of issues. And the Russians have said they need to discuss the flank issues. So we would take these things as a piece and move systematically and as fast as we could.

Question: What are your expectations for how this conference will go?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Oh, that is a simple question and a hard one. I think we will have a better sense of the Russian position, which until now has not been clear. I think with luck and some good will we will have a sense of a work program going forward, but I cannot say for sure. I will have a better sense after the opening session this afternoon and tomorrow. I certainly hope, and it would be in everyone's interest, if we came out of here with a sense of problems to be addressed, but a way forward on how to address them. That is very much our mindset coming in and I think it is the approach of our European allies.

Question: The lack of a solution to the problem of Transnistria is may be a factor. Do you think there seems to be a connection between this and making Kosovo independent? They are both break-away regions, and intellectually do you think this can be separated? Is the conflict there linked to Kosovo?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Is what linked to Kosovo?

Question: The resolution of the Transnistria conflict.

Assistant Secretary Fried: I see. The frozen conflicts.

Question: Do you see this being muddled into this debate because there were very strong words about Kosovo at Heiligendamm.

Assistant Secretary Fried: To answer narrowly, the Russians here have not raised Kosovo at all, and we are dealing here with purely CFE issues. That is quite enough. But your larger question is a fair one and an interesting one. I was at Heiligendamm and the issue of Kosovo came up at length. President Sarkozy, as is well known, had a very interesting and frankly constructive, helpful idea of how to move this forward. We think it is useful, a useful way to proceed, and we hope for progress in the UN. As President Bush said, the time is now to make that progress. We have not been rushing this issue. This issue has been on the agenda since 1999. Now we do not think that Kosovo should be linked with any other issue. We believe to do so would be destabilizing and serve no useful purpose whatsoever. Kosovo is a unique situation. It has been under effective UN trusteeship since 1999 as a result of a war and a UN resolution. That UN resolution, Resolution 1244, said that Kosovo's final status would have to be the subject of further negotiations. That situation does not pertain anywhere else. Not in Abkhazia, not in Transnistria, not in Chechnya, not in Corsica or Scotland or Texas.

Question: Yes, but it comes up.

Assistant Secretary Fried: No, it does not come up. People bring it up. It does not come up out of the ether.

Question: But it's logical to see a connection, isn't it?

Assistant Secretary Fried: We believe it is simply wrong to link this. There are many separatist conflicts in the world. It is impractical to try to link them all together and say that one solution for a unique case must apply everywhere in the world. Even those who make that claim cannot possibly mean it. They cannot possibly mean that every separatist conflict has to be resolved one way. Surely that is not a serious position.

However, that kind of rhetoric is damaging. Every such case is unique and must be dealt with on its merits. Kosovo must be dealt with on its merits. Ahtisaari's plan is denounced by more people than have read it. If you read it, you will find that 90% of it is devoted to the rights and welfare of the Kosovo Serbs. The Albanian majority, the Kosovars themselves, have accepted it. Now this is quite an achievement, and it is one that should not be put at risk. If the Ahtisaari plan does not go into effect, the results would be bad for everyone, including and maybe especially for the Kosovo Serbs, who have a right to live in Kosovo as Serbs and to have a future in Kosovo as Serbs. It is, frankly, the genius of Ahtisaari's proposal that he has provided for this. In a practical way the Albanian majority, the Kosovars, have agreed to put it into practice. The Russians ought to take some credit because they were the ones who spoke up for the rights of the Kosovo Serbs and could take some credit.

Long answer, complicated question. But you will certainly see a very intense period of work in New York in the immediate period ahead as we work through this tough issue and one that cannot be allowed to sit.

Question: You say that it will be legitimate to address the flanking issue as the Russians want to once the treaty is ratified, which will depend on some kind of solution first, especially for Moldova. Are there some amendments you would like to make to the Treaty once it is ratified?

Assistant Secretary Fried: When I said it was legitimate, I was referring to the practice we had in the nineties, the precedent of revising the flank limitations. We have done so twice in the '90s, and the Russians have a right to call for a conference to address this. This is not the time to start negotiating changes in the treaty, which first needs to be ratified. But it is fair to say that if the Russians are interested in revising the flank limits, the interests of the Turks, in particular, will have to be taken into account. Since the CFE Treaty is a multilateral package -- everybody got something, everybody gave something -- the solution will also have to address not only the concerns of the Russians, but of other countries, Norway, Turkey, others, that have a legitimate interest in the flank arrangements. So my statement is simply, and no more than, an acknowledgement that we do not take issues off the table. The CFE Treaty regime has proven to be sufficiently flexible to address these issues, and I see no reason why it cannot continue to do so in the future.

Moderator: I think we have time for one more question, if there is one.

Question: Can you specify really what are the requests of the Russians and what could be the concerns of the Turks in this?

Assistant Secretary Fried: You mean about the flanking arrangements?

Well, the CFE Treaty had overall limits on tanks, heavy artillery, armored personnel carriers, and then there were special limits called the flanks to prevent a country from concentrating all of its treaty-limited equipment in one area. So these were sub-limits in the language of the CFE. The Russians can speak to their own position, but basically they say, we Russia should not be restricted in our own country. The Turks' position is, hey, wait a minute, we do not want to see massive numbers of heavy equipment so close to us without any restriction. So the CFE Treaty recognized that all parties, all states signing up to it, have legitimate interests, and try to achieve a balance. If the Russians want to raise it, let's have a serious discussion. But it is not just Russian concerns; the Turks have concerns of their own. Under the Adapted CFE Treaty, new countries like the Baltics and others who want to join may have their own interests. So let's first solve the Istanbul commitment problem, get the Adapted CFE Treaty ratified, in force, and then we will deal with flank limits. And let's telescope this process so we do not have years and years of an exchange of talking points, so we can actually make progress and deal with these issues in practical ways.

Thank you very much.

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

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