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Statement

**by U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald H. Rumsfeld
at the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG)**

Washington/Crawford Summit

In recent months, the United States and Russia have made significant progress in building a new strategic relationship — one that puts Cold War animosities behind us, so we can focus on the new dangers and challenges that both countries will face in the 21st Century.

An important expression of that new relationship is the broad agreement by both countries that the time has come for substantial reductions in strategic offensive weapons. The U.S. and Russia are no longer adversaries; we no longer need the large nuclear arsenals of the Cold War era.

At the Washington/Crawford Summit, Presidents Bush and Putin confirmed their respective commitments to implement significant reductions. And President Bush told President Putin that the United States intends to reduce the number of operationally deployed strategic warheads to a range of 1700 to 2200 over the next decade. President Putin has since indicated his intention to reduce to between 1500 and 2000.

President Bush will visit Moscow this spring. In weeks and months ahead, we will work together to find new ways to enhance transparency and predictability of the strategic nuclear force reductions both the U.S. and Russia have pledged to make.

Missile Defense and the ABM Treaty

As we work to reduce our nuclear arsenals, we must at the same time prepare for the full range of asymmetric threats we will face in the period ahead.

Of particular concern is the fact that terrorist networks and terrorist states are seeking weapons of increasing power and range — asymmetric capabilities that could allow them to hold our people hostage to terror and blackmail.

Among our vulnerabilities to terrorism, cyber attacks and cruise missiles, we must add our vulnerability to missile attack. The rogue states of the world see this vulnerability — and they are investing enormous sums to acquire the weapons necessary to exploit it.

That is why President Bush has declared his intention to develop and deploy ballistic missile defenses capable of protecting the American people, our friends, allies and forces around the world from limited ballistic missile attack. We have put in place a robust and flexible research, development and testing program designed to examine the widest range of promising technologies.

That program has begun to bear fruit. Earlier this year, on July 14th, we held a successful test of a ground-based mid-course system. Two weeks ago, on December 4th, we again held a successful ballistic missile intercept test.

These intercepts show that, notwithstanding the delays of the past decade, the capability to defend against ballistic missiles is within our grasp. Ballistic missile defense is less a problem of invention than it is a challenge of engineering.

But, as we have warned for some time now, it was inevitable that our testing program would eventually "bump up" against the constraints of the ABM Treaty. That happened on October 25th, when I denied the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization permission to conduct four test activities, each of which some lawyers would have argued would have been a violation of the treaty.

That is why, last week, President Bush decided that the time had come to give Russia our formal 6-month notice of withdrawal. The Russian government has told us that, while disappointed, it accepts the U.S. decision. Indeed, President Putin himself stated that he has "*complete confidence that the decision taken by the President of the United States presents no threat to the national security of the Russian Federation.*"

I believe that this shows that the U.S.-Russian relationship has matured to the point that we can agree to disagree agreeably on the ABM Treaty, without allowing those differences to affect progress in other areas of our relationship.

The U.S. and Russia are cooperating in the war on terrorism. We are expanding our two countries trade and investment ties, and working to bring Russia into the WTO. And we have broad agreement that the time has come for both of our countries to make substantial reductions in strategic offensive weapons.

I know it is hard for some to imagine a U.S.-Russia relationship without the ABM treaty. Not long ago, it would have been hard for some to imagine the U.S. and Russia working together in Afghanistan — but there we are. The world is changing. Not only must we change with it — we must *lead* the change.

Russia and the U.S. are working to do just that as we transform our relationship for a new century.