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USSTRATCOM Commander Announces 2019 Omaha Trophy Winners

U.S. Strategic Command Public Affairs, Sept. 24 | Press Release

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. -- In recognition of outstanding support to U.S. Strategic Command's (USSTRATCOM) strategic deterrence mission, U.S. Navy Adm. Charles Richard, commander of USSTRATCOM, announced the winners of the 2019 Omaha Trophies September 21, 2020.

“The Omaha Trophy is awarded to the best of the best in executing strategic deterrence,” said Richard. “This year’s winners distinguished themselves through hard work, selfless dedication and innovative thinking.”

The 2019 Omaha Trophy recipient organizations are:

- Intercontinental Ballistic Missile: 91st Missile Wing, Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota
- Ballistic Missile Submarine: USS Alaska, Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, Georgia
- Strategic Bomber: 5th Bomb Wing, Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota
- Strategic Aircraft: Wing One Task Group 114.2, Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma
- Global Operations: 100th Missile Defense Brigade, Schriever Air Force Base, Colorado

“The dedicated professionals working for and with USSTRATCOM allow the Command to execute its operations and provide the nation with its strategic deterrent against threats in all domains,” said Richard. “Without the men and women of USSTRATCOM, actively performing the deterrence mission every day, we could not deter potential adversaries and guarantee the freedoms our nation holds dear. Thank you for the important work you do each and every day. It’s an honor to recognize each one of you for your accomplishments.”

The Omaha Trophy, which dates back to the U.S. Air Force’s Strategic Air Command, was originally created by the Strategic Air Command Consultation Committee in 1971. At the time, a single trophy was presented annually as a token of appreciation to the command’s best wing. The SCC – an advisory group comprised of business leaders in the Omaha area – became the Strategic Command Consultation Committee (SCC) after the activation of USSTRATCOM in 1992.

Since then, the tradition has evolved to five awards to recognize USSTRATCOM’s premier intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) wing, ballistic missile submarine, strategic bomber wing, global operations (space/cyberspace) unit and strategic aircraft wing.

“The Strategic Command Consultation Committee is grateful for the opportunity to help recognize the excellence demonstrated by USSTRATCOM’s finest strategic units,” said Tim Burke, chairman of the SCC. “On behalf of the committee, and the greater Omaha community, congratulations and thank you to you and your families for all that you do to protect our great nation. God bless you, your families and the United States of America.”

Wracked by American Sanctions, Russia Cuts Defense Spending

https://freebeacon.com/national-security/wracked-by-american-sanctions-russia-cuts-defense-spending/?utm_source=actengage&utm_campaign=FreedomMail&utm_medium=email

By: [Jack Beyrer](#) for the WFB // SEPTEMBER 22, 2020 5:00 PM

For the first time since 2014, Russia will spend more on resuscitating its economy than on funding its military as it suffers an economic nosedive precipitated by Western sanctions, the Financial Times [reported](#) Monday.

Russia's recently announced budget will cut defense spending by 5 percent and boost spending on social programs by 10 percent. Moscow will also replace its flat income tax with a progressive tax rate. The Kremlin's shift away from military spending toward domestic programs is reportedly an attempt to boost the country's coronavirus-weakened economy, which has been hurt by American sanctions in recent years.

Among other things, the United States has levied economic sanctions on Russia for its 2014 invasion of Crimea, attempted interference in U.S. elections, continued aid to the Syrian and Venezuelan regimes, cyberattacks on U.S. institutions, and trade relations with North Korea, [according](#) to a Congressional Research Service brief. Favorability toward a tough-on-Russia approach has only intensified in the wake of other norms violations by the Kremlin in recent months.

Last week, Republican lawmakers demanded that Moscow release a U.S. Marine imprisoned on dubious charges within Russia. Lawmakers also renewed [calls](#) to strip support from the Russian energy pipeline Nord Stream II following a wave of suppression against Putin critics, culminating in the poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny last August. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has also led a public diplomatic effort to coalesce transatlantic allies against Russia. In an August [speech](#) in the Czech Republic, Pompeo warned of Russia's threat to the rest of Europe.

"Russia continues to seek to undermine your democracy, your security through disinformation campaigns, and through cyberattacks," Pompeo told European allies. "It's even trying to rewrite your history." "At the end of the day it is freedom-loving nations that will find our value sets most overlapping," he added.

Statement by the President Regarding New Restrictions on Iran

Nuclear, Ballistic Missile, and Conventional Weapons Pursuits

White House: Issued on: September 21, 2020

Today, I am taking new actions to restrict Iran’s nuclear, ballistic missile, and conventional weapons pursuits. My Administration will never allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon, nor will we allow Iran to endanger the rest of the world with a fresh supply of ballistic missiles and conventional arms. To ensure this cannot happen, I am issuing a new Executive Order, restoring United Nations (UN) sanctions on Iran, and imposing new

sanctions and export controls on more than two dozen entities and individuals that support Iran's nuclear, missile, and conventional arms-related activities.

The Executive Order I am issuing today blocks the property, and interests in property, in the United States of those who contribute to the supply, sale, or transfer of conventional arms to or from Iran, as well as those who provide technical training, financial support and services, and other assistance related to these arms. This Executive Order is critical to enforcing the UN arms embargo on Iran. The order will greatly diminish the Iranian regime's capacity to export arms to terrorists and dangerous actors throughout the region, as well as its ability to acquire weapons to build up its own forces.

Today, my Administration is also imposing new sanctions and export control measures on 27 entities and individuals connected to Iran's proliferation networks. These actions target the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran for its role in Iran's nuclear escalation, the Iranian missile organization Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group for facilitating ballistic missile development, and two Iranian entities for their involvement in the transfer and acquisition of conventional arms.

The United States has now restored UN sanctions on Iran. The Iranian regime has repeatedly lied about its secret nuclear weapons archive and denied access to international inspectors, further exposing the deep flaws of the last administration's failed nuclear deal from which I withdrew the United States. The world cannot afford to sit idly by as Iran builds a nuclear weapon. My Administration is restoring these sanctions as part of our efforts to ensure that never happens.

My actions today send a clear message to the Iranian regime and those in the international community who refuse to stand up to Iran. The United States will not allow the Iranian regime to further advance capabilities to directly threaten and terrorize the rest of the world. My Administration will use every tool at our disposal to stop Iran's nuclear, ballistic missile, and conventional weapons pursuits. The Iranian regime must change its behavior if it hopes to provide what the Iranian people so desperately want and deserve: a thriving and prosperous Iran.

Pompeo: China using nuclear weapons program aid to seduce US allies in Middle East

https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/defense-national-security/pompeo-china-using-nuclear-weapons-program-aid-to-seducer-us-allies-in-middle-east?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2009.25.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief
by [Joel Gehrke, Foreign Affairs Reporter](#) for the Washington Examiner // September 24, 2020 03:25 PM

China is using the prospect of access to technology related to a nuclear weapons program to lure American allies into Beijing's geopolitical orbit, U.S. officials and lawmakers fear.

"I'm sure that they are," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told the Washington Examiner during an interview this week. "Certainly, when it comes to missile systems, we've seen that." China reportedly has provided Saudi Arabia with assistance in building a facility that can process yellowcake, which arms control observers regard as a sign that Riyadh could partner with the communist power to develop its own nuclear program.

That suspicion was made explicit during a wide-ranging Senate hearing on the state of American policy in the Middle East, in which the sensitivity of the topic precluded a full discussion but couldn't hide the U.S. unease about whether Riyadh's security plans could benefit China. "May I ask our witnesses about Saudi Arabia and its efforts to develop its own indigenous nuclear material program and to have a missile program, as well, which would be an enormously destabilizing element into the Middle East," Sen. Ed Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, asked State Department officials during a Foreign Relations Committee hearing.

"If China is helping Saudi Arabia right now, the American people have a right to know that, especially a month before a presidential election." State Department undersecretary David Hale demurred repeatedly, explaining that all of the information available to him on that topic is classified. "The most effective means to prevent this kind of proliferation and destabilizing activity would be to make sure that we're addressing the threats that Saudi Arabia faces and providing it with the means of self-defense," said Hale, the State Department's third-highest ranking official.

Saudi Arabia has [declared](#) an interest in civilian nuclear power, but American analysts historically look with skepticism at oil-rich nations that seek nuclear energy. "A country that has huge oil and natural gas reserves and is seeking nuclear power, for what? Not because it needs it for domestic energy, but for its design for nuclear weapons," New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez said during the hearing to explain the origin of his suspicion that Iran wanted nuclear weapons.

The relationship between the U.S. policy towards Iran and the Saudi interest in nuclear power proved controversial, as Democratic lawmakers argued that the Trump administration's withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal had the unintended consequence of diminishing constraints on Tehran's program and thus of incentivizing Saudi Arabia to pursue the same capability. Administration officials, on the other hand, maintained that the withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear accord and the renewal of U.S. sanctions represented a step toward a more substantial curb on the Iranian program.

"We think that with that pressure, once our election is over, they will come to the negotiating table," State Department special representative Elliot Abrams said during the hearing. "We do hope for the ability to negotiate what we would view as a comprehensive deal that would include a nuclear aspect that would really prevent Iran from moving toward a nuclear weapon — something that we don't believe the JCPOA actually did."

Hale testified that, in the meantime, U.S. officials are urging Saudi Arabia to strike a "gold standard" nuclear power cooperation agreement in which Riyadh would acquire civil nuclear power but would not build any nuclear industry infrastructure that could pull double-duty for a nuclear weapons program. "We agree that there has to be commitment to a gold standard," Hale said. "The most effective way in order to prevent those hypothetical scenarios from unfolding is to make sure that Saudi Arabia knows that we together are partners in defense of their security and that we are addressing their legitimate security needs."

Pompeo didn't comment explicitly on the yellowcake report, but he acknowledged in the interview that China is offering missile capabilities not only to reap financial gains, but also to build new alliances at the expense of the United States. "They're developing this technology, and they are actively soliciting in the market all across the world," Pompeo told the Washington Examiner. "There's no doubt that they're using that both for economic benefit, but to create security alliances as well."

That observation keyed an acknowledgment that the administration's recent attempts to broker Arab-Israeli peace deals represent, in part, an effort to blunt China's attempts to peel Middle Eastern nations away from the U.S. "It's why [we're doing] what we're doing in the Middle East with the Abraham Accords and the coalition that we're building out and continuing to make sure that America is investing in those places and that the West is connected to the Middle East," Pompeo said. "This will create the option set, so that these countries know that they can rely on its good friend and partner in the United States [and] don't have to turn to China for their security."

Pompeo blames China tensions on past policies of appeasement

https://washingtontimes-dc.newsmemory.com/?token=7cd9579692e05ccca3212b7ce90dc204_5f6b47bc_d3019ac&selDate=20200923

BY BILL GERTZ for THE WASHINGTON TIMES // 23 Sept 2020

The United States is pushing back against stepped-up Chinese military activities near Taiwan and in the South China Sea as a means of deterring a conflict with Beijing, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says.

China in recent days has conducted large-scale military exercises and provocative jet flights near Taiwan in what China's state media say is a response to a visit to the island by a senior State Department official last week. China's military fired four missiles into the South China Sea last week, and the People's Liberation Army this week posted a video online showing a simulated Chinese bombing strike on the American territory of Guam.

Asked about the growing tensions in an interview with The Washington Times, Mr. Pompeo blamed past policies that he said ignored threatening Chinese activities. He hinted that Washington was also ready to expand the offensive against Chinese internet companies operating in the U.S. and will seek to completely shut down a network of Chinese cultural centers in the U.S. called Confucius Institutes as soon as the end of this year.

"What we have done for decades is we have permitted the Chinese Communist Party to engage in threatening or disruptive behavior, whether that is predatory economic practices and the like, and they have continued to expand their capacity and their footprint," he said. "The biggest risk with regard to the Chinese Communist Party is appeasement." President Trump, he added, has said, "Enough. We're not going to let that happen anymore."

The secretary of state said in the interview that leaders in Beijing need to recognize the Trump administration's seriousness and Mr. Trump's commitment in pushing back against Chinese expansionism. "We watch these military activities, and we prepare," Mr. Pompeo said. "President Trump's been clear: We don't want conflict with China. They say they don't want conflict with us as well. We hope they'll reduce what they're doing to create this tension."

The increase in saber-rattling and threatening rhetoric from China has worried some U.S. officials, who see the activities as possible signs that Beijing is preparing for some type of military action. The state-run Global Times, viewed as China's most xenophobic state-controlled outlet, warned in an editorial this week that the series of military exercises near Taiwan could be a prelude to an attack on the island.

The United States is obligated to defend Taiwan from mainland attack under terms of the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which also calls for selling defensive weapons to Taiwan. The Trump administration recently formalized the long-delayed sale of 66 new F-16 jets to Taiwan in a deal worth \$8 billion. Additional weapons sales to Taiwan reportedly will include an advanced attack missile called the Stand-Off Land-Attack Missile-Expanded Response, or SLAM-ER, an air-launched cruise missile capable of hitting targets in China.

Mr. Pompeo said the United States is determined to counter Chinese activities through economic, diplomatic and military responses. “We’ve engaged our freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea and elsewhere in ways that no administration has done before,” he said. “We’re going to stand up for freedom, for the American right to make sure we transit goods wherever we need to in international waterways.

Those are the things that President Trump has mandated, and I hope the Chinese Communist Party will see them for what they are: a clear enunciation of America’s underlying rights and our willingness to help build out a coalition to protect the free and open Indo-Pacific.” Mr. Pompeo said the administration’s arms sales to Taiwan, which China considers part of its country and has vowed to reclaim, are permitted under the Taiwan Relations Act.

“We’re doing these things in a way that makes clear that the obligations that both countries, China and the United States, undertook, the commitments we made to each other, the promises that we made to each other, will be lived up to,” he said. Mr. Pompeo said one of the challenges in deterring China is that Beijing “has never been held to account for broken promises.” “Now we’re seeing those broken promises continue,” he said. “They promised President Obama they wouldn’t arm the South China Sea. They did so.

They promised Hong Kong they would be allowed to have a different system from mainland for 50 years and they’ve now broken that promise. The list goes on.” U.S. policy toward China is aimed at pressing the Chinese Communist Party to abide by its promises and commitments. “That goes for Taiwan as well,” he said. Mr. Pompeo also weighed in on the controversy over the recent presidential order banning two popular Chinese apps, TikTok and WeChat, over concerns that Chinese intelligence uses the software to compile personal data on Americans and others.

The problem is that China can obtain Americans’ data from the internet when it travels through networks owned by Chinese companies. All businesses in China are required to turn over all information to “the Chinese national security apparatus,” Mr. Pompeo said. In addition to WeChat, the Chinese messaging and financial transaction service, the U.S. government is looking at a number of Chinese applications to restrict.

“Our mission set is not to deny Chinese commercial activities, but rather to protect America’s national security and Americans’ private information,” Mr. Pompeo said. A federal judge in California issued an order temporarily preventing the administration from banning WeChat. TikTok, a video-sharing site that is popular with younger internet users, is negotiating a possible partial sale to U.S. companies under pressure from the administration.

On WeChat, Mr. Pompeo said: “We think that they got the law wrong, and we’re hopeful that this big international security matter will not be decided in court. This is something the president has the full authority to do, and we hope that we will ultimately prevail there.” Americans need to know that communicating and interacting online will not result in their information being stolen by Chinese intelligence services, he added.

On China's use of a network of Confucius Institutes on U.S. campuses for covert influence operations, Mr. Pompeo said the administration is working to shut down the institutes, possibly as soon as the end of the year. "We began by righting what the previous administration had done wrong by calling out these institutions and making it known to the schools and institutions with which they were affiliated the risks that they present," he said.

As a result of the effort, a number of the more than 100 Confucius Institutes were shuttered. "We are looking at other tools," Mr. Pompeo said. "The president is reviewing other options to get the certainty around not being influenced by these Confucius Institutes." The institutes present a false "happy front," Mr. Pompeo said, by claiming to just teach Mandarin or Chinese culture. However, the institutes have been used for influence operations and have been connected by the Justice Department in at least one case to illegal Chinese technology talent recruitment programs, he said.

"This administration is not going to tolerate that," Mr. Pompeo said. The administration's recent decision to block visas for about 1,000 students linked to a Chinese military-civilian "fusion program" and the closure of the Chinese Consulate in Houston were examples, he said. Mr. Pompeo also warned that Chinese influence in the upcoming presidential election is "a real challenge." Attorney General William Barr and Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe have warned that China, along with Russia and Iran, are trying to influence the U.S. vote.

"The Chinese Communist Party will operate differently than other countries in trying to affect the outcome of our election," Mr. Pompeo said, "but they are no less serious in their intention to have an impact, to exert their influence, to have an outcome that's consistent with China's goals and not those of the voters here in the United States." Vice President Mike Pence said in 2018 that China conducted an unprecedented effort to interfere in that year's election and was targeting the president this year. "China wants a different American president," he said.

Mr. Pompeo said he is confident that the U.S. government will protect the election and deliver a free, fair, secure election in November. "I'm confident that we will deliver that, but the Chinese intent is certainly to weigh in on our election.

Pentagon sees 'unacceptable risk' in House nuclear provisions

InsideDefense.com, 17 Sep 20

Tony Bertuca

Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Pentagon acquisition chief Ellen Lord say they oppose House legislation that would reduce spending on nuclear weapons and re-structure the way the arsenal is funded.

Esper, in a Sept. 11 letter to the House and Senate Armed Services committees, said he had "strong concerns" with provisions in the House's fiscal year 2021 defense authorization and appropriations bills that, in his view, put the Pentagon nuclear modernization program at "unacceptable risk."

Esper said the Defense Department also opposes the House's energy and water appropriations bill, which provides \$18 billion for the National Nuclear Security Administration, rather than the \$20 billion the Trump administration requested. Esper said the cut would do "grave harm" to the U.S. nuclear deterrent.

While \$18 billion is an increase of more than \$1 billion over the previous year, Esper said the House bill "would prevent NNSA from delivering on its nuclear modernization commitments."

Esper also noted a separate House defense appropriations bill would trim funding for several nuclear modernization programs, like the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent, which was reduced by \$60 million and the Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) Weapon, which was reduced by \$170 million.

The cuts, he said, are not "reflective of the urgency of nuclear modernization" and would likely result in a delay of one to two years for the programs.

"This would put the viability of the nuclear Triad in jeopardy around 2030," he wrote. "Any delay in funding for these replacement systems would adversely impact the nuclear Triad and the essential deterrence mission."

In a Sept. 15 letter to the House and Senate Armed Services committees, Lord noted the energy and water spending bill does not fund the W93 nuclear warhead program. She also decried provisions in the House defense authorization bill that would curtail the Nuclear Weapons Council.

The NWC, headed by Lord, is composed of DOD and Energy Department officials who plan budgets and schedules for NNSA's nuclear weapons programs.

The House's defense authorization bill, however, would make the secretaries of DOD and DOE co-chairs of the NWC, something the administration opposes.

Meanwhile, House appropriators have passed measures that would constrain the NWC from coordinating or directing NNSA or DOE in terms of budget planning.

Lord said the proposed restrictions on the NWC would limit its "effectiveness as a coordinating body, place Congress within the executive branch decision-making process, and jeopardize the ability of DOD and DOE/NNSA to coordinate effectively on our shared responsibilities for nuclear deterrence."

The administration has an ally in Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jim Inhofe (R-OK), who during a hearing today with Lord and NNSA chief Lisa Gordon-Hagerty alleged the nuclear budget is being undermined by "rogue actors" within the U.S. government who have been working with congressional Democrats.

"Recently, I've learned that individuals from the Department of Energy have worked behind the scenes with House Democrats on ill-advised legislation that would: bury the Nuclear Weapons Council in unneeded bureaucracy and bring its decision-making process to a grinding halt; prohibit all cooperation between NNSA and the NWC for maintaining the safety and security of our nuclear weapons; destroy the NNSA's congressionally mandated independence and drag us back to the dysfunction of the Clinton years; and do lasting and possibly irreversible harm to the President's efforts to preserve and improve our deterrent -- an effort even former President Obama understood was necessary," he said.

The committee did not respond when asked to provide evidence or additional information regarding Inhofe's explosive charges.

Congressional aides said Inhofe's comments are related to a debate from earlier in the year, when he went to President Trump to increase NNSA's budget, despite opposition from DOE and the White House Office of Management and Budget.

In a bid to strengthen the NWC, the Senate has passed a defense authorization bill mandating the council certify NNSA's budget request before it is submitted to Congress by OMB.

Aides said the issue is sure to be contentious when the bill is debated by a conference committee.

Formal conference negotiations between the House and Senate on the defense authorization bill have yet to begin, though a final vote is not expected until after the November election.

'Tipping Point' Is Here for Nuclear Modernization, Defense Official Says

DOD News, 17 Sep 20

Todd Lopez

The Defense Department has long talked about modernization of the nuclear deterrent capability it maintains and operates and has issued warnings about the risks of allowing that deterrent, the nuclear triad, to become too old to effectively perform its mission.

Now, Ellen M. Lord, undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment, said the nuclear enterprise has reached a critical juncture beyond which failure to act will have devastating consequences going into the future.

"Today, we face a stark reality: the long-standing and repeated warnings about the need to modernize and recapitalize the U.S. nuclear deterrent is no longer a warning about the future," Lord said during testimony today on Capitol Hill before the Senate Armed Services Committee. "The tipping point in recapitalization that we have long tried to avoid is here. And we believe the condition of the nuclear enterprise now poses possibly the greatest risk to deterrence."

In a prepared statement to the committee submitted by Lord and Navy Adm. Charles A. Richard, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, both of whom testified, more details about the state of the U.S. nuclear deterrence were spelled out.

"Previous and well-intentioned directive policy changes and de-emphasis of our nuclear deterrent resulted in decades of deferred investments in nuclear warheads, delivery systems, platforms, nuclear command, control, and communications and supporting infrastructure," the statement reads. "Although sustainment efforts have allowed us to maintain a viable nuclear triad and to defer modernization investments for many years, continued delays are no longer an option."

The statement from both of those defense leaders concludes that nearly all of the systems currently a part of the nuclear deterrent are beyond their

original service lives and can no longer be cost-effectively maintained to meet future requirements. Additionally, they said, the nuclear weapons production infrastructure used to develop new weapons dates to the 1950s or earlier.

"The majority of this infrastructure is rated as being in no better than fair condition," the statement reads.

The department is now engaged in a recapitalization of the nuclear triad, which involves new submarines, such as the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines; new intercontinental ballistic missiles as part of the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent program; and new bomber aircraft, such as the B-21 Raider.

That effort, Lord said, is something the department will need help with.

"DOD has embarked upon the first recapitalization of our triad since the end of the Cold War, and we cannot do it alone," she said.

Lord cited partnerships between DOD, the Department of Energy and the National Nuclear Security Administration as critical to continued work to rebuild the U.S. nuclear deterrence capability. Also a critical part of that partnership, she said, is the Nuclear Weapons Council, an interagency group made up of both the DOD and the NNSC that oversees sustainment and modernization of nuclear weapons and supporting infrastructure. Lord serves as chairwoman of the NWC.

"On behalf of the NWC, I strongly urge full support for the NNSA's budget request, as well as successful resolution of the language in various FY21 congressional bills that would prevent the NWC from carrying out its statutorily mandated responsibilities," Lord said. "I want to thank this committee for its long standing bipartisan support to our nuclear deterrent mission and the men and women in uniform who are its backbone."

WEB EXCLUSIVE: Air Force's Roper Wants to 'Fast Forward' Digital Engineering Revolution

Air Force News 9/23/2020

By Yasmin Tadjdeh and Stew Magnuson

The Air Force's chief weapons buyer wants to quickly expand a digital engineering regime that he says will revolutionize weapon development and save taxpayers billions of dollars.

Will Roper, assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition, technology and logistics, shocked the military aviation community Sept. 15 when he announced at an industry conference that the Air Force had already secretly flown a prototype of its next-generation fighter. He attributed the rapid development of the Next-Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) program to digital engineering methods widely used in the commercial automotive industry.

Next up, the Air Force wants to use digital engineering for two classified satellite programs and possibly a tactical weapons system, he told reporters Sept. 23. It is already being applied to the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent — the Minuteman III replacement program — and the T-7A Red Hawk jet fighter trainer, he added.

He expressed some frustration because NGAD and the two satellite programs are classified, and therefore are difficult to use as examples of how digital engineering can greatly reduce development timelines and possibly billions of dollars in maintenance and sustainment costs.

“I’m very focused on trying to build airplanes where we do more iterative designs, more frequently in smaller batches,” he said.

Radically changing the way the Air Force develops platforms using digital engineering will allow the service to retire older, expensive to maintain aircraft, he said. Currently, lawmakers are reluctant to allow the service to retire certain aircraft because there is nothing in the works to replace them. Rapid development of smaller batches that are quickly replaced with updated versions means that “geriatric” aircraft won’t be sitting on tarmacs for 30 years, he said.

Currently, the Air Force does a 30-year aircraft mass production purchase and then modernizes and sustains them until retirement. Digital engineering allows the Air Force to “flip” the paradigm, he said. “You can do smaller lots. You give up your economic order quantities, but you can spiral more frequently, but because you’re not doing large procurement lots, you can afford those spirals and you can also afford to not keep the airplane for 30 years.

“And that frees up the massive amounts of money that we spend in modernization and sustainment, but that very few people report about. And that very few [congressional] hearings are held on,” he said.

“Once something is locked into modernization [and] sustainment, it’s like dead money,” he said. “You’re committed to that airplane and it’s fixed money.” Most people only see the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Air Force acquisitions. They don’t see the vast amount of money being spent on sustainment, he said.

“If we don’t flip the iceberg, it could very well sink us,” he added.

“The first time we take that over to the Hill — not as a hypothetical pitch like I’m doing now, but once it’s tied to talk about a real airplane that we want to buy this way — and that’s the discussion I’m having now on Next-Generation Air Dominance — that’s where it gets real,” he said.

The talks are now with Defense Department leadership, he said. Key will be proving that the per-unit price of a platform will come down along with the sustainment costs.

“I pray that the answer is ‘yes,’ because we’re not going to be the kind of Air Force we need to be if most of our money is in geriatrics,” he said.

“Digital engineering as a service” will be provided across the Air Force and the Space Force, he said. While the methodology is being applied to some classified programs, there is nothing secretive about digital engineering techniques themselves, he noted.

“So far the results have been amazing. It's been fun on NGAD watching the digital engineering tools allow us to lower risk and change designs in a way that would typically require physical world iterations. It just feels like you've got a fast forward button for acquisition. It's magical,” he said.

Head of U.S. Nuclear Forces Warns of Growing, Modernizing Chinese Nuclear Threat Admiral highlights new missiles capable of hitting the U.S. and expects Chinese arsenal to double.

The Diplomat Online, 17 Sep 20

Steven Stashwick

Earlier this week the commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, responsible for the United States' nuclear arsenal, warned that modernizing its own arsenal was next on China's "to-do list."

Admiral Charles Richard highlighted his concerns that there was no margin of error for the United States to modernize its massive nuclear arsenal to respond to China's moves.

The Pentagon's annual report on China's military released in August provided some of the most specific information on China's nuclear arsenal ever released by the U.S. government. The most respected open-source estimates of China's arsenal in recent years from the Federation of American Scientists assess that China has a little over 300 nuclear warheads. The Pentagon's new report puts the number of warheads closer to 200 and expected it to double over the next decade.

By comparison, the United States has close to 4,000 nuclear warheads in its arsenal, with 1,600 deployed strategic weapons atop intercontinental ballistic missiles in silos and ballistic missile submarines, or ready to be dropped by air force bombers.

Despite the United States' massive advantage in the size and capability of its nuclear arsenal, Richard is worried about China's new and anticipated capabilities.

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“China now has the capability ... to directly threaten our homeland from a ballistic missile submarine. That's a pretty watershed moment,” Richard told reporters. China's land-based nuclear missiles have been capable of targeting the United States for decades.

But China's fleet of Type 094 nuclear missile submarines remains small at four, with two more being completed. The range of the missiles on those submarines is also relatively limited. The Pentagon believes that to threaten the continental United States, those submarines would need to travel more than halfway across the Pacific Ocean to the east and north of Hawaii. The island geography around China that those submarines would need to pass through to reach those patrol areas off Hawaii presents a significant challenge to remaining undetected by the U.S. Navy.

China's next generation of nuclear missile submarines, the Type 096, and an advanced new missile they are expected to carry, will be able to target

the United States from just off its own shores, potentially reducing the risk of being tracked.

In earlier remarks to a policy institute closely aligned with the U.S. Air Force, Richard was more specific about his worries that China's new nuclear capabilities would challenge the United States' ability to deter what he described as China's increasing aggression.

“China is on a trajectory to be a strategic peer to us by the end of the decade. So, for the first time ever the U.S. is going to face two peer-capable nuclear competitors [Russia and China] who are different, who you have to deter differently. We have never faced that situation before.”

But even if China's military approaches greater parity with the United States in coming years, it will remain a drastically different strategic challenge than the United States faces with Russia. China's People's Liberation Army has grown and modernized with stunning rapidity in the last 20 years, but even if it doubles, its nuclear arsenal will still be tiny compared to the thousands of warheads maintained by the United States and Russia.

Implied in the Pentagon report and Richard's concerns is a worry that if China can use its nuclear arsenal to effectively deter the United States' own nuclear weapons, there may be little to stop the two from fighting a destructive conventional war.

--Steven Stashwick is an independent writer and researcher based in New York City focused on East Asian security and maritime issues

NNSA Administrator Lisa Gordon Hagerty To Represent US At International Atomic Energy Agency General Conference

Submitted by Carol A. Clark

on September 18, 2020

NNSA News:

WASHINGTON, D.C. — NNSA Administrator and Under Secretary for Nuclear Security of the U.S. Department of Energy Lisa E. Gordon Hagerty will travel next week to Vienna, Austria to represent the United States at the 64th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The Administrator and her team will engage with IAEA officials and international partners to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern, including nuclear security and nonproliferation.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 64th annual IAEA General Conference is certainly different than in previous years. The Administrator will be joined by Dr. Christopher Ashley Ford, Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation.

Despite these changes, the Administrator fully anticipates being able to further the important mission to support the safe, secure, and peaceful use of nuclear energy, and looks forward to having productive conversations with her counterparts at this important event.

In addition to meeting with IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi and several IAEA Deputy Directors General, Administrator Gordon-Hagerty and Dr. Ford plan to hold bilateral meetings with Brazil, Canada, France, and Russia to discuss topics as diverse as repatriating nuclear material to cooperating on the security and safeguards of nuclear material to thwart potential terrorists.

Follow the Administrator on Twitter at @LGHNNSA to keep up with her travels

NNSA: Cost, Schedule, and Risk Information - W87-1 Warhead Program. (PDF Attached 56pgs)

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/709253.pdf>

GAO-20-703: Published: Sep 9, 2020. Publicly Released: Sep 23, 2020.

By: Allison B. Bawden (202) 512-3841 bawdena@gao.gov -- Office of Public Affairs (202) 512-4800 youngc1@gao.gov

The National Nuclear Security Administration plans to replace the W78—an older type of nuclear warhead used in intercontinental ballistic missiles—with the W87-1, starting in 2030.

But it's unclear if NNSA can produce enough of the W87-1's fissile cores in time to meet its planned production schedule. NNSA estimated that the new warhead could cost up to \$14.8 billion, which could make it the most expensive program of this type to date. Upcoming design decisions for the weapon could affect cost. But the agency didn't have formal plans to assess the costs and benefits of these decisions.

What GAO Found The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) did not consider cost estimates in early major design decisions for the W87-1 warhead because it was not required to do so, but NNSA has since changed its guidance to require that cost be considered, according to a May 2019 NNSA review of program documentation.

The design decisions that remain for features that would achieve either minimum or enhanced requirements for the W87-1 could affect cost, according to NNSA officials (see table). We found, however, that NNSA did not yet have study plans for assessing the costs and benefits of the remaining decisions consistent with best practices as detailed in NNSA's analysis of alternatives business procedure.

NNSA does not require and only recommends that programs such as the W87-1 follow these best practices. By directing the W87-1 program and future weapons programs to follow best practices for design studies, or to justify and document deviations, NNSA would have better assurance that design studies apply consistent, reliable, and objective approaches. NNSA Cost Estimates for W87-1 Warhead Design Variations That Meet Minimum and Enhanced Requirements, as of December 2018 (Dollars in billions)

W87-1 design variations Cost estimate range a Design includes features that meet minimum safety and security requirements 7.7 - 13.3 Design includes enhanced safety and security features 8.6 - 14.8 Difference between the above estimate ranges 0.9 - 1.5 Source: National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) documentation | GAO-20-703 The cost ranges reflect low and high estimates for a single design variation. The ranges represent technical and production risk and uncertainty.

It is not clear that NNSA will be able to produce sufficient numbers of pits—the fissile cores of the primary—to meet the W87-1 warhead's planned production schedule. Recent NNSA and independent studies have cast doubt on NNSA's ability to ready its two planned pit production facilities in

time. If one facility is not ready to produce pits in the early 2030s, for example, NNSA would likely produce fewer weapons than planned, according to GAO's analysis of NNSA plans.

We were unable to fully assess the extent to which the two pit production facilities will be ready to produce pits for the W87-1 because NNSA's plutonium program—which is managing the facility readiness efforts—has not yet completed an integrated schedule for the overall pit production effort. An integrated schedule is important, according to best practices, because it integrates the planned work, resources, and budget.

An NNSA official stated that the program was building a schedule, but could not provide documentation that it would meet best practices. A schedule consistent with best practices would provide NNSA with better assurance that it will have adequate pits to meet planned W87-1 production. This is a public version of a classified report that GAO issued in February 2020. Information that NNSA or DOD deemed classified or sensitive has been omitted.

News & Opinion

A \$13 Billion Contract for ICBMs: What's the Rush?

The deal needs closer scrutiny — as does the purported need for new long-range ballistic missiles at all.

DEFENSE ONE

BY WILLIAM D. HARTUNG

DIRECTOR, ARMS AND SECURITY PROJECT AT THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

The recent [announcement](#) by the U.S. Air Force that it will award Northrop Grumman \$13.3 billion to develop a new intercontinental ballistic missile raises more questions than it answers. First and foremost: what's the rush? The move greatly complicates the ability of the next administration — whoever wins the election in November — to rethink the Pentagon's [\\$2 trillion](#) nuclear modernization plan in light of other demands both within and outside of the department's budget.

Former Defense Secretary William Perry hit the nail on the head when he [said](#), “The highest probability of starting a nuclear war is a mistaken launch caused by a false alarm and a rushed decision to launch nuclear-armed ICBMs. Instead of spending billions of dollars on new nuclear missiles we don't need, we must focus on preventing accidental nuclear war.” In keeping with Perry's view, a June 2020 [report](#) by the Union of Concerned Scientists (of which I was a co-author) argues that rather than building a new ICBM at a staggering price tag of [\\$85 billion to \\$150 billion](#), the current generation of ICBMs should be taken off of hair-trigger alert and refurbished, as the first steps towards eliminating land-based nuclear missiles altogether.

Unfortunately, strategic concerns aren't the only drivers of the new program, known formally as the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent, or GBSD. The establishment of the nuclear triad of sea- and land-based strategic missiles and long-range nuclear bombers had as much or more to do with interservice rivalry and [the fight for funding](#) as it did with a careful calculation of how best to protect the United States from nuclear attack. The financial and bureaucratic imperatives that gave us the ICBM continue to this day, as evidenced by the highly effective [advocacy efforts](#) of contractors such as Northrop Grumman and Aerojet, joined in many cases by the [Senate ICBM Coalition](#), a group of senators from states that host ICBM bases or are involved in major work on the missiles themselves. Together, this special interest lobby has beaten back virtually every effort to consider the costs and consequences of building new ICBMs, including a proposed amendment to this year's National Defense Authorization Act, sponsored by Rep. Ro Khanna, D-California, that would have cut \$1 billion from the GBSD program and applied the savings to addressing the COVID-19 crisis.

The [clout](#) of the ICBM lobby is underscored by the fact that contractors involved with the program have given \$4.1 million to key members of Congress since 2012, and that together Northrop Grumman and its major subcontractors, including Bechtel, Lockheed Martin, and General Dynamics, employ over 500 lobbyists, nearly one for every member of Congress. While obviously not all of these lobbyists work on the ICBM issue, the numbers employed by these companies are a measure of their political power.

The [process](#) through which the new ICBM development contract was awarded raises questions as well. In the initial runup to the Pentagon award of the ICBM development contract, there were two competitors, Boeing and Northrop Grumman. But in June 2019, Boeing pulled out, claiming that the terms were [unfairly tilted](#) in favor of Northrop Grumman. A key complaint was Northrop Grumman's acquisition of Orbital ATK, the main U.S. producer of solid rocket motors used in ICBMs. Before the acquisition, Orbital ATK had been part of the Boeing team that was bidding to develop the new missile.

One problem posed by the sole-source award of the ICBM development contract is that the already astronomical costs of the program could rise still further because of the Pentagon's limited bargaining power in negotiating the contract in the first place. The problem could be exacerbated if Northrop Grumman's missile fails to perform as advertised. At a minimum, Congress needs to investigate the terms of the contract in detail to make sure the company is held accountable for efficiently spending the billions it is receiving to develop the new system. More importantly, Congress and the next administration should take a fresh look at the question of whether a new ICBM is needed at all.

William D. Hartung is the Director of the Arms and Security Program at the Center for International Policy.

A balancing act for Beijing

<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/517416-the-coming-us-election-presents-a-balancing-act-for-beijing>

The coming US election presents a focus

BY JOSEPH BOSCO, CONTRIBUTOR to THE HILL // 09/22/20 10:00 AM EDT

China is conducting its most serious military escalation against Taiwan since it fired missiles across the Taiwan Strait in 1996 to protest the country's first direct presidential election.

Over the weekend, China flew 18 People's Liberation Army aircraft, both [bombers and fighters](#), provocatively violating Taiwanese airspace. Does China perceive that the window of opportunity to get away with an attack on Taiwan is closing or opening? It's not yet clear whether Beijing views the costs and risks of aggressive action are increasing or decreasing. Its upscaling of preparations for an assault could mean either that

- (a) it believes time is running out and it must act sooner rather than later, or
- (b) it has greater latitude to move any time it chooses and should continue its preparatory planning while desensitizing Taiwan and the United States to the increased frequency of mere "training" exercises.

China has expanded its military forays around Taiwan since Tsai Ing-wen's [reelection](#) as president in January, and as the Trump administration broadens its efforts to enhance Taiwan's relations with the United States and the international community. Under a second Trump administration, America's economic, diplomatic and security relationship with Taiwan only promises to deepen.

The U.S. presidential campaign presents Beijing with both opportunity and danger.

It may believe that [President Trump](#) is so preoccupied with fighting off the challenge from former Vice President [Joe Biden](#) that he would be unable to respond coherently to a sudden move against Taiwan. It also may minimize the risk of a strong U.S. response because of Trump's frequent touting that he has kept the United States out of another "endless foreign war" — though a U.S.-China conflict is unlikely to be protracted.

Trump's political task has been made exponentially more daunting by the ongoing economic crisis generated by the coronavirus pandemic. Conveniently for China, the virus that originated in Wuhan spread at a time when Trump's trade pressures were succeeding in extracting significant economic concessions that, if continued, would have forced regime-threatening political reform in China.

Beijing clearly would welcome a change of leadership in Washington instead. But attacking Taiwan before Nov. 3 might reveal an unpleasant surprise for China. Rather than being paralyzed by hesitation, Trump may be quite prepared to react swiftly and decisively, especially given his resentment at China's handling of the virus outbreak and [Xi Jinping](#)'s deceitful representations. The president recently suggested as much, saying that his trusting feelings toward Xi had changed and that his administration has forewarned Beijing of his retaliatory intentions.

He said, ominously, "[China knows what I'm gonna do](#). China knows." The open question is whether Xi and his colleagues are deterred by a commitment not made publicly and not subject to condemnation if unfulfilled, as was President [Barack Obama](#)'s evanescent "[red line](#)" over Syria's use of chemical weapons. This time, however, a firm, forceful response by Trump would be strongly supported by an American public equally resentful over the impact of the virus on their lives and favorably disposed toward the people of Taiwan.

The rallying of public opinion behind the president would boost his prospects for reelection, precisely the opposite result that Beijing desires. Under that analysis, China is unlikely to make a move before Nov. 3 and instead will first await the election results. If the vote is close, with a disputably narrow margin for either Trump or Biden, great civil discord in America is likely. With an escalation of domestic protests and disorder, Beijing may decide that would be the time to act while the administration and the nation are distracted and divided.

But, again, a president under siege domestically might well seize upon an external challenge to mobilize public support behind his domestic position. His political opponents almost certainly would accuse him of a "wag the dog" tactic and it could well exacerbate bitter internal divisions — an outcome that would please not only China but Russia, Iran, North Korea and other regimes that do not wish this country well.

Beijing would have to decide whether the perceived benefits of a quasi-civil war in America would outweigh the incalculable costs to China of outright conflict with an aroused United States.

If either candidate were to win the election with a clear and definitive margin, most of the country would accept the result and civil unrest would be muted. If the winner is Biden, China would have no incentive to move against Taiwan before he takes office in January.

With the disruptive Trump out of the way, Beijing would expect a gradual reversion of American policy back to the softer, less confrontational 24 years of the Clinton-Bush-Obama period, and the prospect that it could win without the need for fighting — on Taiwan, the South China Sea, trade, and other contentious issues. If Trump wins convincingly, Beijing would be back to its assertiveness dilemma — whether to move aggressively now, before Taiwan and the United States further build their defensive posture, or to hope the triumphant reelected president would feel vindicated rather than vindictive toward the Chinese Communist regime that has done so much to undermine him and the country he governs.

Joseph Bosco served as China country director for the secretary of Defense from 2005 to 2006 and as Asia-Pacific director of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief from 2009 to 2010. He is a nonresident fellow at the Institute for Corean-American Studies and a member of the advisory board of the Global Taiwan Institute.

China air force video appears to show simulated attack on U.S. base on Guam

Reuters, Sept. 21 | Yew Lun Tian

BEIJING -- China's air force has released a video showing nuclear-capable H-6 bombers carrying out a simulated attack on what appears to be Andersen Air Force Base on the U.S. Pacific island of Guam, as regional tensions rise.

The video, released on Saturday on the People's Liberation Army Air Force Weibo account, came as China carried out a second day of drills near Chinese-claimed Taiwan, to express anger at the visit of a senior U.S. State Department official to Taipei.

Guam is home to major U.S. military facilities, including the air base, which would be key to responding to any conflict in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Chinese air force's two minute and 15 second video, set to solemn, dramatic music like a trailer for a Hollywood movie, shows H-6 bombers taking off from a desert base. The video is called "The god of war H-6K goes on the attack!"

Halfway through, a pilot presses a button and looses off a missile at an unidentified seaside runway.

The missile homes in on the runway, a satellite image of which is shown that looks exactly like the layout of Andersen.

The music suddenly stops as images of the ground shaking appear, following by aerial views of an explosion.

"We are the defenders of the motherland's aerial security; we have the confidence and ability to always defend the security of the motherland's skies," the air force wrote in a brief description for the video.

Neither China's defence ministry nor U.S. Indo-Pacific Command immediately responded to requests for comment on the video.

Collin Koh, a research fellow at Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, said the video was aimed at highlighting China's growing prowess in long-range power projection.

"The video is meant to warn the Americans that even supposedly safe, rearward positions such as Guam may come under threat when conflicts over regional flashpoints, be it Taiwan or South China Sea, erupt," he said.

The H-6 has been involved in multiple Chinese flights around and near Taiwan, according to Taiwan's air force, including those last week.

The H-6K is the latest model of the bomber, which is based on the 1950s vintage Soviet Tu-16.

On Monday, China's Eastern Theatre Command, which would be in charge of an attack on Taiwan, released a propaganda video of its own, called "what if war broke out today?", showing soldiers running in wooded hills and ballistic missiles launching.

"Motherland, I swear I will fight for you until my death!" large golden Chinese characters read at the end of the montage as explosions go off in the background.

--Additional reporting and writing by Ben Blanchard in Taipei

Sole Purpose: A Policy Without a Purpose

RealClearDefense.com, Sept. 19 | Franklin C. Miller

Ambassador Steve Pifer, a former colleague in government and now a research fellow at Stanford's Center for International Security and Cooperation, has just written an article (The National Interest Online, September 15, 2020) supporting the idea of dropping the longstanding U.S. deterrence policy that we might, under grave circumstances, actually use nuclear weapons first [1]. Instead, Pifer and others support a policy of No First Use of Nuclear Weapons (known colloquially as "NFU") styled as "Sole Purpose". [2] Pifer writes that adopting "Sole Purpose" is necessary because the existing 60 year-old U.S. and NATO policy are no longer credible to either our friends or our potential enemies and that U.S. pledge not to use nuclear weapons first in extremis will reduce global tensions, particularly with Russia and China. But Pifer's argument ignores recent engagements with U.S. allies and also commits the most fundamental mistake of deterrence: he substitutes his own notion of what makes a threat credible to Putin and Xi Jinping for their judgment, thereby falling into the classic and oft-warned- about the trap of "mirror imaging."

To set the stage, it is important to understand how the current policy evolved. A U.S. threat to use nuclear weapons to defend NATO Europe in the event of a Soviet conventional attack was designed to raise the cost of aggression to unacceptable levels: the Soviet leadership could not be certain that such an attack would not set off a nuclear holocaust. The very idea of another conventional war being fought on their devastated territories was unthinkable to America's European allies in the 1950s; indeed, the thought of a new conventional war being fought on NATO territory today is similarly unthinkable to allied populations. If the goal, therefore, is to prevent conventional attack, the idea of a conventional only deterrent to Russian conventional aggression fails the test of history and logic. Conventional deterrence of a determined aggressor has generally failed throughout history. The late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, speaking of the many memorials in Europe to the dead of World War 1, called them "monuments to the failure of conventional deterrence."

Moreover, Pifer misunderstands the very nature of the current "First Use" threat when he writes that it: "might have contributed to the deterrence of a conventional conflict, but such escalation would have entailed enormous risks: once the nuclear threshold was crossed, where would matters stop? Many analysts question the ability to control escalation once nuclear weapons enter into use". The whole point of the threat of nuclear escalation is that no one knows where it would end, and potential enemy leaders, in deciding whether or not to attack, must question whether what they seek to gain through aggression is worth the potential destruction of their homelands. Pifer compounds this by postulating two scenarios in which conventional aggression has already occurred (by Russia in one case, by China in the other) and then asking whether a U.S. nuclear response is credible – to which he answers "no." There are two mistakes here: first, he allows that deterrence has failed in the first place, and second he substitutes his own judgment of what is credible for that of Presidents-for-life Putin or Xi Jinping. In so doing, he is guilty of "mirror imaging" and of ignoring the fact that Moscow and Beijing view nuclear weapons and nuclear use quite differently than Western leaders do.

Finally, Pifer suggests that if the U.S. were to adopt an NFU/Sole Purpose policy, this would "defuse the current situation in which both Washington and Moscow believe that the other seeks to lower the nuclear threshold" and also "open the path to a new security dialogue with Beijing". [3]

But these assertions do not stand scrutiny. As I have testified previously [4], abandoning our current policy will reduce allied confidence in the U.S. pledge to defend them, potentially undercut U.S. nonproliferation objectives, and will have no effect on policies or perceptions in either Moscow or Beijing. Let's examine each in turn.

Pifer asserts that U.S. allies no longer find the current policy credible. The last time the question of moving to NFU was examined occurred in the summer of 2016; allied protests against changing the longstanding policy were vociferous. As reported in Fred Kaplan's "The Bomb" (a work with which Pifer is familiar since he quoted from it in his article), the Japanese and South Korean foreign ministers weighed in strongly against moving to no first use. [5] Equally, although not reported by Kaplan, London and Paris protested at very senior levels against changing existing policy, as did NATO Headquarters. At the NSC considering the proposed policy change, the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Energy argued successfully against walking away from the longstanding policy. Given this, and, more pointedly, the tumultuous relationship between Washington and its NATO allies over the past four years, a move to NFU/Sole Purpose would be seen as additional evidence that the United States was stepping away from its pledge to defend the Alliance.

Suppose allies come to believe the United States nuclear deterrent no longer protects them against conventional attack. In that case, it is not inconceivable one or more who already possess the nuclear material and technical expertise to build their own national deterrents might do so. Proposals have surfaced in the bodies politic in both Japan and Germany to pursue an independent deterrent over the past decade as fears grew that the U.S. nuclear umbrella "had holes". [6] Developments along these lines would represent a huge setback both for U.S. nonproliferation policy and for the Nonproliferation Treaty. Furthermore, Beijing's reaction to a potential Japanese nuclear weapons program would be a cause of great concern for peace and stability, as would Moscow's reaction to a potential German program.

The notion that either Moscow or Beijing or both would be reassured by a U.S. move to an NFU/Sole Purpose policy is risible. Given their strong conspiratorial outlook, neither leadership would believe that an announced policy shift would be translated into operational policy. Some context here is important. From 1977 until its demise, the Soviet Union had a declaratory policy that it would never be the first nation post-1945 to use a nuclear weapon. As the Warsaw Pact crumbled and Germany reunited in late 1990, West German forces obtained the Pact's warplans (which were written by the Soviet General Staff); the plans contained clear nuclear first use options. And while China's current declaratory policy is "no first use" policy, analysts and U.S. Government officials have discerned multiple ambiguities which suggest there are, in fact, circumstances in which Beijing would use nuclear weapons first. [7]

Lastly, the suggestion that a U.S. shift to NFU/Sole Purpose will lead to Moscow and Beijing's adoption of similar policies (operational as opposed to solely declaratory) suggests a strong degree of cultural arrogance. The nuclear policies of Russia and China (and, to the degree one exists, of North Korea) are formulated based on their respective leadership's view of the threats they face and the opportunities they seek to exploit. They will never seek to emulate American policy. To think that this is true is to over-value our own importance regarding setting global standards and denigrate these governments' ability to determine their policies based on their own goals and objectives (however much we might disagree with those goals and objectives).

Pifer closes his piece by noting, accurately, that there has been a "taboo" against using nuclear weapons operationally since 1945. But that is only a part of the story. The important taboo is that no major power has committed aggression against another major power. That historical aberration is a direct result of the danger of escalation to nuclear war. That is the reason for the current policy. Changing that policy to "NFU/Sole Purpose" has no positive national security value for the United States and our allies and carries within it serious risks to alliance cohesion, nonproliferation, and unsubstantiated assumptions about potential enemy nuclear weapons policy.

Sadly, with a "Sole Purpose" clause having been included in the Democratic Party platform, there is a risk this will become a partisan political issue. That would be extremely unfortunate. The current policy has been endorsed equally by Democratic and Republican Administrations for over seven decades. The over-riding need to prevent aggression against ourselves or our allies is too important to become an "R vs. D" question.

--Franklin C. Miller served for over decades as a senior policy official in the Department of Defense and on the NSC staff

NOTES:

[1] Steven Pifer, "Nuclear Weapons: It's Time for Sole Purpose", National Interest Online, September 15, 2020

[2] "the "sole purpose" of U.S. nuclear weapons should be to deter and—if necessary, retaliate against—a nuclear attack"; Ibid

[3] Ibid

[4] Franklin C. Miller, "Outside Perspectives on Nuclear Deterrence Policy and Posture", Prepared Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, March 6, 2019

[5] Fred Kaplan, *The Bomb* (Simon and Schuster, New York,) Spring 2020. 253-254.

[6] See, for example: <https://interactive.pri.org/2019/03/japan-nuclear/index.html>; Mark Fitzpatrick, "How Japan Could Go Nuclear: It Has the Smarts and the Resources, but Does Tokyo Have the Will?", *Foreign Affairs*, October 3, 2019; Heather Hurlburt, "'Having Decided It Can't Rely On America, Germany Debates Acquiring Its Own Nuclear Weapons", *International Politics*, August 17, 2018.

[7] See for example: U.S. Department of Defense, "Military and Security Developments Involving the PRC", Annual Report to the Congress 2020; Peter Pry, "China's 'no first use' nuclear fiction", *The Hill*, June 24, 2020; Nan Li, *China's Evolving Nuclear Strategy: Will China Drop "No First Use?"*, Jamestown Foundation Publication: China Brief Volume: 18 Issue: 1, January 17, 2018; Dan Satherley, "China Military Moving Away From 'No First Use' Nuke Policy- U.S. commander's stark warning", *Newshub*, September 16, 2020

Declassified U.S. intelligence tracks huge Chinese missile buildup

WJLA-TV/Sinclair Broadcast Group (Exclusive), Sept. 18 | James Rosen

WASHINGTON -- U.S. intelligence agencies have monitored a huge expansion in China's production and testing of ballistic and cruise missiles over the last decade, in what senior Trump administration officials and outside military analysts call a military buildup unprecedented in human history.

Satellite images taken by U.S. intelligence and declassified in the last week for presentation to officers at the NATO military alliance tell the tale in a juxtaposition of two photographs of the same military parade held in China a decade apart. Both photographs, attributed to Digital Globe, show the same stretch of Tiananmen Square in Beijing as the country staged its annual National Day festivities on October 1.

In the 2009 event, the segment of the military parade that was devoted to the display of missiles took up .48 kilometers, or just under one-third of a mile. In the declassified imagery from the 2019 parade, the missile segment of the parade can be seen extending for longer than two-and-a-half miles: an expansion of nearly tenfold.

"They are going to destroy the strategic equilibrium that has existed heretofore and they're going to propel the world into uncharted waters," said Ambassador Marshall Billingslea, a former assistant secretary of the Treasury who was appointed in April to the newly created post of Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control.

Adding to the concern of senior U.S. officials is China's aggressive testing schedule. State Department figures released exclusively to Sinclair show that in 2020 alone -- despite the coronavirus -- China has conducted at least seventy test-launches of ballistic or ground-launched cruise missiles. This puts the Communist regime on track to replicate its feats of the last two years. In 2019, Beijing conducted 225 ballistic missile launches, a number that exceeded the combined number by all other nations in the world. The pattern was the same in 2018.

"These are incredibly dangerous weapons," Billingslea said in an interview at the State Department this week. Asked what happens when American diplomats seek to engage their Chinese counterparts in meaningful arms control dialogue, Billingslea answered with a single word: "Stonewalling." At present, the U.S. is seeking at various official levels and through different communications platforms to convince Beijing that the destructive power of its growing ballistic arsenal -- and the possibility of an accident, or an unintended escalation of localized military conflict -- make it unwise to continue the country's unrivaled expansion in this arena.

With those entreaties mostly falling on deaf ears, however, Ambassador Billingslea and other U.S. officials have begun to set their sights on an unlikely diplomatic ally: the Russians. In meetings in Vienna last month, Billingslea engaged his Russian counterpart, Sergei Ryabkov, the deputy foreign minister, in talks aimed at persuading the Kremlin to lean on China, with the goal of getting the Asian power to join the next major arms control agreement.

"[Ryabkov] himself has said publicly the next arms control treaty must be multilateral," Billingslea said. "I agree with that; we agree with that. The next arms control treaty must include China."

The United States and Russia abide by self-imposed limits of about 1,500 nuclear warheads. But according to estimates derived from Chinese propaganda and open sources, the Communist regime is preparing to outfit just one of its advanced intercontinental ballistic missile systems, the DF-41 -- which can travel ranges of up to 9,000 miles at a top speed of Mach 25, and therefore capable of striking the continental U.S. within thirty minutes -- with 1,000 nuclear warheads.

Asked to what end the government led by Chinese President Xi Jinping has embarked on its crash missile program, Billingslea said the question is "concerning" because the regime's intentions remain so opaque. "Their intentions are not clear," he said. "The same kind of obsessive secrecy that they apply to the coronavirus outbreak is the kind of secrecy that they're applying to their nuclear weapons program."

Biden would push for less U.S. reliance on nukes for defense

Associated Press, Sept. 19 | Robert Burns

WASHINGTON -- Democrat Joe Biden leaves little doubt that if elected he would try to scale back President Donald Trump's buildup in nuclear weapons spending. And although the former vice president has not fully detailed his nuclear priorities, he says he would make the U.S. less reliant on the world's deadliest weapons.

The two candidates' views on nuclear weapons policy and strategy carry unusual significance in this election because the United States is at a turning point in deciding the future of its weapons arsenal and because of growing debate about the threat posed by Chinese and Russian nuclear advances.

China, whose relatively small nuclear force is growing in sophistication, is cited by the Pentagon's top nuclear commander as a leading reason why the United States should go all out on nuclear modernization.

“We are going into a very different world,” Adm. Charles Richard, the head of U.S. Strategic Command, said Sept. 14. “We are on a trajectory, for the first time in our nation's history, to face two peer nuclear-capable competitors.” He was referring to Russia, which has long been a nuclear peer, and China, whose leaders Richard says have put a strategic nuclear buildup “next on their to-do list.”

Days later, Richard said China could become a peer “by the end of the decade, if not sooner.” But other estimates suggest a slower pace. The Pentagon recently said Beijing may double its nuclear stockpile over the next 10 years, which would still leave it far behind the U.S.

Trump entered the White House in 2017 with little to say on the subject of nuclear weapons, but his administration produced a policy document a year later that the Pentagon portrayed as largely tracking the path of the Obama administration. Trump did, however, add two weapon types and beef up the budget for a years-long overhaul of the nuclear arsenal — an overhaul that Biden sees as excessive.

“Our nuclear now is in the best shape it’s been in decades,” the president said this month, although the military says the arsenal's main components are so old they are long past due for replacement. He has boasted in broad, sometimes cryptic, terms of U.S. nuclear advances, telling journalist Bob Woodward in 2019 that he had built a secret nuclear weapon that neither Russian nor China knew about.

If reelected, Trump would be expected to stay on his path of modernizing the nuclear arsenal, which has bipartisan support in Congress despite growing budget pressures. Less clear is how Trump would approach nuclear arms control, including the problem of North Korea's unconstrained arsenal. His administration has walked away from one arms control deal with Russia and balked at extending an Obama-era strategic nuclear treaty with Russia that Biden says he would keep in place.

Just days before Trump entered the White House, then-Vice President Biden cautioned against abandoning Obama’s approach.

“If future budgets reverse the choices we’ve made, and pour additional money into a nuclear buildup, it hearkens back to the Cold War and will do nothing to increase the day-to-day security of the United States or our allies,” Biden said in a Jan. 11, 2017, speech at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

James Acton, a nuclear expert at the Carnegie Endowment, says Biden's instincts on nuclear weapons are more liberal than those of much of the Democratic Party's defense establishment. But that doesn't necessarily mean he would fundamentally change U.S. nuclear policy.

“In practice, there are often pressures to continue the status quo,” Acton said in an interview.

Biden embraces the notion that nuclear weapons should play a smaller role in defense strategy and that the ultimate goal should be a nuclear-free world. He has not spelled out how he would pursue this, but he has dropped clues.

He has said, for example, that he opposes the Trump administration's decision to develop and deploy two types of missiles armed with less-powerful “low-yield” nuclear warheads. One is a sea-launched cruise missile that is some years from being fielded; the other is a long-range ballistic missile that the Navy began deploying aboard submarines nearly a year ago.

“Bad idea,” Biden said in July 2019. Having these makes the U.S. “more inclined to use them,” he added.

During the campaign, Biden also has embraced what nuclear strategists call a “no first use” policy. In simplest terms, that means not initiating a nuclear war — not being the first to pull the trigger, so that in a nuclear crisis, the U.S. president might opt to unleash a retaliatory strike but not a preemptive one. Longstanding U.S. policy has been to reserve the option of striking first, arguing that this makes war less likely.

Obama considered but rejected a shift to “no first use.”

The Biden campaign has made few pronouncements on U.S. nuclear weapons policy or strategy and it declined to make an adviser available for an interview. The campaign website says Biden believes “the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring — and if necessary, retaliating against — a nuclear attack. As president, he will work to put that belief into practice, in consultation with our allies and military.”

In a questionnaire last year by the Council for a Living World in which Biden and other candidates were asked whether the U.S. should review its policy reserving the option of using nuclear weapons first, Biden said yes but did not elaborate. He also agreed that modernizing the U.S. arsenal could be done for less than the currently projected \$1.2 trillion.

Some have speculated that Biden would consider dropping the plan to build a new nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile force, replacing the Minuteman 3 fleet fielded in 1970. That project is expected to cost at least \$85 billion.

Loren Thompson, a military analyst at the Lexington Institute, believes Biden would stick to the missile program.

“This outcome will result partly from the fact that Joe Biden is a common-sense centrist who respects the views of experts,” Thompson wrote recently. “He will find few if any experts in the nation’s nuclear establishment who think phasing out ICBMs would make us safer.”

After 20 Years, Let the NNSA Stand on Its Own

RealClearDefense.com, Sept. 18 | Franklin C. Miller and Tim Morrison

On September 17th, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing on the current partnership between the Departments of Defense and Energy concerning the U.S. nuclear deterrent. While the three Administration witnesses are highly professional public servants and have labored mightily to ensure the U.S. has the nuclear capabilities it needs in an increasingly dangerous and uncertain world; what the witnesses did not address

is the 800 kiloton elephant in the room: the 20 year experiment to create a semi-autonomous nuclear weapons production complex within the Department of Energy (DoE). The U.S. is at a critical moment in the recapitalization of its deterrent, and adversaries (including Russia and China) are in the midst of a nuclear arms race. Time is of the essence to throw out this failed arrangement in favor of a new, fully independent cabinet department.

Since the United States Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was dissolved in 1975, management of the nuclear weapons stockpile has, effectively, been entrusted to the Department of Energy (DoE). The decades that followed were marked by failures, waste, and even highly damaging espionage by nations like the People's Republic of China. So, finally, 20 years ago this month, the House and the Senate passed legislation, on a veto-proof margin, to stand up a semi-autonomous agency – the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) – to manage the nation's nuclear stockpile, nuclear nonproliferation programs, and naval nuclear reactors. At the 20-year point, it is entirely appropriate to consider whether this half measure worked, and, if not, is now the time for a more radical change?

There has long been an awkward “blended family” arrangement to manage the U.S. nuclear deterrent: the Department of Defense (DoD), a civilian-run agency, sets the requirement for how many nuclear weapons of what types the nation needs to satisfy the President's nuclear weapons guidance, but it leaves the actual production of the nuclear weapons to another civilian-run agency: the Energy Department's NNSA.

DoD develops, procures, and deploys multi-billion weapons systems, like nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines, land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, heavy bombers, and other systems. But, as sophisticated as these weapon systems are, they're effectively paperweights without the "bullet in the chamber," the nuclear weapon, that the NNSA produces and maintains.

This has, understandably, always been a fraught relationship between large bureaucracies. While the DoD's mission is relatively single-focused on national defense, the DoE has varied missions. It was established to help the nation prevent another energy shock of the type it faced in the Arab oil embargo of the early 1970s. Its priorities range from fossil fuels to solar panels to nuclear waste dumps to artificial intelligence and electric utility rates. It's worth noting that other than the national defense mission of the NNSA, DoE's other missions are exclusively civilian.

DoE's first leader, former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, was perhaps the first and last hired with any actual nuclear weapons experience (having been Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission). Most Secretaries are hired because they're energy experts, understandably. As a result, most ignore the nuclear weapons mission, content to leave it in a radioactive bureaucratic box. Yet, this is Washington: no bureaucrat wants to lose responsibility for a mission (or its budget – especially not 50% of it). Since the NNSA was created as a semi-autonomous entity with DoE, Secretaries of Energy have bridled at this arrangement: while the head of the NNSA is subject to the control of the Secretary, the agency is supposed to otherwise be beyond the reach of the Department of Energy and its bureaucracy.

But these two massive departments, DoE and DoD, have ultimately been able to work together – often at greater cost in time and dollars than should have been needed – because of a statutory system of coordination and cooperation. Congress established the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC) to coordinate budget requests between the two departments, synchronize acquisition and modernization cycles, and prepare the annual Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Memorandum for the President, wherein he determines the size and composition of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.

And today, the NWC is headed by Undersecretary for Acquisitions and Sustainment Ellen Lord, marking the first time that the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile has been managed by two women (i.e., Lord and NNSA Administrator Lisa Gordon Hagerty), a shattering of the nuclear glass ceiling. Together with senior uniformed leaders, including General John Hyten, USAF, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Admiral Charles “Chas” Richards, USN, Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, the DoD and NNSA systems appear to be succeeding in the hard, but critical, work of ensuring the reliability and credibility of the nation’s nuclear deterrent.

For example, in the process to produce the Fiscal Year 2021 budget request, the NWC learned that the NNSA budget submission, as reviewed and approved by the Department of Energy and the Office of Management and Budget, was going to be woefully short of the requirements needed to meet the Department of Defense’s requirements, as determined by the President. Ultimately, the President agreed with the budget requirements initially identified by the NWC. While some in the White House Office of Management and Budget and DoE were not pleased that the President sided with the NNSA and the NWC and not them, the system worked because the President had the information and options to make his decision.

Unfortunately, those who were on the losing side appear not to have accepted that decision. For example, after the President made his decision about the Fiscal Year 2021 budget request, an effort has been underway to strip both the Nuclear Weapons Council and the NNSA Administrator of her responsibility for coordinating the NNSA budget with DoD’s. There is no winner in this effort to sabotage the Nuclear Weapons Council. But these institutional jealousies are not new; they are long-standing symptoms of previous half measures to address the organization and governance of the U.S. nuclear weapons production enterprise.

Early in the 2010s, Congress recognized that DoE's partial implementation of semi-autonomy, as required by the NNSA Act, was a risk to the U.S. nuclear deterrent. The NNSA, which itself has accreted tremendous bureaucratic bloat over the years as a lazy response to mistakes, mismanagement, and congressional and press pressure, was also drowning in micromanagement from "Big DoE."

Notwithstanding the NNSA Act, which provided that, as a matter of law, only the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Energy can direct NNSA, through the Administrator, the Department's bureaucracies had regularly interfered with the NNSA's activities. Countless layers of oversight of the overseers meant DoD weapons were regularly late and over-budget (often resulting in the Pentagon being asked to foot the bill) because no one in the DoE bureaucracy or NNSA field offices had the authority and will to say "yes" and anyone could say "no." Instead of accountability and responsibility by the Secretary and the NNSA Administrator, as specified in law, it was spread around a dozen bureaucratic fiefdoms.

So, Congress established the Augustine-Mies Advisory Panel on the Governance of the Nuclear Security Enterprise to propose solutions for this dysfunctional arrangement. In its final report, the panel members found that “the existing governance structures and many of the practices of the [nuclear weapons] enterprise are inefficient and ineffective, thereby putting the entire enterprise at risk over the long term. These problems have not occurred overnight; they are the result of decades of neglect.”

The panel proposed a wide-ranging overhaul of both the Department of Energy and the NNSA, including reorganizing and renaming the Department itself to reflect a priority on the nuclear deterrent. The panel also made a recommendation that, if those changes were not undertaken within two years, the NNSA must be made "an independent, autonomous agency.” Six years, two Administrations, and multiple Congresses later, the reforms

have not been made. And, bureaucratic infighting – and gamesmanship with bureaucratic allies on Capitol Hill – again threatens the U.S. nuclear deterrent.

In a March 2000 hearing, the Chairman of the Special Oversight Panel on Department of Energy Reorganization of the House Armed Services Committee, Mac Thornberry (R-TX), stated, “if we cannot make this work within the Department of Energy, there are a number of our colleagues who want to remove it entirely.” Twenty years after the passage of the NNSA Act, and a mountain’s worth of GAO and independent commission reports later, it’s clear that there is only one option left: the Executive Branch and the Congress need to establish an independent, cabinet level agency, answerable to the President, to provide the U.S. and its allies the nuclear deterrent it needs today and for the foreseeable future.

The nuclear deterrent is the ultimate guarantor of U.S. and allied security. The nation’s senior civilian and military leaders have been clear it is the number one priority to protect the homeland. We cannot continue to risk unilateral nuclear disarmament by bureaucratic neglect. The time for change is now.

--Franklin C. Miller served for decades as a senior policy official in the Department of Defense and on the NSC staff. He was a member of the Mies-Augustine Commission. Tim Morrison is a former Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security, former Policy Director on the House Armed Services Committee and is now a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute

Is the Russian Avangard Hypersonic ICBM a Serious Threat?

Or is this just more hype from Moscow?

National Interest Online, Sept. 18 | Peter Suci

Exactly how serious a threat Russia's Avangard hypersonic intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) is to the United States isn't entirely clear. The ICBM is reported to have both hypersonic speed and an ability to fly a “maneuvering” flight path through the atmosphere. Such a combination would make it considerably difficult to counter.

It can reportedly cruise at twenty-seven times the speed of sound and its ability to maneuver could make it almost impossible to correctly predict its trajectory, which provides the ICBM with the ability to protect itself from air and ballistic missile defenses that try to impede its path.

“The United States has practically no chances to resist the Avangard, since, in the event of large-scale hostilities, Russia will attack a potential enemy with all available weapons,” Maj. Gen. Vladimir Popov, honored military pilot of the Russian Federation and candidate of technical sciences, was quoted by the Eurasian Times earlier this month.

“In this case, the defensive complexes will not be able to identify all targets,” Popov added. “Among the attackers, there will be false missiles without charges as well as electronic interference due to electronic warfare. Among the many attacking missiles, some will still reach their destination.”

The news outlet, which suggested that Beijing has praised the fact that Russia’s nuclear-tipped hypersonic ICBMs, could “devastate” U.S. defenses, also noted that the United States and Russian Federation remain very much in parity, while other nations cannot yet catch up.

The Avangard is still just one component of Russia's large arsenal of such weapons, which include 528 land- and submarine-based ICBMs, plus nuclear weapons on bombers. America's missile defenses have only focused on intercepting a handful of ICBMs launched by a small power like North Korea.

"The air and missile defense system of the United States is very strong," Popov added. "It cannot be written off and underestimated; we are talking about a deeply echeloned engineering network. It is thought out and protects the most important regions of the country."

U.S. Response

The development of such weapons may not give America's adversaries a significant advantage, however. Should U.S. nuclear launchers, ICBMs or even land-launched, nuclear-armed strategic bombers be rendered ineffective or destroyed, the United States still has available options with which to retaliate; including measures via the U.S. Navy's nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarines.

In addition, the United States is continuing to develop weapons that could be seen as a deterrent against the use of the Avangard and other ICBMs. Earlier this month, the U.S. Air Force announced that it had awarded Northrup Grumman a \$13.3 billion Engineering and Manufacturing Development contract for the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) intercontinental ballistic missile program.

Moreover, in June, President Donald Trump addressed the fact that the United States military has its own hypersonic missile.

"We are building new ships, bombers, jet fighters, and helicopters by the hundreds; new tanks, military satellites, rockets, and missiles; even a hypersonic missile that goes seventeen times faster than the fastest missile currently available in the world and can hit a target one thousand miles away within fourteen inches from center point," the president said during his address at the 2020 United States Military Academy at West Point Graduation Ceremony.

While the president's description of the accuracy of the United States' hypersonic missiles has been called into question, it remains very much true that the U.S. military won't allow any nation to gain such an upper hand when it comes to ICBMs.

--Peter Suci is a Michigan-based writer who has contributed to more than four dozen magazines, newspapers and websites. He is the author of several books on military headgear including *A Gallery of Military Headdress*, which is available on Amazon.com

Is the United States Planning a Nuclear-Armed, Intercontinental-Range, Hypersonic Missile?

Union of Concerned Scientists, Sept. 18 | Cameron Tracy

Last month the US Air Force accidentally released a document soliciting proposals for upgrades to its Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD), an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) now under development and slated to replace the current nuclear-armed ICBM fleet. This document indicated interest in a hypersonic glider modification to the GBSD, prompting speculation that the United States might be planning a nuclear-armed hypersonic missile.

This would be a dramatic reversal of US policy, which currently limits hypersonic weapons to conventionally-armed, non-nuclear roles. A spokesman for the Department of Defense was quick to point out this policy, asserting that the solicitation did not signal plans for deployment.

Still, the lines between hypersonic missiles and nuclear-armed ICBMs have long been blurred. Many of the hypersonic weapons now under development could, once deployed, carry nuclear warheads as easily as they could conventional explosives. Regardless of current policy, these weapons will influence global nuclear security for decades to come.

Hypersonic missiles, ICBMs, and dual-use capabilities

The policy distinction between conventionally-armed hypersonic missiles and nuclear-armed ICBMs is central to the US contention that hypersonic weapons should be excluded from nuclear arms control agreements. Abandoning it could lead adversaries to mistake the launch of a conventionally-armed hypersonic missile for a nuclear attack, increasing the likelihood of unintentional nuclear war.

Yet, despite its importance, this distinction is one of policy, not technology. Mounting a hypersonic glider onto an ICBM rocket is not a new idea. In flight testing, the United States launches hypersonic gliders on Minotaur IV rockets, modifications of old Peacekeeper ICBMs that were previously armed with nuclear warheads.

The Air Force has long considered deploying hypersonic weapons on these modified ICBM rockets. Given that a Peacekeeper ICBM carrying ten small nuclear warheads had a range of ~6000 km, one could easily accelerate a hypersonic glider to speeds sufficient for intercontinental range flight (defined as greater than 5500 km). It is therefore unsurprising that the Air Force might envision pairing the GBSD, their newest ICBM, with a hypersonic glider.

Even if these hypersonic weapons were designed for use with conventional, non-nuclear explosive payloads, substitution with a nuclear warhead is unlikely to be a problem. In recent US flight testing, hypersonic gliders have carried up to 450 kg of extra tungsten metal as ballast, heavier than many modern US nuclear warheads. Russia's hypersonic glider, the Avangard, is specifically designed to carry nuclear payloads.

Just what are hypersonic weapons for?

Regardless of whether the Air Force pursues a hypersonic modification to its nuclear-armed GBSD, the advent of hypersonic weaponry is a pressing nuclear security concern. The GBSD is slated for deployment in 2027. Meanwhile, US hypersonic weapons currently under development—which will likely be capable of carrying nuclear warheads over long ranges, should the United States choose to do so—might be fielded as early as 2023.

While it would not represent a new technical capability for hypersonic weapons, the recent commotion about a potential hypersonic GBSD draws attention to the uncertainty that accompanies the US hypersonic weapon program. The Department of Defense has yet to make clear precisely what role these weapons are meant to play in US strategy.

Until a clear rationale for these weapons is articulated, statements regarding US hypersonic weapon policy should be taken with a grain of salt. That policy could change quickly if hypersonic weapons begin to look attractive for nuclear use. Given their intrinsic dual-use character (conventional or nuclear), the world would be a safer place if these weapons were swiftly integrated into the global nuclear arms control regime, before they are widely deployed.

--Cameron Tracy is the Kendall Fellow for the Global Security program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. His work focuses on nuclear arms control and the interface between science and security policy. His current research involves analysis and modeling of the flight conditions of hypersonic weapons in order to determine their effects on global strategic stability

Why the new ICBM contract is a bad deal

Defense News Online, Sept. 21 | Kingston Reif

While Washington's attention remains focused on the coronavirus scourge and President Donald Trump's disastrous handling of the pandemic, the Pentagon this month made another down payment on an unnecessary and dangerous planned spending binge to upgrade the nation's already excessive nuclear arsenal.

The Air Force on Sept. 8 awarded a \$13.3 billion development contract to Northrop Grumman to build a new fleet of intercontinental ballistic missiles to replace the existing Minuteman III missile. The estimated \$85 billion price tag for the new missile program, known as the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, is part of a larger nuclear spending blueprint that is likely to top \$1.5 trillion over the next several decades.

But let the buyer — in this case, the American taxpayer — beware. ICBMs are the least valuable leg of the so-called nuclear triad. Cost overruns, which are not exactly an uncommon occurrence at the Pentagon, are likely to drive the purchase price of a new ICBM system even higher, starving other spending priorities. There are cheaper ways to maintain a credible land leg of the triad than moving full steam ahead on a new missile mere weeks before a presidential election.

Contrary to the Pentagon's positive characterization of the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent program as a "pathfinder," the effort is off to a rocky start.

The Pentagon's plan to compete the contract did not unfold as intended. Boeing said last year that it would not bid on the contract, leaving Northrop as the only remaining contender. By moving ahead with a single bidder, the Pentagon has less leverage to control costs. There is no precedent for the absence of competition for a contract the size of the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent program.

The primary mission of the ICBM leg of the nuclear triad is to deter a nuclear attack by forcing Russia, America's only nuclear peer, to have to destroy hundreds of missiles in a large-scale nuclear attack against the United States.

But ICBMs are vulnerable to such an attack unless launched within minutes of detection of the attack. Maintaining the option to launch ICBMs quickly is dangerous because it could lead the president to order the use of nuclear weapons based on inaccurate or incomplete information.

In addition, ICBMs do not provide unique capabilities. The sea leg of the triad is more survivable. The air leg is more flexible.

Even if one agrees with the justification for ICBMs, however, spending \$100 billion to buy a new ICBM is unnecessary. Deferring development of a new missile and continuing to rely on a smaller number of Minuteman III missiles is possible and would free up funds to help pay for higher-priority national security needs.

Such needs include pandemic response, maintaining the U.S. military's technological edge, shoring up the U.S. conventional military position in East Asia and combating the increasingly costly impacts of climate change.

The Defense Department has repeatedly claimed that the price to build and operate a new missile system would be less than the cost to maintain the Minuteman III. But the department arrived at this conclusion by comparing the total life-cycle cost of the two options through the 2070s.

In contrast, the Congressional Budget Office in 2017 evaluated the cost of the two options over a shorter period of time and projected that extending the life of the Minuteman III could save \$37 billion (in 2017 dollars) through the late 2030s.

The Pentagon also argues that a new missile is essential to maintain the current force of 400 deployed ICBMs and defeat advancing adversary missile defenses.

Reducing the number of ICBMs to 300 and forgoing capability upgrades would still allow the ICBM force to provide a more than sufficient deterrent capability. Reducing the number of missiles could also free up additional savings by allowing for the reconsideration of current ICBM warhead requirements.

The claim that the Minuteman III may not be able to overcome expected advances in adversary missile defenses is unconvincing, given the penetration aids that the missile is already believed to contain.

Charting a more sustainable path for the nuclear arsenal is both doable and necessary. The current plans exceed what is needed to maintain a devastating deterrent, and their opportunity costs are exacting a growing toll.

As former Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein warned in July, despite significant recent growth, the defense budget is not large enough to buy new nuclear and conventional forces at the same time. The pressure on the federal budget imposed by the response to COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate this challenge.

Foregoing a new ICBM is but one cost-cutting step the United States could take while still retaining a credible nuclear triad and ample leverage with which to pursue future arms control agreements.

No matter the result of the upcoming presidential election, flat spending on defense is likely to be a best-case scenario. Overinvesting in a costly new ICBM would be an enormous misstep.

--Kingston Reif is the director for disarmament and threat reduction policy at the Arms Control Association

Why there's no such thing as 'tactical' nuclear weapons

Task & Purpose, Sept. 19 | Jeff Schogol

The commander of the U.S. military's nuclear forces recently acknowledged that no one knows if using low-yield or tactical nuclear weapons will trigger a full-scale nuclear war.

Ever since the Cold War, commanders have considered whether it is possible to conduct a limited nuclear war. That's why the United States developed "tactical nuclear weapons," which were originally conceived to be used against specific troops and installations instead of completely destroying the other side.

In May 1953, the Army tested "Atomic Annie," a cannon that could fire a shell with a 15-20 kiloton nuclear warhead up to 20 miles. It quickly became obsolete and was withdrawn from service in the 1960s.

Other tactical nuclear weapons were meant to be carried by U.S. troops behind enemy lines, such as the B-54 Special Atomic Demolition Munition, which could fit in a backpack. (Special Forces soldiers were required to stay within visual range of the target to make sure the bomb actually went off.)

First produced in 1968, B61 nuclear gravity bombs continue to be in the U.S. military's arsenal. They are being updated with GPS so they can function more as smart bombs.

Under former President George W. Bush, the Defense Department looked into whether bunker busting bombs could be fitted with nuclear warheads, but in 2005 Congress killed funding for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator. (Although the Energy Department was considering using a bomb with a 1-megaton warhead, so this bunker buster could have been considered a strategic weapon.)

More recently, the Navy in February fielded the W76-2, a low-yield nuclear warhead for submarine-launched ballistic missiles. This is likely the new secret nuclear weapons system that President Donald Trump bragged about when talking to author Bob Woodward for the book *Rage*, although he could have been referring to the planned W93 warhead.

The return to the idea of limited nuclear war is relatively recent. At the moment, the U.S. military feels that it needs relatively small nuclear weapons to prevent potential adversaries – particularly Russia – from using any of its own low-yield nuclear weapons in the belief that they can escape U.S. retaliation.

One scenario envisioned by the Trump administration in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review is that Russia could use tactical nuclear weapons at the very start of a war because they believe the United States would not launch its intercontinental ballistic missiles or use other strategic nuclear weapons in response. In other words, if the Russkies have baby nukes and we only have big nukes, Ivan might exploit the baby nuke gap as part of their unscrupulous doctrine of “Escalating to De-escalate.”

If this sounds a little nutty to you, please keep in mind that the military has had far wackier ideas in the past. In 1994, the Air Force proposed building a bomb that would make enemy troops so “sexually irresistible” to each other that they would focus on the physical act of love instead of fighting, a weirdly offensive weapon dubbed the “gay bomb” at the time.

While the United States has leaned into tactical nukes in recent years, the Russians have made clear that they would view any nuclear attack as the start of a war, regardless whether the U.S. uses a tactical or strategic nuclear weapon.

“Those who like to theorize about the flexibility of American nuclear potential must understand that in line with the Russian military doctrine such actions are seen as warranting retaliatory use of nuclear weapons by Russia,” said Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova in April.

The debate over ‘tactical’ nukes, it seems, is a matter of semantics. Even former Defense Secretary James Mattis, who has supported developing nuclear-tipped cruise missiles, told Congress that the word “tactical” is not applicable when describing nukes.

“I don’t think there is any such thing as a ‘tactical nuclear weapon,’” Mattis told Congress in February 2018. “Any nuclear weapon used any time is a strategic game-changer.”

Since both sides seem to agree that once the button is pushed there is no running away, the W76-2 seems kind of useless. It’s not as if Vladimir Putin would say: “Those clever Americans have used a ‘tactical’ nuclear weapon. Now my hands are completely tied!”

When Navy Adm. Chas Richard, the head of U.S. Strategic Command, came to the Pentagon on Sept. 14, Task & Purpose asked if he believed the United States could actually use the W76-2 against Russia or China and escape a full retaliation.

Richard said the W76-2 is meant to deter anyone else from using low-yield nuclear weapons in the first place so that the United States doesn’t get into a nuclear exchange with another country. When Task & Purpose asked Richard if a nuclear war could be confined to low-yield weapons – and if tactical nuclear weapons even exist – the admiral’s answer was both brutally honest and slightly terrifying.

“The answer is nobody knows if that’s the case,” Richard replied. “But I do think it’s an obligation for the United States to do everything in its power should a nuclear weapon be used by somebody else to stop the exchange as soon as possible, to limit damage to the U.S. to the maximum extent possible, and to end it on terms favorable to the United States.”

“The short answer to your question is, is that nobody knows,” he continued. “Fortunately we don’t have any real-world experience in that, and I would just as soon keep it that way.”

--Jeff Schogol covers the Pentagon for Task & Purpose. He has covered the military for 15 years and embedded with U.S. troops in Iraq and Haiti. Prior to joining T&P, he covered the Marine Corps and Air Force at Military Times

Born to prevent war, United Nations at 75 faces deeply polarized world

<https://news.yahoo.com/born-prevent-war-united-nations-092844679.html>

From: The Associated Press // [NBC News](#) // September 21, 2020

UNITED NATIONS — Born out of World War II’s devastation to save succeeding generations from the scourge of conflict, the [United Nations](#) officially marks its 75th anniversary Monday at an inflection point in history, navigating a polarized world as it faces a [pandemic](#), regional conflicts, a shrinking economy and [growing inequality](#).

Criticized for spewing out billions of words and achieving scant results on its primary mission of ensuring global peace, the U.N. nonetheless remains the one place that its 193 member nations can meet to talk. And as frustrating as its lack of progress often is, especially when it comes to preventing and ending crises, there is also strong support for its power to bring not only nations but people of all ages from all walks of life, ethnicities and religions together to discuss critical issues like climate change.

Secretary-General [Antonio Guterres](#), looking back on the U.N.’s history in an AP interview in June, said its biggest accomplishment so far is the long period during which the most powerful nations didn’t go to war and nuclear conflict was avoided. Its biggest failing, he said: its inability to prevent medium and small conflicts. Monday’s mainly virtual official commemoration will not be a celebration.

It will include a declaration on the U.N.’s 75th anniversary, approved by diplomats from all U.N. member states after sometimes heated negotiations. Then, representatives from over 180 countries are expected to deliver pre-recorded speeches lasting three minutes. The declaration recalls the U.N.’s successes and failures over more than seven decades and vows to build a post-pandemic world that is more equal, works together, and protects the planet.

“The urgency for all countries to come together, to fulfill the promise of the nations united, has rarely been greater,” it says, while praising the United Nations as the only global organization that “gives hope to so many people for a better world and can deliver the future we want.” Even at times of great tension, it says, the U.N. promoted decolonization, freedom, development, [human rights](#) and equality for women and men, “and worked [to eradicate disease](#).”

And it “helped mitigate dozens of conflicts, saved hundreds of thousands of lives through humanitarian action and provided millions of children with the education that every child deserves.” As for disappointments, the declaration says the world “is plagued by growing inequality, poverty, hunger, armed conflicts, terrorism, insecurity, [climate change](#) and pandemics.” It says the poorest and least developed countries are falling behind, decolonization is not complete, and people are forced to make [dangerous journeys in search of refuge](#).

“It’s very unfortunate that it’s going to be a pretty gloomy celebration for the U.N,” said Richard Gowan, U.N. director for the Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank. He said the declaration was weakened by U.S. opposition to strong language on climate change, and negotiations were

delayed because the United Kingdom and others objected to [China](#) trying to insert language into the document, a reference to Beijing's now hallmark phrase "win-win" which was not included.

"Although it was pretty minor, that captures the real question that has emerged over the U.N. in 2020, exacerbated by COVID, which is how is this organization going to navigate an era of [U.S.-China tension](#)," Gowan said. "There is a real sense that China has taken advantage of the Trump administration's relative disengagement from the U.N. to increase its influence here," he told a media briefing.

To mark its 75th anniversary, the United Nations launched "a global conversation" in January using surveys, polls, online and in-person gatherings to find out what all kinds of people were thinking about the future. The results, which secretary-general called "striking," were released Monday. According to the results, over one million people from all 193 U.N. member nations took part, including 50,000 people in 50 diverse countries who were part of a scientific poll.

"People are thinking big — about transforming the global economy, accelerating the transition to zero carbon, ensuring universal health coverage, ending racial injustice and ensure that decision-making is more open and inclusive," the U.N. chief said. "And people are also expressing an intense yearning for international cooperation and global solidarity - and rejecting go-it-alone nationalist approaches and divisive populist appeals."

Guterres said the 75th anniversary is an ideal time to realize these aims. "We face our own 1945 moment," he said. "We must meet that moment. We must show unity like never before to overcome today's emergency, get the world moving and working and prospering again."

The U.S. must resume nuclear testing

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Russia and China are decades ahead in developing advanced nuclear weapons

By Peter Vincent Pry for The Washington Times // 22 Sept 2020

Sept. 23, 1992 — date of the last U.S. nuclear test — 28 years ago.

Nuclear weapon scientists and strategists are increasingly concerned about the safety and reliability of U.S. nuclear weapons, none tested in nearly three decades, obeying the unratified Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT was the bright idea of President Clinton and anti-nuclear ideologues, increasingly dominant in a radicalized Democratic Party that would have the U.S. lead the way toward President Obama's "world without nuclear weapons" even though Russia, China, North Korea and Iran are not following.

Decades late, the State Department finally admits Russia and China are violating the CTBT, conducting low-yield nuclear tests ("Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments" April 2020). Defense Intelligence Agency Director and Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, on May 29, 2019, warned: "Our understanding of nuclear weapon development leads us to believe Russia's testing activities would help it to improve its nuclear weapon capabilities.

The United States, by contrast, has forgone such benefits by upholding a ‘zero-yield’ standard.” Consequently, Russia and China are probably decades ahead in developing advanced nuclear weapons. Accordingly, President Trump and Senate Republicans wisely include funding in the new defense bill to de-mothball U.S. capabilities to perform nuclear testing. Yet, despite nuclear testing by Russia, China and North Korea, House Democrats oppose funding even preparations to resume U.S. nuclear testing in an emergency.

They would bind the U.S. to the CTBT and an obsolescing nuclear deterrent forever. Democrats and their anti-nuclear allies in the Department of Energy (DOE) argue so-called science-based nuclear stockpile stewardship relying on computer models and engineering judgment is adequate to sustain the safety and reliability of U.S. nuclear weapons — without testing. Democrats and the press trumpet recent testimony, supposedly supporting their “no testing” policy, before the Senate Armed Services Committee by chief of U.S. Strategic Command and Adm. Charles Richard: “At this time, there is no condition ... where I would recommend the need for nuclear testing.”

However, Adm. Richard also testified: “But I would say though that it is important for the nation to maintain an ability to do a nuclear test should an issue arise in the future.” Adm. Richard surely knows that a recommendation to immediately resume nuclear testing would guarantee rabid opposition and no funding from congressional Democrats. Left-stream media mischaracterize President Trump’s support for nuclear testing as merely a negotiating ploy.

They often belittle the president for exaggerating U.S. nuclear capabilities and asserting the existence of secret nuclear superweapons superior to those of Russia and China. Public admission by Mr. Trump and the U.S. Strategic Command that America’s nuclear deterrent is obsolete and outclassed could invite World War III. U.S. nuclear capabilities must deter, not Nancy Pelosi and House Democrats, but Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and Kim Jong-un — whose nuclear arsenals are proven by testing.

Twenty-four years ago, the late great Floyd Spence, then-chairman of the House National Security Committee, warned cessation of nuclear testing could eventually result in U.S. unilateral nuclear disarmament in “The Clinton Administration and Nuclear Stockpile Stewardship: Erosion By Design” (HNSC Oct. 30, 1996). Time has proven Spence was right.

John Hopkins and David Sharp, former senior scientists in the Los Alamos stockpile stewardship program, call for resumption of nuclear testing. See “The Scientific Foundation for Assessing the Nuclear Performance of Weapons in the U.S. Stockpile Is Eroding” Issues in Science and Technology (Winter 2019):

- “Nuclear tests gave decisive, direct evidence about the behavior of new weapons destined for the stockpile ... Virtually no comparable data exist on the nuclear performance of stockpiled weapons in their current state.”
- “Nuclear testing provided a solid foundation for the development and evaluation of scientific judgment because it unequivocally tested performance predictions.” • “Confidence that today’s nuclear weapons will perform properly is predicated on the assumption that there will be no surprises ... The history of testing complex systems, nuclear and nonnuclear, is punctuated by unpleasant surprises.”
- “The above arguments are not ones that proponents of a continuing test moratorium or a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty wish to hear.”

DOE is trying to crush such “politically incorrect” thinking and hamstringing the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC), according to Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman **James Imhofe**:

“Recently, I’ve learned that individuals from the Department of Energy have worked behind the scenes with House Democrats on ill-advised legislation that would bury the Nuclear Weapons Council in unneeded bureaucracy and bring its decision-making process to a grinding halt; prohibit all cooperation between NNSA and the NWC for maintaining the safety and security of our nuclear weapons; destroy the NNSA’s congressionally-mandated independence and drag us back to the dysfunction of the Clinton years; and do lasting and possibly irreversible harm to the President’s efforts to preserve and improve our deterrent ...”

Mark Schneider, former senior Pentagon nuclear strategist, observes: “Today, we do not have ‘science-based stockpile stewardship,’ but more like ‘political science-based stockpile stewardship’ while, conversely, Russia has science-based development of new and improved nuclear weapons” (“Yes, the Russians Are Testing Nuclear Weapons and it is Very Important,” RealClearDefense.com Aug. 14, 2019). The U.S. must resume nuclear testing.

Peter Vincent Pry, director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, served as chief of staff on the Congressional EMP Commission, and on the staffs of the House Armed Service Committee and the CIA. He is author most recently of “The Power And The Light” (Amazon.com)

In search of a clear-eyed US strategy on Russia

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/in-search-of-a-clear-eyed-us-strategy-on-russia/>

By: [Matthew Sussex](#) for the ASPI Strategist // 21 Sep 2020

An [open letter](#) signed by 103 experts recently called for the US to re-embrace its Cold War strategy for dealing with Russia.

It argued that competition should be balanced with diplomacy and identified arenas for US–Russia cooperation: countering nuclear proliferation, protecting the environment and stabilising regional flashpoints. Above all, it advocated combining deterrence with détente. That’s a laudable goal, but it’s also deeply flawed. First, Russia has shown no signs whatsoever of being deterred by US policy. The opposite is true, as demonstrated by its adventurism in Crimea, Ukraine and Syria and its disinformation operations against the West.

Second, the Kremlin has no real interest in long-term détente with the US, mainly because Moscow’s price to assure its security—a privileged [zone of influence](#) in the former Soviet space—isn’t something that the US will agree to or be supported by Washington’s NATO allies. Third, the rules that helped [underpin Cold War stability](#) no longer apply. Even if the international system becomes bifurcated again, China, not Russia, will occupy a major pole.

Globally, nuclear politics is no longer dominated by the US–Soviet dyad. [Nuclear multipolarity](#) is shaping strategic interactions in far more complex ways than Cold War–style deterrence could mitigate. And the technological revolution has been a bonanza for hostile actors seeking to weaponise information, exacerbate divisions and degrade trust in democratic institutions. The reality is that US–Russia competition is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

That means that another tepid ‘reset’, paying lip-service to Russian insecurities while not actually addressing them, is similarly doomed to failure. But so, too, is symbolic posturing, such as stationing a few thousand troops in Poland and the Baltic states to mask a [net drawdown](#) of US forces in Europe. Equally unhelpful are suggestions about recreating the [Sino-Soviet split in reverse](#) to prompt Russia to [balance against China](#). Such signals are read in Moscow as proof of Western weakness.

Instead of advocating a Russia policy based on old solutions or half-measures, the US needs a more comprehensive Russia strategy that responds to new strategic, economic and transnational realities. What might such a strategy look like? To begin with, it would need to move away from a Helsinki-style ‘[baskets](#) of competition and cooperation’ approach. Recognising that the US–Russia relationship will be competitive in virtually every field will permit a more comprehensive, proactive and layered strategy, cutting across linked areas instead of viewing them in isolation.

Where the US is strong relative to Russia, it can engage in denial activities. Incorporating conventional and nuclear balancing, as well as promoting geoeconomic and social cohesion, the US should seek to prevent Moscow from engaging in territorial expansionism, creating networks of vulnerable overdependence with itself at the centre or interfering in democratic elections. This means committing to defend the Baltic states with significant troop deployments and offsetting Russian attempts at nuclear brinkmanship by deepening missile defences. Economically, denial means undercutting Russian commercial ventures, especially in energy and arms sales.

Domestically, denial should seek to harden US critical infrastructure against cyberattacks; join up and centralise efforts to enhance election security; and legislate firmer punishments for domestic proxies engaged in interference. The second layer of the US’s Russia strategy should be based on disruption. In the geopolitical and geoeconomic realm, this would include offering realistic investment alternatives in Central Asia and partnering with Nordic countries—and potentially even China—on free and open [Arctic trade routes](#).

In the cyber and intelligence domains, disruption includes messaging to Russian citizens on issues the Kremlin finds sensitive: political corruption, nomenklatura and economic and social dislocation. As the third layer of US strategy, dilution should seek to mitigate Russian influence where Moscow already has an advantage. Two examples might be providing better alternatives to the [Nord Stream 2](#) gas pipeline and taking advantage of Ukraine’s participation in the ‘17+1’ framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

And, while healing America’s tribal divisions seems impossible, renewing and nurturing a sensible political centre would go some way towards inoculating the US against further meddling. Ironically, China will increasingly have incentives to moderate Russia’s behaviour, including its attempts at territorial expansion, as a Sino-centric Eurasian order begins to take shape. Indeed, China’s gravitational pull in Central Asia, not to mention its investments in the Russian energy sector, give it far more leverage over Russia than the US can muster.

It’s plausible, then, that the US and China could find their interests in relation to Russia converging. A deny–disrupt–dilute strategy will require the US to abandon some of the more pernicious myths clouding its thinking about Russia. That includes the assumption that Moscow can somehow be ‘managed’. Just as for the naive ‘[socialisation](#)’ [thesis](#) about the liberal order’s ability to blunt Chinese ambitions, the Kremlin has long been awake to efforts to entrap it in Western institutions, especially because entrapment increases the risks to regime stability.

A related myth is that US–Russian relations will change for the better after Russian President Vladimir Putin leaves power. In fact, they’re likely to worsen. While Putin cares little for ideology, he has presided over a generation of politicians and policymakers who have mistrust of the US hardwired into their strategic thinking. And, although Russian elites worry about getting too close to Beijing, they also long ago concluded that the Western order is moribund: that Russia is on history’s winning side.

What does this imply for US strategy? Clearly, it won’t be achievable if Donald Trump is re-elected, but that would make a ‘deterrence and détente’ approach equally implausible. To work effectively, a deny–disrupt–dilute strategy will require Washington to engage more closely with its allies, recommit firmly to NATO and recognise that not all its partners will always feel similarly threatened. It will also have to reach beyond its alliance networks to others with interests in checking Russian ambitions.

This will be healthy for the US. It will go some way towards rebuilding its badly damaged global standing and remind it that persuasion and incentives rather than lazy rhetoric or blunt transactionalism are the key to protecting its national interests. It will demonstrate that Washington remains committed to standards of fairness and order. And ultimately it may make the US itself more resilient, more united and less fractured than the past four chaotic years have left it.

Matthew Sussex is an associate professor at the Australian National University’s National Security College.

China air force video appears to show simulated attack on U.S. base on Guam

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-china-usa-security/china-air-force-video-appears-to-show-simulated-attack-on-u-s-base-on-guam-idUKKCN26C0EH?il=0>

By Reuters Staff // 3 Min Read

BEIJING (Reuters) - China’s air force has released a video showing nuclear-capable H-6 bombers carrying out a simulated attack on what appears to be Andersen Air Force Base on the U.S. Pacific island of Guam, as regional tensions rise.

The video, released on Saturday on the People’s Liberation Army Air Force Weibo account, came as China carried out a second day of drills near Chinese-claimed Taiwan, to express anger at the visit of a senior U.S. State Department official to Taipei. Guam is home to major U.S. military facilities, including the air base, which would be key to responding to any conflict in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Chinese air force’s two minute and 15 second video, set to solemn, dramatic music like a trailer for a Hollywood movie, shows H-6 bombers taking off from a desert base. The video is called “The god of war H-6K goes on the attack!” Halfway through, a pilot presses a button and looses off a missile at an unidentified seaside runway. The missile homes in on the runway, a satellite image of which is shown that looks exactly like the layout of Andersen.

The music suddenly stops as images of the ground shaking appear, following by aerial views of an explosion. “We are the defenders of the motherland’s aerial security; we have the confidence and ability to always defend the security of the motherland’s skies,” the air force wrote in a brief description for the video. Neither China’s defence ministry nor U.S. Indo-Pacific Command immediately responded to requests for comment on the video.

Collin Koh, a research fellow at Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, said the video was aimed at highlighting China's growing prowess in long-range power projection. "The video is meant to warn the Americans that even supposedly safe, rearward positions such as Guam may come under threat when conflicts over regional flashpoints, be it Taiwan or South China Sea, erupt," he said.

The H-6 has been involved in multiple Chinese flights around and near Taiwan, according to Taiwan's air force, including those last week. The H-6K is the latest model of the bomber, which is based on the 1950s vintage Soviet Tu-16. On Monday, China's Eastern Theatre Command, which would be in charge of an attack on Taiwan, released a propaganda video of its own, called "what if war broke out today?", showing soldiers running in wooded hills and ballistic missiles launching.

"Motherland, I swear I will fight for you until my death!" large golden Chinese characters read at the end of the montage as explosions go off in the background. Reporting by Beijing newsroom and Yew Lun Tian; Additional reporting and writing by Ben Blanchard in Taipei; Editing by Gerry Doyle, Robert Birsell

Nuke Brain-Drain in Military 'Bottomed Out,' 'Turned the Corner,' LLNL Resident Scholar Says

DefenseDaily.com, 22 Sep 20 Dan Leone

A nuclear brain-drain in the military has shown signs of reversing course in the decade-plus since the mistaken delivery of nuclear-armed cruise missiles to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, the head of the Lawrence Livermore Nuclear Laboratory's Center for Global Security Research said Monday.

"My sense of it is that that bottomed out," Brad Roberts, director of the Livermore internal think tank, said in a webcast hosted by the Washington-based non-government group, the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies. "The mis-transit of the weapon to Minot [Air Force Base] and the subsequent Schlesinger panel findings about the loss of leadership focus and loss of service and other commitments to institutional excellence turned the corner, bottomed out."

Roberts was deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear and missile defense policy in the Obama administration from 2009 to 2013, years after the event that prompted some admonishments and early retirements among senior officers. He was responding Wednesday to an audience member's assertion that "the U.S. defense establishment's nuclear IQ has decreased dramatically since the end of the Cold War."

Despite allowing that the nuclear know-how among post-911 military professionals has rebounded from a nadir in 2007, when Air Force personnel improperly loaded off nuclear-armed Air Launched Cruise Missiles aboard a B-52H bomber at Minot base, Roberts said that it is still "very difficult to find evidence of nuclear focus in the professional military education system."

Roberts said the group he now leads seeks to improve that status quo by encouraging nuclear professionals to look at nuclear weapons as one part of a post-Cold War strategic picture that emphasizes space, cyber and regional security in ways that the U.S.-versus-Soviets competition of the late 20th century did not.

“The nuclear problem today is not the problem of the Cold War,” Roberts said. “[I]t’s unhelpfully similar to the Cold-War problem ... in the sense that there are elements that are similar, and so we sort of ignore the differences.”

U.S. officials scramble to reach nuclear deal

Washington Post, 23 Sep 20 Paul Sonne and John Hudson

Frustration is mounting inside the Trump administration as Russia gives little indication of whether it will agree to an arms control deal before President Trump faces reelection, according to senior U.S. administration officials, who are trying to secure the deal.

U.S. officials presented a proposal to the Russians two weeks ago in Vienna as part of negotiations that began in June. Under the deal, the United States and Russia would extend the soon-to-expire New START pact for a limited time while negotiating a replacement treaty. Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin would sign a political agreement outlining a framework for the replacement treaty and what it would cover.

The administration's scramble to cut a deal with Russia before the election comes as the president's top diplomats have been rushing to secure diplomatic achievements as U.S. voters begin going to the polls.

Trump has long sought to negotiate an arms control deal with Moscow, but so far his administration has only pulled out of pacts with the former Cold War foe, citing violations by Russia. In comments Sept. 4, Trump said arms control talks with Russia were a "very important thing"- more important than addressing global warming. Trump and Putin have been discussing a deal for months.

But the Russian government has given the U.S. negotiators little direct feedback outside public commentary since they presented their proposal about two weeks ago, according to U.S. officials. The result is U.S. frustration, which boiled over into comments in a Russian media outlet by Trump's top nuclear negotiator, Marshall Billingslea, and a response from his Russian counterpart.

The "price of admission" for Russia to secure the deal with the United States will go up if the Kremlin doesn't agree to terms before the U.S. presidential election, Billingslea warned in an interview Monday with the Russian newspaper Kommersant. Billingslea said the United States would insist on "a number of new conditions" if Russia waits until after the election to decide and Trump wins.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, Russia's main arms control negotiator, warned that such ultimatums wouldn't result in a deal.

"Either they can stop making their ultimatums and we can start to negotiate something, or there will be no agreement," Ryabkov told the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti. Ryabkov said the U.S. demands don't correspond to Russia's idea of what must be done to ensure strategic stability.

In his own separate interview with Kommersant, Ryabkov said "the offer made by the Americans does not look like a good deal" and rejected the U.S. preconditions. Still, U.S. officials didn't read Ryabkov's comments as the final word on whether Russia would agree to some sort of deal before the election or thereafter.

At stake is the future of New START, a 2010 treaty that expires in February and restricts the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads and certain launch platforms. If the treaty isn't extended or replaced, the world's two biggest nuclear powers will return to an era without substantive restraints on their arsenals for the first time in decades, potentially paving the way for a new nuclear arms race.

Because the Trump administration didn't begin substantive negotiations until this year, the arms control standoff is colliding with the American political calendar. Moscow is probably calculating whether Trump or Democratic nominee Joe Biden would offer more favorable terms.

Russia has said it would like to extend the treaty, which includes a clause that can prolong the pact for five years without ratification if both presidents agree. In his online platform, Biden has said he would pursue an extension of New START, which President Barack Obama negotiated.

The Trump administration, however, has argued that New START is insufficient because it doesn't include China and regulates only a portion of Russia's nuclear arsenal. The administration is willing to extend the pact only if its replacement addresses those issues and others. China has rejected U.S. calls to join the talks with Russia, citing its smaller nuclear arsenal.

The proposal offered by Billingslea two weeks ago in Vienna goes beyond the parameters of New START to encompass all the nuclear warheads of both countries, a senior U.S. official said. It would include a complex monitoring system allowing both nations to observe which nuclear weapons are coming into Russian or American facilities for refurbishment and which are coming out of the facilities for deployment.

The proposal also allows for an increased number of inspections and faster access to sites that inspectors request to visit, among other things, the senior official said.

U.S. officials drafted the proposal in the form of a political agreement that would become a treaty once China agrees to join the accord - a goal that has eluded U.S. negotiators.

The lack of response by Moscow to the proposal has led some U.S. officials to conclude that Putin has not empowered Ryakbov to cut a deal. Billingslea made his public comments to the Russian newspaper Kommersant in part to underscore the U.S. offer to Putin and seek clarity from the Russian side on its interest in an agreement, according to the U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing diplomatic negotiations.

"So far the proposal stands in the form that we made it in. If and when Moscow expresses a desire to go down this path that, frankly speaking, President Putin has already discussed multiple times with President Trump, then we are ready," Billingslea told Kommersant.

Promoting himself as a dealmaker, Trump has sought to undertake nuclear arms control negotiations with Russia since the 1980s, when he expressed an interest in conducting talks with the Soviets on behalf of the Reagan administration. When asked about the recent poisoning of Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny at a Sept. 4 White House news conference, Trump instead emphasized that arms control talks were underway.

"With Russia, we're right now negotiating a nuclear nonproliferation treaty, which is very important. It's a very important thing. To me, it's the most

important thing," Trump said. "Some people say 'global warming'; I don't. I say this is far more important."

The Trump administration began substantive negotiations with Russia over New START in earnest only this year, leaving insufficient time to hammer out an entirely new treaty.

The result is an attempt to extend the current treaty, probably for a year or two, on the condition that Russia agrees to certain elements in a follow-on treaty. Such a deal would allow Trump to tout a nuclear accord with Russia on the campaign trail, even if the specifics of a new treaty haven't actually been hashed out - and may not result in an actual follow-on pact.

The Trump administration has had little success securing arms control deals.

U.S. officials have failed to reach a formal pact with North Korea, which has tested nuclear warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles. The administration has also been unable to negotiate a new deal with Iran, which has exceeded the restrictions on its nuclear program set by a 2015 international nuclear agreement that Trump abandoned.

To Deter China, Extend New START

A new arms race with Russia will drain funds from the forces that influence and deter Beijing

DefenseOne.com, 22 Sep 20 Alex Moore

Joe Biden, much like the president he is attempting to replace, is anything but a dove when it comes to China. Be it trade or geopolitics, the Democratic presidential candidate has made it a point to match, if not out-hawk, President Trump on Beijing. One such area where hawkishness would be unwise for the United States, however, would be the topic of New START extension. Choosing to extend the bilateral nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia is a low-hanging fruit that would serve U.S. interests in a multitude of ways, including buttressing Washington's position vis-à-vis Beijing.

Nuclear and China hawks alike have teamed up for more than a year now to push a common goal: the inclusion of China in talks to extend New START, a 2010 agreement between the U.S. and Russia to verifiably decrease one another's respective strategic nuclear arsenals. Critics of such attempts allege the Trump administration's persistent drive to include China in a trilateral arms framework is unrealistic at best and at worst a transparent attempt to make New START the latest in a string of fruitful arms control arrangements President Trump has scrapped.

While earnest engagement with China on the arms-control front is a laudable longer-term goal, the Trump administration's attempts to include Beijing in a trilateral framework have been flatly rejected and have yet to produce so much as even a vague outline of what such an arrangement would look like. While the U.S. and Russia are both estimated to possess over 6,000 nuclear warheads, China's approximate figure is less than 300. Even this vast disparity only tells part of the story. Given China's relatively minimalist nuclear posture, it would only be accountable for a small fraction of the warheads that the U.S. and Russia are under New START rules, which only count deployed warheads and heavy bombers. With these factors in mind, Beijing's reluctance to entertain Washington's attempts at creating a trilateral framework make sense.

Nonetheless, the clock is ticking. This final major bilateral arms treaty is set to expire on Feb. 5. Failure to renew the agreement would leave the world's two biggest nuclear arsenals unconstrained for the first time in a half-century.

Such a failure would bring a multitude of strategic and fiscal consequences. It would reduce what the U.S. knows about Russia's nuclear arsenal, thereby reducing America's national security. The consequent effort to shore up nuclear security would, for example, divert finite resources from Washington's conventional force posture in East Asia to balance China.

This year's defense budget of \$738 billion may be massive, but amid economic pressure thanks to the coronavirus fallout, hard choices must be made to prioritize where and how the U.S. delegates its finite resources to secure vital national security interests.

Given China's rapid economic rise, it seems prudent to consider China the predominant foreign issue worth expending resources and attention to address from the U.S. standpoint, both now and into the future. As such, extending New START and ensuring that the U.S. will not need to divert funding from priorities at home or in Asia to bankroll an arms race with Russia makes sense, particularly when one factors in the price tag of Washington's ongoing nuclear modernization efforts.

Nuclear weapons and the means to reliably deliver them do not come cheap. The U.S. nuclear triad is currently in the midst of extensive modernization and life extension, manifesting itself in next-generation complexes ranging from a new ICBM to an upgraded nuclear-capable stealth bomber. The projected cost of this modernization effort is upwards of \$1.7 trillion, a figure that even the Trump administration Nuclear Posture Review concedes is "substantial." The Congressional Budget Office forecasts that spending on modernized nuclear complexes will peak at around \$50 billion annually in the late 2020s and early 2030s, consuming upwards of 15 percent of DoD's acquisition costs and 8 percent of national defense expenditures.

All of these costs are predicated upon the assumption that Washington's nuclear force posture will be within New START-imposed limits on force size. As Frank Klotz, a former Air Force Global Strike Commander, noted, New START is "baked" into modernization efforts, which are more or less a one-for-one replacement program for existing nuclear systems. Allison Bawden, GAO's Director for Nuclear Security, found that NNSA hasn't considered the implications of New START expiration on its modernization plans given DoD's assumption of its warhead and delivery system limits bracketing the U.S. arsenal. Even with these assumptions, GAO says the rising modernization costs could come at the expense of other weapons procurement initiatives with DOE seeking \$15 billion more than expected in 2021 through 2025 in its 2021 budget estimate.

Any potential diversion of funding from conventional complexes to fund a nuclear arms race would disproportionately hurt what is already an overburdened U.S. posture in the Pacific. Speaking bluntly, Gen. Dave Goldfein, previously Air Force Chief of Staff, said tradeoffs will be necessary to fund nuclear modernization while simultaneously bolstering Washington's conventional edge, and even this presupposes New START treaty limits.

These offset impacts have already been felt by the Navy, a vitally important service branch for projecting power to deter China, which was forced to not only cancel plans to add 10 years to the life of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer but also cut five of the planned ships to prioritize funding for the modernized nuclear missile submarine. Officials were also forced to make cuts to planned Virginia-class attack submarine and FFG(X) guided

missile frigate procurement plans. With the Navy's widely publicized plans for a 355-ship armada already being squeezed by SSBN modernization costs, it is easy to see how New START's demise could further hurt the Navy's ability to project conventional power in East Asia.

As U.S. power relative to China continues to shrink, it will only become more imperative for policy-makers to make sharp decisions and prioritize resources for the most important task at hand: preventing China from becoming a Eurasian hegemon. While still a great power, Russia is a country in decline and is hardly the geopolitical menace the Soviet Union once was. Engaging in an arms race with Russia—a country with which we already have a strategic relationship characterized by mutually assured destruction—would be an imprudent use of finite resources better spent elsewhere. China is the most important strategic challenger to the United States—the next president would be smart to extend New START to bolster America's ability to compete.

--Alex Moore holds a Master's degree in International Conflict and Security from the Brussels School of International Studies

NNSA: Cost, Schedule, and Risk Information - W87-1 Warhead Program. (PDF Attached 56pgs)

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/709253.pdf>

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By: Allison B. Bawden (202) 512-3841 bawdena@gao.gov -- Office of Public Affairs (202) 512-4800 youngc1@gao.gov

The National Nuclear Security Administration plans to replace the W78—an older type of nuclear warhead used in intercontinental ballistic missiles—with the W87-1, starting in 2030.

But it's unclear if NNSA can produce enough of the W87-1's fissile cores in time to meet its planned production schedule. NNSA estimated that the new warhead could cost up to \$14.8 billion, which could make it the most expensive program of this type to date. Upcoming design decisions for the weapon could affect cost. But the agency didn't have formal plans to assess the costs and benefits of these decisions.

What GAO Found The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) did not consider cost estimates in early major design decisions for the W87-1 warhead because it was not required to do so, but NNSA has since changed its guidance to require that cost be considered, according to a May 2019 NNSA review of program documentation.

The design decisions that remain for features that would achieve either minimum or enhanced requirements for the W87-1 could affect cost, according to NNSA officials (see table). We found, however, that NNSA did not yet have study plans for assessing the costs and benefits of the remaining decisions consistent with best practices as detailed in NNSA's analysis of alternatives business procedure.

NNSA does not require and only recommends that programs such as the W87-1 follow these best practices. By directing the W87-1 program and future weapons programs to follow best practices for design studies, or to justify and document deviations, NNSA would have better assurance that design studies apply consistent, reliable, and objective approaches. NNSA Cost Estimates for W87-1 Warhead Design Variations That Meet Minimum and Enhanced Requirements, as of December 2018 (Dollars in billions)

W87-1 design variations Cost estimate range a Design includes features that meet minimum safety and security requirements 7.7 - 13.3 Design includes enhanced safety and security features 8.6 - 14.8 Difference between the above estimate ranges 0.9 - 1.5 Source: National Nuclear Security

Administration (NNSA) documentation | GAO-20-703 The cost ranges reflect low and high estimates for a single design variation. The ranges represent technical and production risk and uncertainty.

It is not clear that NNSA will be able to produce sufficient numbers of pits—the fissile cores of the primary—to meet the W87-1 warhead’s planned production schedule. Recent NNSA and independent studies have cast doubt on NNSA’s ability to ready its two planned pit production facilities in time. If one facility is not ready to produce pits in the early 2030s, for example, NNSA would likely produce fewer weapons than planned, according to GAO’s analysis of NNSA plans.

We were unable to fully assess the extent to which the two pit production facilities will be ready to produce pits for the W87-1 because NNSA’s plutonium program—which is managing the facility readiness efforts—has not yet completed an integrated schedule for the overall pit production effort. An integrated schedule is important, according to best practices, because it integrates the planned work, resources, and budget.

An NNSA official stated that the program was building a schedule, but could not provide documentation that it would meet best practices. A schedule consistent with best practices would provide NNSA with better assurance that it will have adequate pits to meet planned W87-1 production. This is a public version of a classified report that GAO issued in February 2020. Information that NNSA or DOD deemed classified or sensitive has been omitted.

Our [recommendations](#) address these and other concerns.

In U.N. debut, Saudi king calls for comprehensive solution on Iran

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-un-assembly-saudi/in-un-debut-saudi-king-calls-for-comprehensive-solution-on-iran-idUSKCN26E2GC>

By Reuters Staff // SEPTEMBER 23, 2020 10:31 AM - UPDATED 2 DAYS AGO

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia’s King Salman bin Abdulaziz on Wednesday called for a comprehensive solution on Iran and disarming its affiliate Hezbollah in Lebanon, and expressed support for U.S. efforts to start talks between Israel and the Palestinians during his first address to the United Nations General Assembly.

He said Iran has exploited a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers “to intensify its expansionist activities, create its terrorist networks, and use terrorism,” adding that this had produced nothing but “chaos, extremism, and sectarianism.” “A comprehensive solution and a firm international position are required,” he told the 193-member General Assembly in a video statement, prerecorded due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The United States quit the Iran nuclear pact in 2018 with President Donald Trump dubbing it the “worst deal ever.” Washington has since imposed unilateral sanctions and asserts that all countries also have to reinstate U.N. sanctions in an attempt to push the Islamic Republic to negotiate a new deal. But all the remaining parties to the nuclear deal, including longtime U.S. allies, and 13 of the 15 U.N. Security Council members say the U.S. claim on U.N. sanctions is void and diplomats say few countries are likely to reimpose the measures.

“Our experience with the Iranian regime has taught us that partial solutions and appeasement did not stop its threats to international peace and security,” King Salman said. On attempts to mediate peace between Israel and the Palestinians, the Saudi monarch said a 2002 Arab peace initiative is the basis for a “comprehensive and just solution” ensuring the Palestinians obtain an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“We support the efforts of the current U.S. administration to achieve peace in the Middle East by bringing the Palestinians and the Israelis to the negotiation table to reach a fair and comprehensive agreement,” he said. The king stopped short of endorsing recent U.S.-brokered agreements by the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain to establish ties with Israel. Saudi Arabia has quietly acquiesced to the deals but has signaled it is not ready to take action itself.

Palestinian leaders have condemned the UAE and Bahrain’s warming of relations with Israel, describing it as a betrayal of their efforts to win statehood in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. King Salman also said a deadly blast in Lebanon’s Beirut port last month “occurred as a result of the hegemony of Hezbollah ... over the decision-making process in Lebanon by force of arms.”

“This terrorist organization must be disarmed,” he said. Authorities have blamed the Aug. 4 blast on a huge stockpile of ammonium nitrate stored for years at the port without safety measures.

Reporting by Michelle Nichols, Marwa Rashad, Ghaida Ghantous, David Brunnstrom and Matt Spetalnick; editing by Jonathan Oatis

Kill'em All? Denial Strategies, Defense Planning, and Deterrence Failure

WarOnTheRocks.com, Sept. 24 | Evan Montgomery

Should the United States be ready to destroy hundreds of Chinese vessels or thousands of Russian armored vehicles in just a few days during a conflict? Could these clear-cut yet ambitious operational objectives spur innovation within the Department of Defense? Would threats to inflict mass attrition on high-value military assets in a short span of time dissuade Beijing and Moscow from attacking their neighbors? These questions are moving to the forefront of the U.S. defense policy debate as the difficulties of preparing for great-power rivalry become more apparent.

Yet a closer look reveals how efforts to encourage outside-the-box thinking and enhance conventional deterrence have the potential to backfire without the right guidelines in place. A narrow focus on the operational problems associated with a Chinese assault on Taiwan or a Russian invasion of the Baltics, for example, along with a corresponding emphasis on denying aggression via rapid attrition as the solution to those problems, could actually weaken deterrence in several different ways, especially if planners and policymakers do not take unintended consequences into account. Specifically, these efforts could heighten doubts about America’s willingness to intervene in the moment, raise the costs of sustaining a denial strategy over time, and leave Washington ill-prepared if adversaries adjust their offensive tactics.

Searching for Innovative Solutions to Stressing Operational Problems

The Trump administration’s National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, released in late 2017 and early 2018, respectively, are notable for calling out China and Russia as competitors bent on overturning the status quo. Equally important, these documents also maintain that the best defense depends on denial, as opposed to punishment or rollback. According to the National Security Strategy:

We must convince adversaries that we can and will defeat them — not just punish them if they attack the United States. We must ensure the ability to deter potential enemies by denial, convincing them that they cannot accomplish objectives through the use of force or other forms of aggression.

Moreover, new military concepts and capabilities will be required to prevent rivals from achieving their aims by force. As the National Defense Strategy explains, that includes concepts and capabilities “to strike diverse targets inside adversary air and missile defense networks to destroy mobile power-projection platforms.”

Denial is a tempting defense strategy for dealing with a revisionist power — especially a revisionist power that is poised to launch a sudden assault in pursuit of a *fait accompli*. After all, the ability to protect allies and partners is arguably the best way to deter attacks against them, or to win a war quickly if deterrence fails. Alternatives, like punishment and rollback, have obvious drawbacks. For instance, punishment typically involves bombarding or blockading an adversary until the costs of aggression become so high that it abandons its efforts. This strategy has a mixed if not mediocre track record, however, and many analysts are skeptical that targeting an enemy’s will to resist rather than its ability to fight could prevent aggression or produce victory in a major clash. Rollback, by contrast, entails mobilizing military forces gradually and then reversing an opponent’s gains. Although this strategy has worked in global conflicts like World War II and regional campaigns like Desert Storm, it also cedes ground from the start by delaying a direct response.

Despite its understandable appeal, and regardless of the particular form that it takes, a strategy of denial also has inherent challenges, which can be onerous for a geographically insular great power like the United States that is facing off against widely dispersed, well-armed, and highly motivated rivals. To start, denial can require overcoming an unfavorable balance of military power at the outset of a conflict because an aggressor would be fighting close to home and could choose the time and place of its attack. In the case of a Taiwan contingency, for example, Beijing would be massing its offensive forces across the 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait, whereas Washington would be reinforcing its defenses in the region from over 6,000 miles away. What’s more, denial can also require overcoming an unfavorable balance of interests since an aggressor cares about the issue at hand enough to initiate a war. For instance, although America has an enduring stake in the security of Taiwan — and possibly a larger stake in avoiding a world where China or Russia can invade and occupy other countries — Beijing ostensibly has a greater interest in the island’s fate. Compounding these challenges, militaries are often slow to adapt and innovate when facing new threats, especially if legacy ways of warfare have not yet been discredited decisively. That could leave the United States without the tools necessary to implement an effective denial strategy as its previous military advantages continue to decline.

One way of addressing these constraints is to concentrate on a set of straightforward but stressing operational problems. For instance, if Pentagon planners are most concerned that adversaries might conduct large-scale amphibious or armored assaults that overwhelm frontline states before Washington can defend them, then they could opt to focus more intently on destroying large numbers of critical targets, during small windows of time, inside of contested areas.

The history of military innovation shows that specificity is often crucial for success. Simply put, organizations that tackle well-defined problems are more likely to devise novel and effective solutions. Channeling this insight, former Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work has proposed giving each of the services a goal of killing approximately 350 Chinese vessels or 2,400 Russian armored vehicles in 72 hours, and reserving a significant pot of money for the branch with the best response. In theory, this should catalyze new ideas due to the clarity of the military objective, the promised

budgetary reward, and salutary effects of interservice competition, which are often lost when senior leaders emphasize joint solutions from the very start. “Give goals to the joint force that they have to solve,” he has argued, “and I guarantee you, that will generate operational concepts.”

Achieving these goals should also keep rivals on guard and in check. According to former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michèle Flournoy:

If the U.S. military had the capability to credibly threaten to sink all of China’s military vessels, submarines, and merchant ships in the South China Sea within 72 hours, Chinese leaders might think twice before, say, launching a blockade or invasion of Taiwan; they would have to wonder whether it was worth putting their entire fleet at risk.

Not only would this enhance conventional deterrence by denial, insofar as China would be unable to conduct a brute force assault or count on militarized economic coercion, but the ability to wipe out expensive and prestigious assets such as modern submarines and surface combatants could have the added bonus of contributing to conventional deterrence by punishment.

Putting Will, Endurance, and Relevance at Risk

At first glance, concentrating on these operational problems and challenging the services to pursue denial via the rapid attrition of high-value enemy platforms seems like a sensible way to break through innovation barriers, prevent latent threats from manifesting, and bring strategy and operations into alignment. Indeed, it might offer the best chance of turning the aspirations of the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy into concrete actions. Even if senior leaders throw down this gauntlet and service planners successfully meet the challenge, however, there are several risks that could arise. Specifically, a narrow focus on these operational problems could heighten the prospect of deterrence failure via three distinct mechanisms: a lack of will, a lack of endurance, and a lack of relevance.

First, the rapid attrition objective could fuel doubts about Washington’s determination to uphold its threats and intervene on behalf of a beleaguered partner during a crisis. The measures required to achieve denial in this fashion are bound to create escalation concerns, even if one sets aside the extreme possibility that adversaries might resort to nuclear use after sustaining major losses — a potentially suicidal gamble, particularly for an opponent like China, which remains inferior to the United States on the nuclear front. In most cases, any type of denial campaign should be implemented during the initial stages of a conflict. Simply put, the longer the United States waits to intervene in support of an exposed ally, the greater the risk it will find itself attempting to reverse aggression rather than trying to thwart an assault. Moreover, a version of denial that entails destroying so many forces in such short order could put an even greater premium on conducting attacks quickly. Achieving this difficult aim would almost certainly be easier the earlier it was attempted, before ships, submarines, tanks, and other targets have taken precautions to reduce their vulnerability.

Yet it is not difficult to envision scenarios in which a U.S. president would be reluctant to sanction the immediate use of force, let alone commit to a course of action that would inflict enormous losses on an opponent from the outset. This might be due to domestic politics, alliance dynamics, or doubts about the veracity of indications and warnings if opponents attempt to mask their preparations with large-scale exercises or other methods of deception. Whatever the reason, an expectation of reticence would come at the expense of credibility.

Second, the goal of rapid attrition might set an untenably high bar for the capabilities needed to execute a threat. If this requires employing force at speed as well as at scale, a significant portion of U.S. surveillance, strike, and logistical support assets would probably need to remain at a high level of readiness, both to provide early warning of an impending attack and to launch a response as soon as possible. Not only would preserving this force-in-being be financially taxing, potentially drawing resources away from other investment areas such as modernization, but it could also create openings that adversaries might exploit.

China, in particular, has proved adept at wearing down opponents through peacetime cost imposition. For instance, dispatching ships and scrambling fighters each time Beijing sends coast guard vessels into Japan's territorial waters or conducts air patrols near its southwest islands has taken a heavy toll on Tokyo's platforms and personnel. It would not be surprising, therefore, to see Beijing attempt to bait Washington in a similar fashion. In other words, raise and lower tensions just enough, and just often enough, that the price tag and political costs of a rapid attrition posture become increasingly burdensome over time. Meanwhile, signals of an actual assault might become lost in the noise of frequent provocations.

Third, rapid attrition could simply become less relevant. Because this objective is geared mainly toward blunting a major amphibious or ground assault, it highlights a fundamental tradeoff between the operational focus needed for military innovation and the strategic flexibility required to keep the international status quo intact. Organizations might benefit from tackling clear problems when it comes to devising new ways of warfare, but revisionist powers often have many options for aggression. Depending on the contingency, for instance, China could choose to launch an invasion, implement economic strangulation, engage in missile coercion, or some combination of the three, not to mention the various "hybrid" uses of force it might pursue.

Closing off one of those options, especially the most serious option, would be an achievement. Yet it could also drive a dynamic adversary to explore substitutes as it seeks to "design around" U.S. conventional deterrence, leaving Washington the victim of its own success. As Alexander George and Richard Smoke cautioned many years ago, "The defender's strategy must be made relevant to the range of alternative options possibly available to the initiator." Otherwise, a determined revisionist could exploit "loopholes, weaknesses, or uncertainties" to achieve its aims.

Designing New Approaches to Denial

None of this means that the Pentagon should completely forgo the recommendations of Work, Flournoy, and others who share their views. There is a clear rationale for denial in regions characterized by contested frontiers and U.S. security commitments. There is also a compelling demand for new operational concepts to prevent hostile actors from dominating those regions as military balances shift in dangerous ways. And there is a corresponding need to overcome organizational barriers to adaptation and innovation, which can keep those concepts out of reach.

These considerations should not obscure the risks that stem from focusing on narrow operational problems and prescribing rapid attrition as the solution to them — risks that could increase the danger of deterrence failure via a perceived lack of will, an imposed lack of endurance, or an eventual lack of relevance. A defense strategy that addresses pressing operational problems but leaves policymakers with an all-or-nothing decision, is too costly to keep up, or becomes less applicable if opponents play by a different set of rules could, in the end, do as much harm as good.

Ideally, then, efforts to devise new versions of denial should pursue solutions that are scalable enough to give policymakers flexibility when tensions are high. This could entail, for example, collaborating even more closely with allies and partners to improve their resilience and ensure the United States has the option of graduated escalation in the event of a conflict, rather than being painted into the corner of rapid attrition as those allies or partners quickly approach the point of defeat. These efforts should also prioritize solutions that are sustainable over time. That, in turn, could involve placing greater emphasis on forward defense over expeditionary reinforcement so that the United States is better poised for day-to-day denial, rather than rushing to protect allies and partners from thousands of miles away. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, these efforts should emphasize approaches that are fungible enough to enhance deterrence across a range of scenarios. That means avoiding point solutions that cannot easily be adapted to address alternative forms of aggression.

--Evan Braden Montgomery is the director of research and studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments and the author of *In the Hegemon's Shadow: Leading States and the Rise of Regional Powers*

CONGRESSIONAL

By Susan Cornwell

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

SASC and HASC have passed their respective Bills

- *ALL ICBM PEs at PB*

AUTHORIZATION CONFERENCE

- **November: Tentative timeframe for markup**

DEFENSE APPROPRIATION

HAC

- **July 8: HAC-D Marked up the FY21 Defense Bill**
 - *GBSD lost \$60M*
 - *Missile Repl/Eq Ballistic lost \$1.53M*
 - *ICBM Fuze Mod lost \$3.458M*
 - *MM Mods lost \$23.684M and transferred \$4.173 to another line*

SAC

TBD: Markup

APPROPRIATION CONFERENCE

TBD: Markup

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Tuesday: House passed a CR to go through December 11

Next Wednesday: Senate to vote.

Senate tees up stopgap spending bill for final vote next week

Sept. 24, 2020; Updated 2:24 p.m. By Jennifer Shutt, CQ

Senators left Thursday for a four-day weekend without approving a temporary spending bill needed to keep federal agencies open when the current fiscal year ends in less than a week.

Before heading for the exits, senators voted 93-2 to proceed to the 10-week funding extension ([HR 8337](#)), setting the stage for a possible down-to-the-wire vote next Wednesday.

Thursday's motion to proceed vote sets up a cloture vote on the underlying bill next Tuesday, which if invoked would allow up to 30 additional hours of debate. Unless time is yielded back, it could push a vote on final passage to late Wednesday, just hours before the midnight deadline to avert a partial government shutdown.

House passes bill to avert shutdown

https://thehill.com/homenews/house/517700-house-passes-bill-to-avert-shutdown?utm_source=&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=33427

BY [CRISTINA MARCOS](#) for THE HILL // 09/22/20 08:20 PM EDT

The House passed legislation on Tuesday night to avert a government shutdown through Dec. 11, sending the bill to the Senate with just eight days left before current federal funding expires.

Lawmakers passed the bill in a bipartisan vote of 359-57 after Democrats earlier Tuesday rekindled negotiations with Republicans that had temporarily stalled because of a dispute over farm aid. Rep. [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) (D-N.Y.) voted "present." The government would shut down on Oct. 1 if Congress doesn't pass a spending bill in time, a scenario that both parties want to avoid mere weeks before Election Day and amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The stopgap spending bill will now set up a clash over government funding in the lame-duck session after the November elections. House Democrats initially introduced their own stopgap measure on Monday that did not include a provision sought by the Trump administration to ensure that farmer assistance payments continue flowing through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), which has a borrowing limit of \$30 billion.

Democrats planned to hold a vote on their bill Tuesday afternoon, setting up a potential pingpong scenario between the two chambers with time running out before current funding expires. But talks between Democrats and Republicans resumed on Tuesday to resolve differences on the farm aid as well as an expiring program created by a coronavirus relief measure earlier this year to ensure that children who normally receive free or reduced-cost meals at schools still have access while they are closed for in-person instruction because of the pandemic.

The agreement struck between the two parties adds \$8 billion in nutrition assistance programs and allows for the farm aid distributed through the CCC to continue but with measures sought by Democrats to prohibit payments to fossil fuel refiners and importers. It expands the expiring program providing low-income children with meals to include child care centers impacted by pandemic-related closures and gives states continued flexibility for food stamp requirements for another year.

The Senate is likely to take up the bill as soon as this week. Senate Republicans hope to avoid a damaging potential government shutdown and are eager to instead focus on filling the Supreme Court vacancy left by the late Justice [Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#), who died on Friday. [President Trump](#) announced last week during a rally in Wisconsin that his administration would make an additional \$13 billion available to help farmers recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Trump administration has previously allotted billions in aid for farmers — a key rural voter constituency for his reelection hopes — to soften the impact of the president's trade wars with China. Democrats, meanwhile, opposed including the CCC funding in the stopgap spending bill and argued that it amounts to a "political slush fund" to help Trump mitigate the effects of his trade policies.

But House Democratic leaders had also faced pushback from some members of their own caucus about excluding the farm aid from the initial stopgap bill. Rep. [Cindy Axne](#) (D-Iowa), a first-term lawmaker in a competitive district, publicly called on leadership to include the farm aid. "I am deeply frustrated that once again Washington is playing games with the vital aid that Iowa's farmers need as they continue to struggle with the long-term effects of a public health crisis, an economic downturn, a trade war, and recent natural disasters," Axne said in a statement on Monday.

Sen. Inhofe at odds with Department of Energy over nuclear weapons

https://tulsaoworld.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/d-c-digest-ihofe-at-odds-with-department-of-energy-over-nuclear-weapons/article_d3fed088-f9f2-11ea-935a-5fe9bfcd714.html

By: [Randy Krehbiel](#) for The Tulsa World // Sep 20, 2020 – Updated 17 hrs ago

U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe continued last week to tangle with the U.S. Energy Department over control of the country's nuclear arsenal and its future development.

At the center of the fight is the National Nuclear Security Administration, which is nominally part of the Department of Energy but is responsible for security and testing of nuclear weapons used by the Department of Defense. The Senate Energy and Armed Services committees both have oversight responsibilities. In that capacity, it is advised by the DoD's National Weapons Council.

Inhofe, as Armed Services chairman, charged last week that Department of Energy officials were "rogue actors" working with House Democrats to stop Trump administration upgrades to the nuclear arsenal and resumption of live nuclear weapons tests.

Inhofe strongly supports nuclear modernization and just as strongly opposes surrendering control of it to the Department of Energy. "It's not surprising that opponents of nuclear weapons support these efforts — it's what you'd expect them to do," Inhofe said, according to [Defense News](#). "What bothers me is that people who should be doing all they can to support the critical work of the NNSA are instead trying to undermine it. As chairman of this committee, I won't stand idly by and allow this to happen."

Energy Dept. officials are 'trying to undermine' nuclear weapons agency

<https://www.defensenews.com/smr/nuclear-arsenal/2020/09/17/energy-dept-officials-are-trying-to-undermine-nuclear-weapons-agency-ihofe-alleges/>

By: [Aaron Mehta](#) for Defense News // 3 days ago

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday accused officials from the Department of Energy of performing as "rogue actors" who aim to "undermine" the agency in charge of managing nuclear warheads, which in turn could damage the Pentagon's nuclear modernization plans.

In his opening comments, Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., cast Thursday's committee hearing on nuclear weapons as an existential one for the National Nuclear Security Administration. "Arguably, this could go down as one of the most significant hearings we've ever had," he said. "I've been given information that individuals from the Department of Energy have worked behind the scenes with the House Democrats on ill-advised legislation,"

including adding bureaucracy to the Nuclear Weapons Council, prohibiting cooperation between NNSA and the council, and subsuming NNSA into the DOE, Inhofe added.

“It’s not surprising that opponents of nuclear weapons support these efforts — it’s what you’d expect them to do,” Inhofe continued. “What bothers me is that people who should be doing all they can to support the critical work of the NNSA are instead trying to undermine it. As chairman of this committee, I won’t stand idly by and allow this to happen. This work is too important.” Since its creation in 2002, the NNSA has lived in an uneasy location — technically part of the Department of Energy but quasi-independent, beholden in some ways to both the DOE and the Department of Defense, with oversight coming from both the defense and energy committees in Congress.

Part of the tension comes from the Nuclear Weapons Council, a Pentagon led office that provides guidance on the development and production of nuclear warheads. Chaired by Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment Ellen Lord, who appeared at Thursday’s hearing, the NWC — made up of five other top Pentagon officials and the NNSA administrator — has become the center of the fight between supporters of the DOE and the DoD.

The hearing occurred following a number of efforts coming out of the House that Inhofe and other Senate Republicans worry will have damaging long-term impacts on America’s nuclear modernization efforts.

Inhofe introduced into the record a letter from Defense Secretary Mark Esper laying out key concerns that the Pentagon chief claims would put nuclear modernization at “unacceptable” risk. Those include:

- Provisions in the House-passed “minibus” that covers both defense and energy appropriations, which would cut NNSA’s weapons accounts by \$2 billion. According to Lord, such cuts could cause delays in the [B61-12 nuclear gravity bomb](#) and other modernization activities. Specific cuts to the [W93 nuclear warhead](#) elsewhere from the House would also imperil America’s ability to work with the United Kingdom on its nuclear arsenal, she said.
- In that same minibuss, there are a number of provisions that curtail NNSA’s ability to work with the Nuclear Weapons Council, or NWC. “Collectively, these sections would end the statutorily mandated NWC as an effective and useful governing body and gravely endanger the ability of DoD and DOE/NNSA to coordinate on our shared responsibilities for nuclear deterrence,” Esper wrote.
- The House’s version of the National Defense Authorization Act also includes language in Section 1644 that would make the secretaries of energy and defense the co-chairs on the Nuclear Weapons Council. Such a move, would make the council “far less efficient and, I’m afraid, it might destroy the relationship right now that we have between DoD as well as NNSA,” warned Lord, currently the chair of the council.
- Language that prevents the use of money for any potential live nuclear test. The Trump administration reportedly plans to resume [nuclear weapons testing](#).

Not included in Esper’s letter, but also very much on Inhofe’s radar: the bipartisan Department of Energy Organization and Management Improvement Act, passed by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce on Sept. 9, [changes language](#) that made the NNSA a quasi-independent entity, and instead folds the agency more fully under DOE’s control. The NNSA’s awkward standing between the energy and defense committees sets up something of a jurisdictional battle in Congress, and it is unclear if the defense-focused legislators actually have a say in whether the NNSA would be disbanded or if that decision would formally fall under the purview of the energy committees.

That tension escalated earlier this year when a fight between pro-defense lawmakers and Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette [over the NNSA's budget](#) went public. The agency eventually won a plus-up in the administration's budget request, thanks in part to Inhofe, [who told Defense News](#) that his message to Brouillette was "I won, you lost." Then in June, Inhofe introduced language, defeated by the larger Senate, that would have [given the Nuclear Weapons Council](#) an earlier say in the NNSA's budget development. Since then, the NWC has become something of a flashpoint between the two sides.

For most of the hearing, Lisa Gordon-Hagerty, the head of the NNSA, tread carefully in her remarks (she reports up to both the DOE and the DoD). But while Brouillette said he is in favor of taking a co-chair role on the council, Gordon-Hagerty noted that "the system that we have in place right now, and unless otherwise directed by Congress to change, is working well." "It's important that we can be [decisive], and with two Cabinet officials — they certainly are busy with the work of their respective departments," she noted.

Gordon-Hagerty later stated that, should the agency take the proposed \$2 billion budget cut, "we would not be able to meet the requirements of the Department of Defense."

A spokesperson from the Department of Energy did not respond to question by deadline.

Defense industry worries Congress will punt budget deal into 2021

https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2020/09/16/defense-industry-worries-congress-will-punt-budget-deal-into-2021/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Air%20Force%20DNR%209.17.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Air%20Force%20-%20Daily%20News%20Roundup

By: Joe Gould for Defense News // 1 day ago

WASHINGTON — As Congress readies a stopgap spending measure this week, the defense industry is girding for a long-term funding patch that could delay both new procurement programs and needed fiscal certainty into next year.

Democrats say they are considering whether to offer a continuing resolution that would stretch 2020 funding levels into next February or March, or whether to go along with a stopgap through mid December, as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is seeking. Trade groups said this week that passing a CR by the Sept. 30 deadline is better than a government shutdown, but they warned that because CR's ban most new start programs, that will add more turbulence for firms already suffering from pandemic-related economic shocks.

"As threats continue to multiply and the COVID-19 crisis continues, sustained and stable funding in national security takes on new meaning for the U.S. military and the defense industrial base that supports it," Aerospace Industries Association President and CEO Eric Fanning, said in an email to Defense News. AIA represents roughly 340 manufacturers. "Relying on continuing resolutions, for any length of time, removes that stability, undermining the shared supply chain and endangering the solid progress made in readiness and modernization over the last several years."

Defense advocates say continuing resolutions of any length are inefficient for government and disruptive to the budget certainty that businesses need in order to make decisions, but the pandemic and sagging economy add new wrinkles. Smaller defense firms, many hit by cash flow problems related

to the pandemic, were of particular concern to shipbuilder Huntington Ingalls Industries, which was among large firms that accelerated millions of dollars in payments to help small suppliers over recent months.

“The effects of a long term continuing resolution can be harmful to the defense industrial base by delaying or prohibiting work,” HII spokesperson Beci Brenton said in an email. “Our greatest concern with a long term CR is the impact to our thousands of suppliers located in all 50 states who are already impacted by the COVID pandemic.” Despite a longstanding deal on the budget top lines, only the House has passed full-year appropriations bills, which means Congress will need more time to pass an FY21 appropriations package.

Congress would likely need to draft a CR this week and pass it next week to avert a government shutdown. That’s just what House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., told reporters this week that House leaders are planning. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., say they have agreed to a “clean” CR, free of policy riders. It’s not expected to include COVID relief funds, but further details have not been announced.

Beyond timing, the defense industry is also watching which anomalies Congress includes to permit select new start programs. The White House sent Congress a list that included the Columbia-class submarine and new W93 submarine-launched nuclear warhead, as well as funds to ramp up the new Space Force — along with select federal programs across multiple agencies. The National Defense Industrial Association’s senior vice president, Wesley Hallman, said delaying new starts means delaying new revenue streams for companies and, for some, new hiring decisions.

“How many new starts are planned for 1 October, I can’t tell you, but if we go to March or February there are more new starts over that entire period,” Hallman said. “If it’s bad in October, it’s really bad if it’s going into March.” Professional Services Council president and CEO David Berteau, whose group represents services contractors across government, said his member are worried about long delays for a budget deal.

“Our members are always concerned because it slows down new contract awards, and it adds uncertainty to every program manager — not only in the Defense Department, but across the federal government — because they don’t know how much money they’re going to get or when they’re going to get it,” Berteau said. The duration of the CR has special political dimensions this year. If the bill runs through December, President Donald Trump and a Republican-controlled Senate would negotiate over the final spending package.

Depending on the outcome of the election, a CR that stretches into the next calendar year could be negotiated by a President Joe Biden or a Democratic-led Senate, which would give Democrats more leverage. Berteau was concerned that Biden, like Trump in 2017, would not enter office Jan. 20 ready to immediately hammer out a budget deal. It took until that April for Trump to sign a deal, and it took President Bill Clinton — who entered office under similar circumstances in 1993 — until that June. “If you don’t get it now, history says you won’t get it for six months,” said Berteau, “and that’s debilitating for industry.”

AROUND THE WORLD



RUSSIA:

Extending New START treaty foremost issue – Putin

Interfax (Russia), Sept. 22 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW/NEW YORK -- Extending the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between Russia and the United States, which expires in February 2021, is a matter of first priority, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

"The issue of primary importance that should and must be promptly dealt with is, of course, the extension of the Russia-US Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which will expire shortly, i.e. in February 2021. We are engaged in negotiations with our US partners on the matter," Putin said at the UN General Assembly.

He added: "We also expect that mutual restraint would be exercised with regard to deploying new missile systems. I would like to add that as early as last year, Russia declared a moratorium on deploying ground-launched medium and short-range missiles in Europe and other regions as long as the United States of America refrains from such actions."

"Unfortunately, we have not received any reaction to our proposal from either our US partners or their allies," Putin said.

"Such reciprocal steps on specific issues would provide a sound basis for launching a serious, profound dialogue on the entire range of factors affecting strategic stability," he said.

"It would aim at achieving comprehensive arrangements, shaping a solid foundation for the international security architecture that would build on prior experience in this field and in line with both the existing and future politico-military and technological realia," Putin said.

He pledged to make "every effort to contribute to peaceful political and diplomatic resolution of regional crises and conflicts" and "to ensuring strategic stability."

"For all the disputes and differences, at times misunderstanding and even distrust on the part of some colleagues, we will consistently advance constructive, uniting initiatives, first of all in arms control and strengthening the treaty regimes existing in this area. This includes the prohibition of chemical, biological and toxin weapons," Putin said.

Russia's newest Kazan nuclear submarine enters White Sea for trials

TASS (Russia), Sept. 22 | Not Attributed

The Kazan, the first submarine of the upgraded Project 885M (Yasen-M class), entered the White Sea for sea trials, Russian Navy's Northern Fleet press service announced Tuesday.

"Ships and assistance vessels of the Northern Fleet's White Sea naval base initiated another stage of sea trials of the newest Kazan multipurpose nuclear submarine of the upgraded Yasen class. The submarine crew [...] tests systems and mechanisms in the underwater position," the press service said.

The TK-208 Dmitry Donskoy heavy nuclear ballistic missile submarine is involved in the Kazan's trials, among other ships, the press service said. After the trials are complete, all ships and vessels will return to their permanent base in Severodvinsk.

The Kazan submarine was laid down on July 24, 2009 and launched in 2017. It is expected to join the Russian Navy in late 2020 to serve in the Northern Fleet. The main weapon of the Project 885/885M submarines are Kalibr and/or Oniks cruise missiles.

Russia won't take part in any US-led coalition against China

Wants France and UK included in new nuclear talks – ambassador

<https://www.rt.com/news/501111-russia-china-india-nuclear-envoy/>

From Russia Today – RT // 19 Sep, 2020 04:24 / Updated 1 day ago

Russia won't join any coalitions against China, or other countries, and it regards American demands to force Beijing into nuclear talks as inappropriate if London and Paris aren't involved too, Moscow's envoy to the US has said.

The US "promotes anti-Chinese sentiments" and its relations with Asia-Pacific countries are based on their support for such an approach, Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov outlined in an interview with the Japanese publication Nikkei Asia Review. "We believe that the US attempts to create anti-Chinese alliances around the world are counterproductive" and "present a threat to international security and stability," Antonov said, adding that Russia "will never participate in coalitions against third countries, including China."

While Washington talks about "the free and open Indo-Pacific" with Japan, Australia and India, the initiative is neither transparent nor inclusive, Antonov noted. Instead of established norms of international law and existing multilateral organizations, the US insists on a "rules based order." What are those rules, who created them and who agreed to them – all this remains unclear. Calling the possible continuation of a trade war between Washington and Beijing "a threat to the global economy," Antonov said Russia would be happy to use its contacts with both countries and its considerable experience in resolving inter-state disputes for "balancing efforts," if needed.

The US is pressuring China to make it join the nuclear arms control process, which Antonov said Russia "cannot support." Beijing's participation should be voluntary and based on respect for Beijing's legitimate interests, Antonov told Nikkei. Russia's priority in a broader arms treaty would be

to get the UK and France involved as well, since they “not only possess nuclear arsenals comparable to that of China, but are also US NATO allies closely coordinating their nuclear policies.”

While the US is trying to set a “price” for extending the New START arms control treaty – demanding a rewrite of its verification mission and inclusion of China, among other things – Moscow has been willing to extend it without any preconditions, Antonov said. Referring to the US withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty last year, the Russian ambassador offered a reminder that Moscow has promised not to deploy missiles that were previously banned “in any region of the world – including Asia” until Americans deploy their missiles first.

The ambassador also warned the US, however, that any such deployment in Asia would get an appropriate response, given the presence of the Russian strategic nuclear deterrent in the region. The INF originally applied only to Europe and US officials complained it was “obsolete” because it did not cover China. Asked about Russia’s relationship with India – which has recently clashed with China in the Himalayas and moved closer to the US in certain military matters, while also expanding trade with Russia – Antonov said the two countries enjoy a “privileged strategic partnership.”

“We are certain that the government of Narendra Modi will continue to pursue a harmonious multidimensional policy, develop predictable and mutually beneficial relations with all countries, including Russia... as well as the US,” he told Nikkei.

Putin: For 1st time in history, Russia possesses weapons superior to all existing ones

Interfax (Russia), Sept. 19 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- For the first time in history, Russia possesses weapons that are superior to all existing ones, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

"At present, for the first time in history, Russia possesses the most advanced weapons which are considerably superior to all [the weapons] that have existed and exist today in power, might, speed, and accuracy, which is vitally important," Putin said at a meeting held as videoconference with honorary general director and general constructor of NPO Mashinostroyeniya Gerbert Yefremov on Saturday.

No one else in the world currently has such weapons, Putin said.

The president congratulated the developers and manufacturers of the Peresvet laser weapon, the Kinzhal hypersonic missile, the Poseidon nuclear-powered unmanned underwater vehicle, the Burevestnik missile, the Tsirkon sea-based hypersonic missile, and other weapons on Gunsmith Day.

"The Avangard system with its hypersonic glide vehicle moving 27 times faster than the speed of sound and changing its direction vertically and horizontally takes a special place on this list. Avangard is not just a new system, it's a new type of strategic weapons," Putin said.

For decades Russia was "playing catch-up" on the development of atomic and nuclear weapons, long-range strategic aviation, and missile and intercontinental equipment.

"And this always put our country in a very complicated and even dangerous position. In essence, there were moments when we were being threatened and had nothing to respond with. In fact, this was a clear dangerous breach of the strategic balance," Putin said.

In the person of Yefremov, Putin congratulated everyone, who are doing the invaluable job for Russia's defense and security, on their professional holiday. "Many generations, one could say hundreds of thousands of people, have for years been dedicating themselves, their efforts and their lives to fulfilling the tasks of utmost importance: creating the unique new types of weapon capable of protecting our country from any external encroachment, " the Russian president said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said on December 27, 2019 that the first missile regiment armed with the Avangard strategic complex featuring the hypersonic glide vehicle was put on combat duty.

The Russian Defense Ministry said earlier that it was preparing to deploy the first Avangard regiment outside Orenburg.

Russia demonstrated the Avangard missile system with a hypersonic glide vehicle to U.S. inspectors in November 2019 as part of the New START.

Avangard is a strategic missile complex with a hypersonic glide vehicle.

It is reported that Avangard warheads first will be mounted on UR-100N UTTKh intercontinental ballistic missiles. Then, new Sarmat intercontinental missiles will be used as their carriers.

According to the Strategic Missile Forces' Academy, the Avangard vehicle performs horizontal and vertical maneuvering during its course, making its flight trajectory unpredictable for any missile defense system.

Putin compares Avangard system's putting on combat duty to nuclear project implementation in USSR

Interfax (Russia), Sept. 19 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- The Avangard missile system's putting on combat duty can be compared to the implementation of the nuclear project in the USSR, Russian President Putin said.

"The first regiment equipped with the Avangard system has been on combat duty since December 2019. It is a major event in the life of the country, its security," Putin said at a meeting held as videoconference with honorary general director and honorary general constructor of NPO Mashinostroyeniya Gerbert Yefremov on Saturday.

"In the current circumstances, the implementation [of this project] for our country can undoubtedly be compared to the Soviet Union's implementation of the nuclear and missile projects undertaken by outstanding Soviet scientists Kurchatov and Korolyov," the president said.

It was the United States' withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 that prompted Russia to start developing its hypersonic weapons, he said.

We had to create this weapon in response to the U.S.'s deployment of its strategic missile defense system which was effectively capable of neutralizing, nullifying our entire nuclear potential. Dear Gerbert Alexandrovich! It did not happen thanks to you and your colleagues," Putin said.

The Russian side made all possible efforts to reach agreements with the U.S. to prevent its work on the missile defense system or ensure it is conducted in cooperation, but all attempts were in vain, he said.

"And in this light in 2004, we finally started large-scale work to realize your ideas and warned everyone publicly about it, I spoke about it publicly. Apparently, no one believed us then and decided we can't do that. And the finishing launch was performed in December 2018," Putin said.

He congratulated Yefremov on Gunsmith day and pointed out that Yefremov stood at the origins of the idea of such weapons and is a creator of the system.

The Russian Defense Ministry said on December 27, 2019 that the first missile regiment armed with the Avangard strategic complex featuring the hypersonic glide vehicle was put on combat duty.

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Caucasus 2020 drills to focus on combating cruise missiles – Russian Defense Ministry

TASS (Russia), Sept. 21 | Not Attributed

Russia's Armed Forces will pay particular attention to combating cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles during the Kavkaz (or Caucasus) 2020 military exercise that kicked off on Monday, the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement.

"The Kavkaz 2020 drills will particularly focus on combating cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as on fire and electronic warfare activities against entire enemy formations, on training airborne troops' vertical envelopment capability and ways to rapidly shift between military activities," the message reads.

The decision was made based on the experience gained during various armed conflicts, including the Syrian one. Another focus will be on using weapons and military equipment at different times of the day and conducting deep-penetration raids.

The Caucasus 2020 drills, led by Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov, are taking place in Russia's Southern Military District and in the Black and Caspian Seas. The exercise involves about 80,000 personnel, including officers of the Russian Emergencies Ministry and the Russian Guard, as well as up to 1,000 troops from Armenia, Belarus, China, Iran, Myanmar and Pakistan. About 12,900 troops are going to take part in activities covered by the 2011 Vienna Document of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures.

US Offers Russia to Extend START Treaty for Less Than Five Years

<https://sputniknews.com/military/202009221080542863-us-strategic-command-flexes-on-russian-air-force-with-bomber-flights-tweet/>
by [Oleg Burunov](#) for Sputnik News // 16:05 GMT 20.09.2020(updated 17:43 GMT 20.09.2020)

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) will expire on 5 February 2021 if it is not extended. Russia's President Vladimir Putin previously proposed extending the treaty for five years without any preconditions.

Marshall Billingslea, US special presidential envoy for arms control, told the Russian daily Kommersant on Sunday that Washington is offering Moscow to extend [the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty \(START\)](#) for less than five years in order to hammer out a new multilateral document as soon as possible.

"We have proposed a shorter period of time [than Russia's proposal to extend the START for five years]. We cannot take our foot off the pedal, as they say, so we need to get down to drawing up the next agreement. That's why we are thinking about a shorter period of time", Billingslea pointed out. He noted that the duration of this period would depend on the flexibility of the Russian government's stance on the matter. The envoy also said that Washington will adjust its negotiating position depending on Russia's possible reaction, adding, *"we believe that we have outlined a very clear and plan of action that is beneficial for both countries". -- "We also believe that it [the plan] reflects those discussions that were conducted by our presidents. And now, as I've made it very clear - and we really think so - the ball is in Russia's court",* Billingslea underscored.

US Wants Memorandum on New START

He also said that the US is ready to conclude a presidential memorandum with Russia on [the question of extending the treaty](#) and that Washington is prepared to allow the New START to expire this coming February should Washington and Moscow fail to conclude a memorandum, because the treaty puts additional restrictions on the US that are detrimental. According to Billingslea, Washington has offered Moscow the opportunity to conclude an agreement resembling a treaty on arms control that would not require ratification before the New START treaty is extended, Billingslea stated.

The US special envoy added that this represents a good deal, which was particularly crucial given that mutual trust between Moscow and Washington is at a low point. Should Russia refuse to accept the deal, Moscow can expect to be offered worse terms at the negotiating table if Trump is re-elected on 3 November, when the US holds its presidential election, Billingslea said.

Clause on China

Separately, the envoy said that any preliminary arms control agreement that may be concluded between Russia and the US ahead of an extension of the New START should contain a clause on China. According to him, the framework arms control between Russia and the US, proposed by Washington, should, in particular, address issues of transparency regarding nuclear warheads.

On the topic of data exchange, Billingslea added that the US and Russia should share information on missile tests at least five times a year, as is permitted by the New START, noting that this process currently takes place just once per year.

Billingslea also stated that the US is ready to discuss the issue of missile defence systems with Russia, but that Moscow has not put forward any proposals in this regard. At the same time, the envoy stressed that his country would not introduce any restrictions regarding missile defence.

Russia's Position on New START's Extension

The remarks come after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in late August that the US had put forward unrealistic conditions for preserving the New START treaty, “including the requirement that China definitely join this document [...]”. He added that the result of the talks on [the future of the New START](#) is still unclear, but that Russia, in any case, will not meet Washington's requirements, including those regarding China's participation in the treaty.

Following the Vienna talks earlier in August, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that the priorities of the two countries are "very different" at the moment. According to the diplomat, the US did not rule out extending the New START, but declined to record this intention. As for Russia, it is not ready to extend the treaty at any cost, Ryabkov pointed out. In late 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed extending the treaty for five years without any preconditions.

The New START is the last remaining arms control accord in force between Moscow and Washington after the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Under the accord, which was signed in 2010, the US and Russia agreed to reduce the number of strategic nuclear missiles by half and limit the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550 each. The treaty is set to expire on 5 February 2021.

Russia Believes US-Proposed Stronger Control Measures in New START Inconceivable - Ryabkov

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/world/russia-believes-us-proposed-stronger-control-1035940.html>

By: Rossiya Segodnya [Sputnik](#) [Moscow] // 21 Sep 2020.

MOSCOW, September 21 (Sputnik) - Moscow considers it inconceivable to strengthen control and verification measures in the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which was announced by the US special envoy Marshall Billingslea, there is no reason to change anything and there will be no return to the practice of the late 1990s, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Monday.

Billingslea earlier said that Russia and the United States needed to eliminate the "hole" on issues of checks and data exchange in the New START before the conclusion of a new arms treaty. "The New START verification regime has been precisely calibrated in accordance with the tasks that this

treaty solves. This regime is sufficient to provide reliable confidence in what is happening, the Treaty provides predictability at a high level, and there is no reason to change anything in this area.

It is simply impossible to imagine measures in this area that would meet the interests of our security. Accordingly, everything that Marshall Billingslea is talking about is a requesting position, which, in his understanding, should be implemented, since it meets the interests of US security," Ryabkov said in an interview with the Kommersant newspaper, commenting on Billingslea's statement.

"We are ready to negotiate. But this is a very complex issue, many aspects of which require clarification. In any case, there can be no return to the practice that existed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The current agreement meets the needs and spirit of the times. Under conditions when relations between our countries are very tense and there is no trust in them, such intrusive measures of control, which the US side speaks of, seem to me simply inconceivable," the deputy foreign minister stressed.

The United States in every possible way avoids discussing the topic of withdrawing its non-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe, Ryabkov also said. "The United States refuses to withdraw its non-strategic assets, that is, free fall bombs, gravity bombs, from Europe. They are not ready to eliminate the infrastructure where these bombs are located so that they cannot be quickly returned if a decision is made to return to European territory after a hypothetical withdrawal. They avoid discussing all aspects of our position on the need to get rid of this factor, which directly affects our security," Ryabkov said.

Senior Russian diplomat notes progress in discussions on US-made Trident II missiles

<https://tass.com/defense/1203333>

The Russian diplomat added that "the issue is still in the process of discussion, some matters have not yet been clarified"

From the Russian News Agency TASS // 21 SEP, 17:04

MOSCOW, September 21. /TASS/. A certain progress has been achieved in Russian-US discussions on US-made Trident II missiles submarine-launched ballistic missiles fitted with nuclear warheads, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said in an interview with the Kommersant daily.

"As far as the problem of refitting launchers of Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missiles is concerned, I can confirm that some progress has been made," he said. "But I'd rather <...> not go into details right now." The Russian diplomat added that "the issue is still in the process of discussion, some matters have not yet been clarified." "Yes, a certain progress has been achieved, but it is yet unclear when the next meeting of a bilateral consultative commission on the New START will be held. The pandemic affects our plans. We are searching for a date," Ryabkov said.

In late January, the **Federation of American Scientists** said the US Navy had started to deploy W76-2 low-yield nuclear warheads on some of its Trident submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The information was later confirmed by The Pentagon. Russian Foreign Ministry's official spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in late April the deployment of its low-yield nuclear warheads by the United States was a dangerous step that leads to destabilization. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the US production of W76-2 missiles lowers the nuclear threshold and increases the risk of a nuclear conflict. According to US experts, the new missile has the explosive yield of 5-6 kilotons.

Deployment of US missiles in Asia to put Russia's nuclear deterrent at risk – ambassador

"The American partners, perhaps, should carefully weigh all the destabilizing consequences of such a step fraught with further escalation of tension and an arms race," Anatoly Antonov said

TASS (Russia), Sept. 18 | Not Attributed

WASHINGTON -- Possible deployment of US ground-based intermediate-range missiles in Asia will affect Russia's national security interests and will put its nuclear deterrence potential at risk, Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said in an interview with Japan's Nikkei Asian Review. The text was posted on the Russian embassy's Facebook about on Friday.

"The possible deployment of US intermediate-range ground-based missiles in Asia will not only upset the military-political balance in the region and global strategic stability, but will also directly affect Russia's national security interests. The fact is that this region is located near the Russian borders, naval facilities and the bases of the Pacific Fleet where submarine strategic forces are based. The deployment of new US systems there will put our nuclear deterrent at risk," he said.

"The American partners, perhaps, should carefully weigh all the destabilizing consequences of such a step fraught with further escalation of tension and an arms race," he noted. "We are interested neither in escalating tension either in the Asia-Pacific region or anywhere else in the world, nor in the beginning of an economically destructive arms race. I hope the United States and its regional allies share this approach. We are ready to work together - our proposals remain on the table."

According to the Russian diplomat, the United States' withdrawal from the Russian-US INF Treaty in August 2019 led to "the collapse of this important for global stability and security Treaty." "As a result, this erroneous US step has complicated efforts to avert the escalation of the missile arms race," he added.

"I would like to stress that Russia has taken concrete steps to prevent the situation from sliding into a crisis. In February 2019, our country made unilateral commitments not to field ground-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles in any region of the world - including Asia - until American systems of this kind are deployed there," he stressed. "We regret that the Russian initiative to introduce similar moratoriums was categorically rejected by the United States and its NATO allies. Moreover, the Pentagon is rapidly developing and has already tested twice systems previously prohibited under the INF Treaty. US officials periodically declare their intention to deploy such missiles in the Asia-Pacific region as soon as possible."

Russia has no intel suggesting impending North Korean SLBM test – Moscow official

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Sept. 20 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- Russia does not have any intelligence suggesting that North Korea is preparing to test-fire a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), a Moscow foreign ministry official has said amid speculation that Pyongyang could conduct a test next month.

Petr Ilichev, director of the department of international organizations at the Russian foreign ministry, said in an interview with the country's RIA Novosti news agency on Saturday that his country does not have any information of a possible North Korean SLBM test launch next month.

There has been speculation that the North could test-fire an SLBM or undertake other weapons provocations on the occasion of the founding anniversary of the Workers' Party on Oct. 10, which could be a new strategic weapon that leader Kim Jong-un pledged to show off in his New Year's Day message.

Ilichev stated that analysis on such a sensitive matter should be made cautiously, arguing that similar speculations in the past have often been made with political motives.

The Russian official also noted that if the North goes forward with a military provocation, it will only worsen the situation for the country, citing past strengthening of sanctions over military provocations.

North Korea is under multiple U.S. and U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions banning the testing of nuclear and ballistic missile technology.

Russian military says U.S. flights near Crimea fuel tensions

Associated Press, Sept. 18 | Vladimir Isachenkov

MOSCOW -- The Russian military on Friday accused the U.S. and its allies of provoking tensions in the Black Sea region with a sharp increase in the number of bomber patrols and intelligence flights.

Col.-Gen. Sergei Rudskoi, head of the Russian General Staff's main operational department, charged that the U.S. and other members of NATO have significantly increased the scope of their military activities in the region.

“The U.S. and its NATO allies will carry the full responsibility for a possible escalation of the situation in the region,” he said at a briefing.

Rudskoi pointed at a series of flights by the U.S. B-52 strategic bombers in August and September over the Black and the Azov Seas, alleging the missions were intended to simulate missile strikes at facilities in southern Russia. He said the bombers flew as close as 11 kilometers (less than 7 miles) to the Russian border.

After flying three B-1 heavy bombers over the East Siberian Sea last week, the U.S. military said the ongoing exercises were meant to show the Air Force's “ability to continually execute flying missions and sustain readiness in support of our Allies and partners.”

The Russian general noted that the U.S. and its NATO allies also have intensified their intelligence flights near Crimea, which he said increased by 40% compared to the last year. He added that on one occasion on Sept. 4 five NATO reconnaissance aircraft were buzzing the area near Crimea at the same time.

Russia scrambled its fighter jets to intercept and escort the U.S. and NATO bombers and reconnaissance planes on 27 occasions this month alone, Rudskoi said.

He added that NATO warships were also spending longer stints in the Black Sea this year.

Russia-West ties have sunk to their post-Cold War lows after Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

Russia has bristled at the deployment of NATO forces in the Baltics and charged that the alliance maneuvers near its borders posed a security threat. The alliance and Moscow also have increasingly often traded accusations over military flights.

Rudskoi charged that Russia has proposed to NATO to reduce military activities alongside the border and discuss additional measures to help prevent military incidents, but the alliance has stonewalled the proposals.



CHINA:

US-China relations: North Korea nuclear talks an opportunity for cooperation, Chinese ex-vice minister says

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3102896/us-china-relations-north-korea-nuclear-talks-opportunity>

- Denuclearisation of Korean peninsula ‘a new opportunity for China and the US to cooperate on important international issues’, former vice-foreign minister Fu Ying says
- Nuclear talks have been on ice since two fruitless meetings between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un last year

By: [Shi Jiangtao](#) for the SCMP // Published: 7:00pm, 24 Sep, 2020

China and the [United States](#) should set aside their differences to help break the deadlock in the [North Korea nuclear talks](#) , a former Chinese foreign vice-minister said, while also calling for a renewal of dialogue with Pyongyang.

The comments by Fu Ying came after [US President Donald Trump](#) on Monday urged North Korea to return to the negotiations on how to achieve a “final, fully verified denuclearisation”.

Talks between Washington and Pyongyang have been on hold since a failed summit in Hanoi between Trump and North Korean leader [Kim Jong-un](#)

in February 2019 and a brief encounter four months later at the demilitarised zone in Panmunjom. Pyongyang has so far refused to resume working-level negotiations, citing the lack of progress in the talks, and Washington’s refusal to provide security guarantees and relief from the [United Nations](#) sanctions led by the US. In an article published on Thursday by state-owned news website The Paper, Fu, who is now head of Tsinghua University’s centre for international security and strategy, gave a brief account of how China started mediation in 2003 at the request of then US president George W Bush and helped kick-start the now defunct six-party denuclearisation talks.

“[It] has become a new opportunity for China and the US to cooperate on important international issues,” said Fu, who attended the talks as head of the foreign ministry’s Asian affairs department. She lamented the fact that the decline in [US-China relations](#) had severely hindered their willingness to continue their cooperation on key regional and global issues, like North Korea, which had in the past helped stabilise their own turbulent ties.

“The overall nature and atmosphere of Sino-US relations is changing, with the American side pushing for strategic competition. Despite uncertainties over [the future of bilateral ties], our international cooperation will inevitably be affected,” she said. Despite Beijing’s wariness of Pyongyang’s push for recognition as a [de facto nuclear-armed state](#), the former diplomat reiterated the Chinese government’s official line of throwing its weight behind Kim and putting much of the blame on the US for the impasse in the nuclear talks.

She indicated that the fate of the denuclearisation talks hinged on the US adjusting its own thinking, saying that Washington’s refusal to acknowledge Pyongyang’s security concerns and its obsession with a regime change in North Korea were the cause of the stalemate on the Korean peninsula. Analysts said Fu’s views were in line with the appeals by China’s top diplomats, including [Foreign Minister Wang Yi](#), who has urged the US to resume its cooperation with China on global issues such as North Korea, Iran and climate change, despite their tensions.

During a visit to South Korea last month, China’s top diplomat [Yang Jiechi](#) said China was “willing to play a constructive role in advancing the political solution of the Korean peninsula issue together with all parties concerned”. Although relations between the communist neighbours have deteriorated in recent years over Kim’s repeated nuclear provocations, China still sees [North Korea](#) as an important leverage in its foreign policy, especially when its relations with the US are at an all-time low.

The [coronavirus pandemic](#) has deepened North Korea’s economic and diplomatic isolation, leaving it more dependent than ever on China to provide diplomatic support and an economic lifeline. While China and [Russia](#) have made repeated calls for sanctions relief for North Korea, Zhang Liangui, a North Korea specialist at the Central Party School in Beijing, said China was unlikely to significantly increase trade and economic aid to its neighbour amid risks of breaching international sanctions and further alienating the US.

Deployment of US forces to Taiwan means war

Global Times (China), Sept. 24, Pg. 5 | Editorial

Military Review, the professional bimonthly journal of the US Army, in its latest issue published a series of articles on the so-called China's armed invasion of Taiwan. A US Marine Corps captain in his article called for returning the US forces to Taiwan, and another article suggests providing a corps of "two-to-four divisions... against the PLA bridgeheads" and "dispatching an Army heavy corps to Taiwan."

These articles have triggered a strong response in the island of Taiwan, and the Taiwan secessionist forces have been greatly encouraged. However, some have pointed out that it is unlikely the US military will publicly deploy in Taiwan.

Such discussions in a US military magazine can be regarded as a public opinion war against China. The US is trying to open up new space for the US strategy to exert pressure on China. If the US military does what the magazine has suggested, it not only means the complete end of the US' one-China policy, but will also mean a blatant challenge to China's sovereignty.

The release of such information seems to be carried away. The US and the island of Taiwan must give up all illusions about the redeployment of US troops in Taiwan, because it means nothing but war. The Anti-Secession Law outlined three conditions that would compel China to use force. The second condition is "the development of major incidents that involve the independence of Taiwan from the mainland," and the third condition is "the exhaustion of all options to reach a deal on the peaceful reunification." The redeployment of US troops in Taiwan meets the two conditions. We believe that the PLA will inevitably take military actions to start a just war to liberate Taiwan.

The US now wants to shape the Taiwan Straits as the main front to prevent China's rise, because the Democratic Progress Party (DPP) authorities in Taiwan have completely turned to the US, and thus can be used as a tool. We must warn the DPP authorities not to wrongly believe that US support is safe for them to split China without being punished.

PLA fighter jets recently crossed the so-called middle line of the Taiwan Straits on a large scale, clearly drawing the red line that the US and Taiwan must not further collude. The Global Times has understood that PLA fighter jets were as close as only seconds away from the coast of Taiwan. They were only one step away from flying over the island of Taiwan.

The Global Times has predicted several times that the PLA fighter jets will fly over the island of Taiwan. The mainland would like to warn the Taiwan authorities that if the US and Taiwan continue to collude, this scenario would be bound to take place. If the Taiwan authorities still believe that the US and Taiwan can adopt "salami slicing" by sending higher-level officials to visit each other, they are making a gamble that will be costly to both of them.

As tensions in the Taiwan Straits spiral, the Taiwan authorities led by Tsai Ing-wen accused the mainland of intimidation, and Washington asserted that the mainland has resorted to high military pressure to unilaterally change the status quo. But the tense situation in the Taiwan Straits began with the Tsai authorities abandoning the 1992 Consensus. This completely breaks the political basis for cross-Straits communication. Meanwhile, the passage of the Taiwan Travel Act by the US breaks away from the US' one-China policy. Safeguarding its territorial integrity has become an urgent task for the Chinese mainland.

When the Tsai authorities scrapped the 1992 Consensus, they "supported democracy and freedom of Taiwan people." When the US violated the three joint communiqués between China and the US to boost "diplomatic" ties with Taiwan and sell arms to Taiwan, it "supported Taiwan's democratic regime." But when the mainland sent its warning through military exercises, it "exercised autocracy and power." Such fallacies will not win support from international law and the international community.

It is not known how the US and Taiwan will make further provocations, but the response of the mainland is certain. If the US and Taiwan raise the level of officials for engagement, the mainland will firmly respond by sending PLA fighter jets over the island of Taiwan to claim sovereignty. Deployment of the US army to Taiwan means the start of a cross-Straits war. With the Anti-Secession Law in place, Taiwan and the US should be prepared to confront the determination of the 1.4 billion mainland people and the PLA if they step over the red lines.

The mainland has patiently promoted its policy for peaceful reunification for years. However, the Tsai authorities obstinately have walked toward the path of "Taiwan independence" and fallen prey to the US strategy of China containment, bringing the cross-Straits situation closer to a tipping point. If a cross-Straits war eventually breaks out, the Tsai authorities will be the collective sinners to be punished.

PLA videos show combat readiness, not warmongering

Global Times (China), Sept. 23, Pg. 3 | Liu Xuanzun

A music video released by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Monday has gone viral, stoking passion in Chinese netizens, as the PLA soldiers vowed to be ready to fight and safeguard the country if a war breaks out.

The video, which caters to the domestic audience amid increasing military tensions in the Taiwan Straits and along the China-India border, shows the PLA's readiness for combat, but does not indicate that China is a bellicose country, or is eager to start a war, analysts said on Tuesday.

The PLA Eastern Theater Command and Southern Theater Command posted the music video titled "If a war breaks out today" on their Sina Weibo accounts on Monday.

The video shows scenes of PLA soldiers marching in the desert, jungle and mountains, and the PLA Rocket Force launching missiles. The song accompanying the video says, "Everyday I'm fully suited up, every minute I'm ready to go," and "I swear to my duty with my life: If a war breaks out, this will be my answer."

The hashtag "Eastern Theater Command releases inspiring music video" attracted more than 60 million views as of press time Tuesday, with mainstream Chinese media including, the People's Daily, also reposting.

In the comments section of the video, the Eastern Theater Command engaged with Chinese netizens. For instance, one netizen said, "Respect to the People's Army!" And the command responded with, "Motherland and the people, please be rest assured!"

On Saturday, the PLA Air Force also released a video on its Sina Weibo account, which introduced the H-6K bomber. Reuters said on Monday that it included a scene of H-6 bombers simulating an attack on what appears to be the Andersen Air Force Base on Guam.

Chinese analysts on military affairs said Chinese citizens are the target audience, and the videos are not meant to send a message to other countries that China is looking to start a war.

The Chinese people are never bellicose people, Chinese military expert and TV commentator Song Zhongping told the Global Times on Tuesday.

"But China is facing growing external pressure, and we are living in a world that is not peaceful, particularly when countries like the US keep provoking China's sovereignty, security and national interests," Song said, noting that this has left China with no choice but to consider self-defense through military means.

The videos also showed China's military capabilities, and other countries and Taiwan secessionists should not underestimate the PLA's resolve to safeguard the national sovereignty, analysts said.



NORTH KOREA:

North Korea's Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site: Evidence of Typhoon Damage

38North.org, Sept. 24 | Peter Makowsky, Frank Pabian and Jack Liu

Recent commercial satellite imagery of North Korea's Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site revealed significant storm damage to the road that runs the entirety of the complex area. Flood waters have washed out several sections of the roadway, limiting access to the site. However, the few remaining buildings on site (post-May 2018 demolition of the Main Administration Support Area) appear to have been spared.

While the flood waters have receded, imagery from September 17 revealed that the streambeds, which originate in the surrounding mountains and join near the portals area, before continuing through the valley toward the town of Punggye-ri, have been severely scoured, significantly widening their paths. This has destroyed bridges and several sections of the roadway, which run parallel to these streams.

There is no evidence yet of efforts being made to repair the roads in order to regain access to the site.

Portal Areas

The multiple typhoons that tore through North Korea resulted in flood damage to the main road leading to the test portals, cutting off any vehicle access in to or out of the area. The footbridge, which had provided the only remaining direct personnel access to the North Portal, has also been washed out. Additionally, the access road that connects the Main Administrative Support Area with the East Portal area has been severed by a small landslide. Significantly, most of the former spoil pile adjacent to the East Portal has been largely washed downstream as well.

Despite the damage to the surrounding roads and bridges, the buildings within the Main Administrative Support Area appear to be intact. However, it is not possible to determine whether they are currently occupied, as they appeared to be earlier this year.

There is no evidence to suggest that the flooding had any direct impact on any of the test tunnels,[1] but the damage to the main access road will require significant clean up and reconstruction before any future underground nuclear testing is viable.

Command Center and Security Barracks

The Command Center and security barracks appear to be undamaged, although recent erosion and the washing out of significant sections of the nearby dirt roads are evidence that flooding occurred in this area. Mudflows are seen throughout the Command Center Support Area, providing evidence that it was also inundated by the storms.

Possible ICBM Transport Vehicle Spotted in North Korea

https://freebeacon.com/national-security/possible-icbm-transport-vehicle-spotted-in-north-korea/?utm_source=actengage&utm_campaign=FreedomMail&utm_medium=email

By: [Jack Beyrer](#) for the WFB // SEPTEMBER 23, 2020 4:44 PM

A vehicle large enough to carry an intercontinental ballistic missile was spotted at a North Korean military parade training site, Voice of America [reported](#) Wednesday.

The vehicle was identified in a satellite image [obtained](#) by 38 North, an American security site that specializes in North Korean affairs. The dimensions of the vehicle suggest it could transport an ICBM, which has led to concerns that the missile may be deployed in a show of military might at an upcoming national anniversary parade. Additional satellite images indicate that North Korea has been preparing for weeks for a large-scale military parade on Oct. 10, the 75th anniversary of the founding of North Korea's Workers' Party.

At the beginning of this year, North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un announced he would soon unveil a devastating new weapons system, which some have speculated to be a solid-fuel ICBM. Other recent [dispatches](#) from North Korea detail the possible reveal of a submarine-launched missile system, which would also greatly expand Pyongyang's strike capacity. North Korea has not yet unveiled any of its developing weapons, as sanctions and a coronavirus-wracked economy have forced Kim to [suspend](#) all missile testing.

If North Korea makes a display of force with ICBMs, it could inflame tensions with the United States. President Trump has reportedly said that smaller displays from Kim would be "no problem," but a large-scale launch may merit a significant response. Analysts further [warn](#) that North Korea hopes to interfere with the upcoming U.S. presidential election.



SOUTH KOREA:

Top nuclear envoy to visit U.S. for talks on North Korea

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Sept. 24 | Not Attributed

SEOUL -- South Korea's chief nuclear envoy will visit the United States early next week for talks with his counterpart and other U.S. officials on North Korea issues, the foreign ministry said Thursday.

Lee Do-hoon, special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, will make a four-day visit to Washington starting Sunday for talks with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun, who doubles as the point man for North Korea.

He will also meet with other U.S. government officials.

"The two sides will have broad discussions on North Korea policy, including joint efforts to bring progress for the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and a lasting peace under the current circumstances," the ministry said in a release.

Nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang remain stalled since the collapse of the Hanoi summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Inter-Korean relations have also been strained after the North severed all communication channels with the South and blew up the joint liaison office in June.

Lee's planned trip also comes in the wake of North Korea's deadly shooting of a South Korean official found in waters near the maritime border this week.

Lee and Biegun last held talks over the phone early this month.



IRAN:

Iran vows 'hit' on all involved in U.S. killing of top general

Associated Press, Sept. 19 | Not Attributed

TEHRAN, Iran -- The chief of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard threatened Saturday to go after everyone who had a role in a top general's January killing during a U.S. drone strike in Iraq.

The guard's website quoted Gen. Hossein Salami as saying, "Mr. Trump! Our revenge for martyrdom of our great general is obvious, serious and real."

U.S. President Donald Trump warned this week that Washington would harshly respond to any Iranian attempts to take revenge for the death of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, tweeting that "if they hit us in any way, any form, written instructions already done we're going to hit them 1000 times harder."

The president's warning came in response to a report that Iran was plotting to assassinate the U.S. ambassador to South Africa in retaliation for Soleimani's killing at Baghdad's airport at the beginning of the year.

“We took out the world’s number one terrorist and the mass murderer of American troops and many, many troops and many people all over the world,” Trump said. “Qasem Soleimani is dead. He’s dead. Bad guy. Bad guy. Very bad guy.”

Salami rejected the report of an Iranian plot to assassinate Ambassador Lana Marks, but made clear that Iran intends to avenge the general's death.

“Do you think we hit a female ambassador in return to our martyred brother?” the general said. “We will hit those who had direct and indirect roles. You should know that everybody who had role in the event will be hit, and this is a serious message. We do prove everything in practice.”

In January, Iran launched a ballistic missile attack targeting U.S. soldiers in Iraq in response to the fatal drone strike.

Trump has stepped up economic pressure on Iran with sanctions since he pulled the United States out of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

Tehran has continued to expand its stockpile of enriched uranium and pressured other nations to offset the harm of U.S. sanctions, while insisting it does not want to develop a nuclear weapon.



INDIA:

Indigenously developed nuclear capable Prithvi-II missile test fired from ITR

<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/indigenously-developed-nuclear-capable-prithvi-ii-missile-testfired-from-itr-5877411.html>

The trial of the missile, which has a strike range of 350 km, was carried out from a mobile launcher from launch complex-3 of the ITR, a DRDO official said.

From” PTI // Sep 23, 2020 10:51 PM IST | Source: PTI

India on September 23 conducted a successful night testfire of its indigenously developed nuclear capable surface-to-surface Prithvi-II missile as part of a user trial by the Army from a base in Odisha, defence sources said.

The state-of-the-art missile was testfired from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur near here in darkness and the trial was successful in meeting all the parameters, they said. The trial of the missile, which has a strike range of 350 km, was carried out from a mobile launcher from launch complex-3 of the ITR, a DRDO official said. Describing the trial as a routine exercise, he said, the missile trajectory was tracked by radars, electro-optical tracking systems and telemetry stations by the DRDO along the coast of Odisha.

The missile was randomly chosen from the production stock and the entire launch activity was carried out by Strategic Force Command (SFC) of the Army and monitored by scientists of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of the training exercise, official sources said. The downrange teams on board a ship deployed near the designated impact point in the Bay of Bengal monitored the terminal events and splashdown.

The last night time testfire of Prithvi-II was conducted successfully from the ITR on November 20, 2019. Prithvi-II is capable of carrying 500 to 1,000 kg of warheads and is powered by liquid propulsion twin engines, thewarheads and is powered by liquid propulsion twin engines, the sources said. The state-of-the-art missile uses an advanced inertial guidance system with maneuvering trajectory to hit its target, they said.

Already inducted into the armoury of the defence forces in 2003, nine-metre long 'Prithvi' was the first missile to have been developed by DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

India, China commanders meet again on ending border standoff

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/india-china-commanders-meet-again-on-ending-border-standoff/ar-BB19fEoG?ocid=msedgdp>

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN for the Associated Press // 3 hrs ago

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Senior Indian and Chinese military commanders are holding talks Monday aimed at resolving a tense monthslong standoff along their disputed border in the mountainous Ladakh region.

Details of the talks, held on the Chinese side in the Moldo area facing the Indian-controlled Ladakh region, weren't immediately disclosed. For the first time, a senior Indian foreign ministry official was also participating in the military-level meeting, said an Indian official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with government regulations. There was no information immediately available from Beijing.

Despite several rounds of talks by military, diplomatic and political officials, including negotiations between the two countries' foreign and defense ministers in Moscow this month, the border tensions have persisted. Monday's military-level talks come less than two weeks after the two nations' foreign ministers met on Sept. 10 and agreed that their troops should disengage from the tense border standoff, maintain proper distance and ease tensions.

The foreign ministers did not set any timeline for the disengagement of the tens of thousands of troops, backed by artilleries, tanks and fighter jets, that have been in the region since the standoff began in May. Military experts have repeatedly warned that any mistake or miscalculation from either side can have disastrous consequences beyond the cold desert region of Ladakh. Both India and China have provided little information, but media in the two countries have given extensive coverage to the escalating tensions, which have dramatically changed their bilateral relations.

The standoff in Ladakh escalated in June to the deadliest violence between the sides in decades — a clash on a high ridge between soldiers using clubs, stones and their fists. Twenty Indian soldiers were killed. China is believed to have also suffered casualties, but has not given any details. After that clash, the two countries partially disengaged from the site in the Galwan Valley and at least two other places, but the crisis has continued in at least three other areas, including glacial Pangong Lake.

In recent weeks, the Asian giants have accused each other of sending soldiers into each other's territory in the Pangong area and firing warning shots for the first time in 45 years, raising the specter of a full-scale military conflict. Relations between the two countries have often been strained, partly due to their undemarcated border. They fought a border war in 1962 that spilled into Ladakh and ended in an uneasy truce. Since then, troops have guarded the undefined border, referred as the Line of Actual Control, while occasionally brawling.

They have agreed not to attack each other with firearms. The fiercely contested control line separates Chinese- and Indian-held territories from Ladakh in the west to India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety. It is broken in parts where the Himalayan nations of Nepal and Bhutan border China. According to India, the de facto border is 3,488 kilometers (2,167 miles) long, while China says it is considerably shorter. As its name suggests, it divides the areas of physical control rather than territorial claims.



PAKISTAN:

Nuclear Weapons Are Central To Pakistan's War Strategy Against India

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/nuclear-weapons-are-central-pakistans-war-strategy-against-india-169122>

Pakistan's nuclear program goes back to the 1950s, during the early days of its rivalry with India.

by [Kyle Mizokami](#) for The National Interest // September 20, 2020

Here's What You Need To Remember: Pakistan is clearly developing a robust nuclear capability that can not only deter but fight a nuclear war. It is also dealing with internal security issues that could threaten the integrity of its nuclear arsenal.

Sandwiched between Iran, China, India and Afghanistan, Pakistan lives in a complicated neighborhood with a variety of security issues. One of the nine known states known to have nuclear weapons, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and doctrine are continually evolving to match perceived threats. A nuclear power for decades, Pakistan is now attempting to construct a nuclear triad of its own, making its nuclear arsenal resilient and capable of devastating retaliatory strikes.

Pakistan's nuclear program goes back to the 1950s, during the early days of its rivalry with India. President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto [famously said](#) in 1965, "If India builds the bomb, we will eat grass or leaves, even go hungry, but we will get one of our own." The program became a higher priority after the country's 1971 defeat at the hands of India, which caused East Pakistan to break away and become Bangladesh.

Experts believe the humiliating loss of territory, [much more](#) than reports that India was pursuing nuclear weapons, accelerated the Pakistani nuclear program. India tested its first bomb, codenamed "Smiling Buddha," in May 1974, putting the subcontinent on the road to nuclearization. Pakistan began the process of accumulating the necessary fuel for nuclear weapons, enriched uranium and plutonium.

The country was particularly helped by one A. Q. Khan, a metallurgist working in the West who returned to his home country in 1975 with centrifuge designs and business contacts necessary to begin the enrichment process. Pakistan's program was assisted by European countries and a clandestine equipment-acquisition program designed to do an end run on nonproliferation efforts. Outside countries eventually dropped out as the true purpose of the program became clear, but the clandestine effort continued.

Exactly when Pakistan had completed its first nuclear device is murky. Former president Benazir Bhutto, Zulfikar Bhutto's daughter, [claimed](#) that her father told her the first device was ready by 1977. A member of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission said design of the bomb was completed in 1978 and the bomb was "cold tested"—stopping short of an actual explosion—in 1983. Benazir Bhutto later claimed that Pakistan's bombs were stored disassembled until 1998, when India tested six bombs in a span of three days.

Nearly three weeks later, Pakistan conducted a similar rapid-fire testing schedule, setting off five bombs in a single day and a sixth bomb three days later. The first device, estimated at twenty-five to thirty kilotons, may have been a boosted uranium device. The second was estimated at twelve kilotons, and the next three as sub-kiloton devices. The sixth and final device appears to have also been a twelve-kiloton bomb that was detonated at a different testing range; a U.S. Air Force "Constant Phoenix" nuclear-detection aircraft reportedly detected plutonium afterward.

Since Pakistan had been working on a uranium bomb and North Korea—which shared or purchased research with Pakistan through the A. Q. Khan network—had been working on a uranium bomb, some outside observers concluded the sixth test was [actually a North Korean test](#), detonated elsewhere to conceal North Korea's involvement although. There is no consensus on this conclusion.

Experts believe Pakistan's nuclear stockpile is steadily growing. In 1998, the stockpile was estimated at five to twenty-five devices, depending on how much enriched uranium each bomb required. Today Pakistan is estimated to have an arsenal of 110 to 130 nuclear bombs. In 2015 the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Stimson Center [estimated Pakistan's bomb-making capability at twenty devices annually](#), which on top of the existing stockpile meant Pakistan could quickly become the third-largest nuclear power in the world.

[Other observers](#), however, believe Pakistan can only develop another forty to fifty warheads in the near future. Pakistani nuclear weapons are under control of the military's Strategic Plans Division, and are primarily stored in Punjab Province, far from the northwest frontier and the Taliban. Ten thousand Pakistani troops and intelligence personnel from the SPD guard the weapons. Pakistan claims that the weapons are only armed by the appropriate code at the last moment, preventing a "rogue nuke" scenario.

Pakistani nuclear doctrine appears to be to deter what it considers an economically, politically and militarily stronger India. The nuclear standoff is exacerbated by the traditional animosity between the two countries, the several wars the two countries have fought, and events such as the 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai, which were directed by Pakistan. Unlike neighboring India and China, Pakistan does not have a "no first use" doctrine, and reserves the right to use nuclear weapons, particularly low-yield tactical nuclear weapons, to offset India's advantage in conventional forces.

Pakistan currently has a nuclear "triad" of nuclear delivery systems based on land, in the air and at sea. Islamabad is believed to have modified American-built F-16A fighters and possibly French-made Mirage fighters to deliver nuclear bombs by 1995. Since the fighters would have to

penetrate India's air defense network to deliver their payloads against cities and other targets, Pakistani aircraft would likely be deliver tactical nuclear weapons against battlefield targets.

Land-based delivery systems are in the form of missiles, with many designs based on or influenced by Chinese and North Korean designs. The Hatf series of mobile missiles includes the solid-fueled [Hatf-III](#) (180 miles), solid-fueled [Hatf-IV](#) (466 miles) and liquid-fueled [Hatf V](#), (766 miles). The CSIS Missile Threat Initiative believes that as of 2014, [Hatf VI](#) (1242 miles) is likely in service. Pakistan is also developing a [Shaheen III](#) intermediate-range missile capable of striking targets out to 1708 miles, in order to strike the Nicobar and Andaman Islands.

The sea component of Pakistan's nuclear force consists of the Babur class of cruise missiles. The latest version, Babur-2, looks like most modern cruise missiles, with a bullet-like shape, a cluster of four tiny tail wings and two stubby main wings, all powered by a turbofan or turbojet engine. The cruise missile has a range of 434 miles. Instead of GPS guidance, which could be disabled regionally by the U.S. government, Babur-2 uses older Terrain Contour Matching (TERCOM) and Digital Scene Matching and Area Co-relation (DSMAC) navigation technology.

Babur-2 is deployed on both land and at sea on ships, where they would be more difficult to neutralize. A submarine-launched version, [Babur-3](#), was tested in January and would be the most survivable of all Pakistani nuclear delivery systems. Pakistan is clearly developing a robust nuclear capability that can not only deter but fight a nuclear war. It is also dealing with internal security issues that could threaten the integrity of its nuclear arsenal. Pakistan and India are clearly in the midst of a nuclear arms race that could, in relative terms, lead to absurdly high nuclear stockpiles reminiscent of the Cold War. It is clear that an arms-control agreement for the subcontinent is desperately needed.

Kyle Mizokami is a defense and national-security writer based in San Francisco who has appeared in the Diplomat, Foreign Policy, War is Boring and the Daily Beast.



UNITED KINGDOM:

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FRANCE:

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ISRAEL:

Esper, meeting with Gantz, reaffirms commitment to Israel's regional military edge

Al-Monitor Staff

Sep 23, 2020

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz met with US Defense Secretary Mark Esper at the Pentagon on Tuesday to discuss maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge in the region amid a Trump administration proposal to sell the United Arab Emirates the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft. "The defense relationship between the US and Israel has never been stronger. And we intend to keep it that way," Esper said.

Esper called the long-standing US policy to maintain Israel's regional military superiority "a cornerstone" of the US-Israel relationship. "The United States is committed to that and the Department of Defense is committed to that," he said.

Al-Monitor had earlier reported that Gantz was likely to request that Israel be given additional hardware to ensure its military edge, and that it be given the option to sell advanced US-Israeli drone technology to the UAE.

Reuters reported Tuesday that US officials are exploring ways to enable Israeli radar to detect the UAE's potential future F-35s, but could not determine whether that meant modifying Israeli systems or the F-35s.

Sign Up

The United States is reportedly hoping to have an agreement signed by UAE National Day on Dec. 2.

Israel's Ynet news reported that Gantz arrived in Washington seeking additional US military hardware to compensate for the proposed UAE sale, including expediting an existing \$2.4 billion sale of KC-46 refueling aircraft and future access to the new F-15 EX, an updated variant of the F-15 with larger payload capacity and updated electronic systems.

Gantz on Tuesday emphasized the centrality of Washington militarily favoring Israel to the two countries' relationship.

"It is in our interest to share with you anything we can possibly share, and we will continue those relations into the future," he said. "We see both as a privilege but also as a ... strategic necessity. And we're going to make sure it stays like this."

Iran's increased military adventurism in the region is one reason for closer defense and intelligence coordination between the United States and Israel in recent years.

But a number of Israeli officials vocally criticized the US offer to sell the F-35 to the UAE amid negotiations aimed at getting Abu Dhabi to normalize relations with Israel.

Gantz, too, was reportedly incensed after news of the potential arrangement leaked last month, but seemed more assured after meeting with President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior Middle East adviser Jared Kushner and US national security adviser Robert O'Brien late last month.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, White House adviser Avi Berkowitz and special envoy for Iran Brian Hook were also in the Aug. 30 meeting.

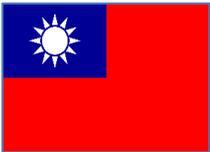
The defense minister opened his trip to Washington on Tuesday with a meeting with Kushner, who is leading efforts to convince Arab states to recognize Israel ahead of the Nov. 3 US presidential election.

Last week the foreign ministers of the UAE and Bahrain signed their countries' normalization agreement with Israel alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House.



JAPAN:

NSTR



TAWIAN:

Taiwan military says it has right to counter attack amid China threats

Reuters, Sept. 21 | Yimou Lee

TAIPEI -- Taiwan said on Monday its armed forces have the right to self-defence and counter attack amid "harassment and threats", in an apparent warning to China, which last week sent numerous jets across the mid-line of the sensitive Taiwan Strait.

Tensions have sharply spiked in recent months between Taipei and Beijing, which claims democratically run Taiwan as its own territory, to be taken by force if needed.

Chinese aircraft crossed the mid-line to enter the island's air defence identification zone on Friday and Saturday, prompting Taiwan to scramble jets to intercept them, and President Tsai Ing-wen to call China a threat to the region.

In a statement, Taiwan's defence ministry said it had "clearly defined" procedures for the island's first response amid "high frequency of harassment and threats from the enemy's warships and aircraft this year".

It said Taiwan had the right to "self-defence and to counter attack" and followed the guideline of "no escalation of conflict and no triggering incidents".

Taiwan would not provoke, but it was also "not afraid of the enemy", it added.

Taiwanese and Chinese combat aircraft normally observe the mid-line of the Taiwan Strait and do not cross it, although there is no official agreement between Taipei and Beijing on doing so, and the rule is observed unofficially.

"Taiwan is an inseparable part of Chinese territory," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters in Beijing. "The so-called mid-line of the Strait does not exist."

Since 2016 Taiwan has reported only five Chinese incursions across the line, including the two last week.

The drills came as Beijing expressed anger at the visit of a senior U.S. official to Taipei.

On Monday, the official China Daily newspaper said the United States was trying to use Taiwan to contain China but nobody should underestimate its determination to assert its sovereignty over the island.

"The U.S. administration should not be blinkered in its desperation to contain the peaceful rise of China and indulge in the U.S. addiction to its hegemony," it said in an editorial.

China has been angered by stepped-up U.S. support for Taiwan, including two visits in as many months by top officials, one in August by Health Secretary Alex Azar and the other last week by Keith Krach, undersecretary for economic affairs.

The United States, which has no official diplomatic ties with the island but is its strongest international backer, is also planning major new arms sales to Taiwan.

China this month held rare large-scale drills near Taiwan, which Taipei called serious provocation. China said the exercise was a necessity to protect its sovereignty.



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TURKEY:

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