

# Los Alamos Study Group

## Press and Action Alert

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## **Senate Strangeloves Threaten Critical Arms Control Treaty Bingaman's Leadership Decisive Up to Now--Where's Domenici?**

Senators Robert Smith (R-NH) and Jon Kyl (R-AZ) may succeed this week in killing the START II Treaty, setting back arms control negotiations between the U.S. and Russia by several years. Prompt Senate action is needed to ratify the popular treaty, which is expected to quickly pass the Senate by more than 90 votes if it is ever finally brought to a vote. Last week, Senator Bingaman successfully filibustered Republican legislation in order to pry the treaty out of Jesse Helm's Foreign Relations Committee, where it passed by an 18-0 vote. In forcing Helms to act, Senate Republican leadership assured the bi-partisan supporters of the treaty that it would be brought to a vote on the floor before the Christmas recess.

At stake are 4,500 deployed nuclear weapons in Russia now aimed at the United States and the same number in this country aimed at Russia. Thus a total of 9,000 weapons are slated to be dismantled if the treaty is ratified by both countries, leaving each side with 3,500 deployed strategic warheads (plus their remaining tactical nukes and thousands of so-called "reserve" weapons). Prompt ratification by the United States is generally thought to be necessary, though not sufficient, for Russian ratification of START II.

Senator Bingaman has received well-deserved praise from the editorial pages of the State's newspapers for his leadership on this issue, which has been critical. Senator Domenici, who has a large voice in determining what matters are considered on the Senate floor, has by contrast been completely silent. "Where's Senator Domenici? Does he want all those warheads to remain in the world's arsenals?" asked Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group, a disarmament and environmental-protection organization in Santa Fe. "Passing this popular treaty will reflect well on both parties and they should do it now, before the Presidential election heats up next year."

Many experienced congressional observers believe that if the treaty does not pass next week, it will be dead until 1997. Given the eroding situation in Russia, this could mean that Cold War-sized nuclear arsenals remain in both countries for the foreseeable future, each weapon a potential holocaust. If Senators Kyl and Smith are allowed to kill a hard-won agreement that gave the world hope that the curse of nuclear terror might some day be lifted, it will be a cruel Christmas present indeed.

**Dear Colleagues: Please call Sen. Domenici (202-224-6621) and tell him to get START II to the floor early next week! If you can, call Sen. Dole (202-224-6521) as well. Your call counts!**