

**Assistant Secretary Mallory Stewart's
Lecture at the South African Institute of International Affairs
Monday, May 8 2023; 18:00 – 19:30**

- Thank you for inviting me to speak with you all tonight. I am delighted to be making my first trip to South Africa as the Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance.
- I've had the opportunity to speak with Members of Parliament, their staff, and the faculty and students at the Saldanha Bay Military Academy today and I deeply appreciate how much more I have learned from these interactions than from anything I can learn sitting in my office or even reading local papers.
- We all agree that collectively we face greater threats to globally stability today than we have in decades.
- As I speak, Ukraine's civilians and infrastructure are under attack.
- This invasion is not rooted in self-defense. When the United States met with Russia in January 2022, before its continuing illegal invasion of Ukraine, we were very clear that no country or group of countries threatens Russia. Rather we warned that Russia's planned invasion would lead to more countries seeking to join NATO for their own defense against Russian aggression. Russia disregarded our warnings and invaded less than one month later. Again, Russia's inhumane and illegal invasion of Ukraine is not rooted in self-defense; Russia simply wants to redraw international borders by force, in violation of the UN Charter.
- Russia's betrayal of its commitments under the Budapest Memorandum and its invasion of its sovereign neighbor; the weaponization of global food supplies and its obstruction of the Black

Sea Grain Initiative; its noncompliance with and purported suspension of the New START Treaty; its use of chemical weapons against civilians; and its mounting abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in Ukraine are all proof that Russia's current actions challenge international stability.

- The United States is calling on all countries, including South Africa, to tell Russia it needs to uphold its commitments under international law and the UN Charter, including the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- Putin's rhetoric with respect to nuclear weapons has been consistently irresponsible and elevates nuclear risks. Seeking to sow instability and fear, Russia has now stopped complying with the New START Treaty, the last remaining bilateral treaty numerically limiting U.S. and Russian nuclear forces. Russia seems to believe that the New START Treaty can be used as leverage to pressure the United States and our partners and allies to diminish our support for Ukraine's sovereignty.
- We have been very clear that Russia's actions on the New START Treaty will not deter the United States from supporting Ukraine.
- Nevertheless, we continue to believe that New START is worth preserving and we support the treaty's full and mutual implementation. Washington and Moscow have been able to keep strategic stability matters separate from broader geopolitical challenges for over half a century. That approach made the world safer then. It would make us all safer now.
- Of course, this is not just a U.S.-Russia issue. New START is good for global security as is the maintenance of U.S.-Russia dialogue on these matters. Russia needs to hear from countries like South Africa that it must return to compliance with the New START Treaty and contribute to global stability.

- But Russia is not the only state whose actions raise concerns.
- The People's Republic of China is undertaking the most massive expansion of nuclear forces in its history. If the PRC continues at this pace, it could have as many as 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035—roughly equal to the deployed forces of the United States or Russia. The PRC's rapid and non-transparent nuclear weapons build-up raises questions about the PRC's intent and policies.
- In this context, it is little surprise that the PRC is the only one of the five NPT nuclear weapon states not implementing a moratorium on production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, despite claiming to support negotiation of a treaty banning such production.
- We hope the PRC will agree to work with the United States bilaterally and with the multilateral community to develop tools like transparency and confidence building measures that improve crisis stability and reduce nuclear risks. We can all agree that any nuclear crisis will not only affect the nuclear powers, it will affect the world.
- South Africa should join its voice to the growing chorus of countries calling on the PRC to be more transparent about its nuclear build-up, to halt its production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, and to engage with the United States so that we all can work to reduce nuclear risk.
- Concerns in the Indo-Pacific are not growing just because of the PRC. As of April 21, the DPRK has already launched 17 ballistic missiles this year, including three ICBMs. Pyongyang continues to make reckless and concerning threats to expand its nuclear stockpile and use nuclear weapons.

- Of course, nuclear matters are not limited to bilateral challenges, as was outlined in the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review.
- The NPR outlines that for as long as nuclear weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. Our nuclear forces protect not just our security, but that of dozens of allies and partners.
- At the same time, the United States is committed to reducing the role of nuclear weapons and the risks of nuclear war, as well as the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons.
- We have taken far reaching and successful steps to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons by leading the world in transparency about nuclear forces and reducing our stockpile of nuclear warheads by about 90 percent from its Cold War high.
- The United States supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and is committed to work to achieve its entry into force.
- In line with the goals of the CTBT, we continue to maintain our zero-yield moratorium on nuclear explosive testing and call on all states possessing nuclear weapons to declare or maintain such a moratorium.
- We continue to provide negative and positive security assurances to the NPT non-nuclear-weapon states; and we honor our assurances.
- We reject irresponsible rhetoric about nuclear weapon use. We will not use nuclear weapons to intimidate others or as part of an expansionist security policy.

- But beyond all this, the United States sees arms control and nonproliferation as indispensable in further reducing nuclear dangers.
- Creative, flexible, and adaptive arms control tools are all the more important during times of tension when guardrails and clarity matter most. Transparency and information sharing helps to prevent misunderstanding and miscalculation through unintended signals and accidents. And Arms control mechanisms can help define the opaque, gray zones, where there are no clear boundaries or rules for appropriate behaviors.
- I know I have spoken a lot about nuclear arms control, but one place where we have been creative and successful in adapting arms control tools and deterring use is at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).
- At the OPCW, States Parties addressed the threat of chemical weapons use by establishing the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria. States Parties took this action when a decision could not be reached at the United Nations due to Russia's veto power.
- We further deterred chemical weapons use by adding two families of Novichoks to the CWC Annex on Chemicals as a technical change to the Convention. This occurred in response to Russia's assassination attempt against the Skripals in 2018.
- Amid all this, how can we reduce strategic risks without substantive engagement from other nuclear weapon states?
- First, the world community can reduce the risk of conflict by defending the existing norms of the UN Charter, the norms to which all UN member states have committed themselves. The more states that condemn Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, the more states that

impose consequences for such brazen violations of the UN Charter, the more aggressors will think twice before invading their neighbors.

- As we continue to pursue mechanisms to reduce risks in the nuclear space, we will look for openings in all available channels. To this end, we remain engaged with both Russia and the PRC through the P5 channel, in which we will continue to pursue measures to concretely reduce these risks. This is not only a conversation for the P5, though. It will remain part of the dialogue within the broader NPT context, and it is important that all of the P5 hear from the non-nuclear weapon states a demand for action in this direction.
- We will also continue to work to make concrete progress towards our shared disarmament objectives in multilateral venues, such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiatives. These forums give nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states the opportunity to work together to tackle very real challenges.
- We can work together in venues like the Conference on Disarmament, where we strongly support commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, and the UN First Committee, where we can call for moratoria on such production. A halt to fissile material production is particularly important now as a way to avoid a future nuclear arms race.
- In many venues like these, South Africa has an important voice and a leadership role to play.
- It is difficult to go forward on norms when Russia is going backwards. Nonetheless, one way to reduce emerging risks is through collective definition of responsible behaviors. It is critical for states that share the need to control risk to coordinate on mutually beneficial behaviors

and rules of the road – in other words, norm building. The importance of this type of risk reduction is expanding now more than ever.

- By creating the conditions for a unified, broad response from the international community, we may deter bad actors from adopting risk-inducing behaviors and even address behaviors that threaten all of us.
- Recently, we led collective efforts to address destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests that create debris in outer space. By voting in favor of the UN General Assembly resolution adopted on this issue last year, South Africa and over 155 countries have indicated that this is irresponsible behavior that is destabilizing and threatening to our astronauts and space assets.
- The very public effort to highlight this activity, and to broadly condemn it, is an effective means to reduce the risk that it will continue. This arms control mechanism supports a normative deterrence effort to diminish the occurrence of destabilizing behaviors.
- The United States has also offered the Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy. It consists of non-legally binding guidelines to address the risk of the use of artificial intelligence in military applications and outlines best practices.
- The major aim of the Declaration is to start to establish standards for responsible behavior and to work with the international community to collectively adopt measures to increase transparency and communication, reducing risk of inadvertent conflict and escalation.
- Mechanisms like declarations and resolutions make international recognition of a norm publicly observable, which can further enhance

the capacity for coordinating action and help isolate states who act contrary to that norm.

- Global peace and security are under attack—literally in Ukraine, but in other fronts as well. The United States stands ready to work with South Africa and other countries to rebuild respect for the UN Charter. We hope you will join us.
- Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.