

WASHINGTON ICBM CONTRACTORS (ICons) GROUP



4 Oct 2020

Oct ICons:

Location: Virtual

Date: TBD

Time: TBD

ADMINISTRATION/PROGRAM SPECIFICS

Thank you Minot AFB for the important work you do

Minot Daily News Online, 28 Sep 20

A big congratulations to the men and women of the 5th Bomb Wing and 91st Missile Wing at Minot Air Force Base for their recent accomplishments in receiving Omaha Trophies for their outstanding support to U.S. Strategic Command's strategic deterrence mission.

Navy Adm. Charles Richard, commander of U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt AFB, Nebraska, announced the recipients of the 2019 trophies last week.

For a military unit to receive an Omaha Trophy is a very prestigious and coveted honor.

The Minot AFB bomb wing is being honored in the Strategic Bomber category and the Minot AFB missile wing is being honored with in the intercontinental ballistic missile category.

Along with the two Minot AFB units, a Navy unit and two other Air Force units were also recognized for outstanding work in 2019.

“The dedicated professionals working for and with USSTRATCOM (U.S. Strategic Command) allow the Command to execute its operations and provide the nation with its strategic deterrent against threats in all domains,” said Richard when announcing the awards last week. “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 awards are a testament to the incredible efforts of the airmen and women at Minot Air Force Base, both in the 5th Bomb Wing and the 91st Missile Wing,” noted Sen. John Hoeven, in extending congratulations to the Minot AFB award recipients. “Minot Air Force Base plays an integral role in the nation's defense, and we continue working to modernize and upgrade our nuclear forces to ensure their future success in defending our nation and deterring the aggressions of our adversaries.”

Minot AFB is commended for winning two of the five Omaha Trophy award categories.

IRAN - Sweeping U.S. Measures to Support Return of UN Sanctions

Relating to Iran's Nuclear, Missile, and Conventional Arms Programs

<https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/2020/iran-200921-state02.htm> ----- [In-Depth Coverage](#)

Fact Sheet - Office of the Spokesperson - September 21, 2020

“Our message is very, very simple: the United States will never allow the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism to freely buy and sell planes, tanks, missiles, and other kinds of conventional weapons. These UN sanctions will continue the arms embargo.”

– **Secretary Pompeo, August 20, 2020.**

“When we’ve seen any country violate our current sanctions, the current American sanctions, we’ve held every nation accountable for that. We’ll do the same thing with respect to the broader UN Security Council sanctions as well.”

– **Secretary Pompeo, August 19, 2020.**

THE UNITED STATES IMPOSES SWEEPING MEASURES TO PRESSURE IRAN’S NUCLEAR, MISSILE, AND CONVENTIONAL ARMS EFFORTS

On September 19 at 8 p.m. Eastern time, virtually all UN sanctions on Iran were re-imposed. On September 21, to support these UN measures, the United States imposed sanctions on:

- Iranian persons directly involved in Iran’s activities that resulted in Iran’s accumulation of enriched uranium in excess of Iran’s commitments;
- Iranian persons on whom UN sanctions are being re-imposed; Iranian persons who support Iran’s ballistic missile programs and who have been associated with an Iranian organization that has played a key role in Iran-North Korea missile cooperation; and
- Iran’s Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics and the illegitimate dictator of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, under the new, broad sanctions authority pertaining to conventional arms related transfers to and from Iran that was issued by President Trump on September 21, 2020.

Now that virtually all UN sanctions have been re-imposed on Iran, stakeholders worldwide are warned that the United States will aggressively use U.S. sanctions authorities to impose consequences for failures to comply with the snapped-back UN measures on Iran and ensure that Iran does not reap the benefits of UN-prohibited activity.

NUCLEAR-RELATED MEASURES

In recent months, Iran has not only continued to engage in nuclear extortion by expanding its uranium enrichment program, but also failed to fully address multiple, separate questions raised by the IAEA about possible undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran. As a part of the fatally flawed nuclear deal, Iran made nuclear commitments that it has failed to uphold, including commitments related to the enrichment level of Iran’s uranium and the quantity of Iran’s enriched uranium, research and development involving advanced centrifuges, enrichment of uranium at the formerly clandestine Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, and accumulation of heavy water. These actions are unacceptable and underscore the continued threat posed by Iran’s nuclear program to international peace and security.

On September 19, as a result of a U.S. initiative at the UN, UN nuclear-related restrictions on Iran snapped back, including a binding obligation on Iran to suspend all enrichment-related activities. Today, the Departments of State, Treasury, and Commerce took coordinated action to increase pressure on Iran’s nuclear program as a part of addressing this threat from the Iranian regime.

The Department of State designates, pursuant to E.O. 13382 (WMD Proliferators and Their Supporters), Hamid Reza Ghadirian and Ahmad Asghari Shiva’i, who are centrally involved in Iran’s uranium enrichment centrifuge operations.

Hamid Reza Ghadirian is a Group Director in the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI). Ghadirian has supported the installation of advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges and has supported the installation of uranium enrichment centrifuges that are used to increase Iran's enriched uranium stockpile. Ghadirian has arranged for the delivery of items needed to assemble Iranian centrifuges and has supervised centrifuge testing activities to ensure such centrifuges would work as intended. Ghadirian has participated in Iranian centrifuge operations that have resulted in Iran accumulating a stockpile of low enriched uranium in excess of that permitted by Iran's JCPOA commitments.

Ahmad Asghari Shiva'i is the head of the TESA (the Iran Centrifuge Technology Company) Kashan Complex. In 2011, the State Department designated TESA pursuant to E.O. 13382. The TESA Kashan Complex, of which Shiva'i is the head, is located at AEOI's Natanz Uranium Enrichment Facility and is responsible for uranium gas centrifuge machine assembly, installation, and startup.

The Department of the Treasury designates, pursuant to E.O. 13382, Pezhman Rahimian, Behrouz Kamalvandi, the Nuclear Science and Technology Research Institute (NSTRI), Mesbah Energy Company, the Advanced Technologies Company of Iran (IATC), Javad Karimi Sabet, and Mohammad Qannadi.

- Pezhman Rahimian is AEOI Deputy Head for Raw Material and Nuclear Fuel and the Managing Director of Iran's Nuclear Fuel and Raw Materials Production Company. Rahimian has been involved in activities related to domestic manufacturing of fuel for Iranian nuclear reactors.
- Behrouz Kamalvandi is the spokesman for AEOI. Kamalvandi has played a central role in Iran's nuclear extortion, including threatening Europe that if it did not help Iran, then Iran would cease performing its nuclear commitments such that nothing would remain of the nuclear deal.
- NSTRI has research schools and laboratories related to plasma physics, nuclear fusion, and nuclear physics and accelerations.
- Mesbah Energy Company is responsible for Iranian heavy water production.

UNSCR 2231 removed a number of individuals and entities from the UN sanctions list. During the five years that followed the adoption of UNSCR 2231, the Security Council failed to uphold its mission maintaining international peace and security with regard to Iran, and not a single individual or entity was designated for sanctions under UNSCR 2231 during this five-year period. Today, to underscore that the U.S. will use our authorities to reinforce vitally important sanctions imposed by the UN, the Treasury Department is designating Javad Karimi Sabet and Mohammad Qannadi, upon whom UN sanctions were reimposed on September 19.

Javad Karimi Sabet is an AEOI Deputy Head and the head of NSTRI. Among his responsibilities, Sabet works on nuclear fuel research. Mohammad Qannadi is the AEOI Deputy Head of Nuclear Planning and Strategic Supervision. NSTRI, Mesbah, and IATC are being designated for being owned or controlled by AEOI. Sabet, Kamalvandi, Rahimian, and Qannadi are being designated for acting for or on behalf of AEOI.

The Department of Commerce adds five Iranian nationals to the Commerce Department's Entity List, which imposes specific U.S. license requirements for the export, reexport, or transfer of specific items. Specifically, Ahmad Nozad Gholik, Behnam Pouremani,

Hamid Sepehrian, Mojtaba Farhadi Ganjeh, and Sayyed Javad Ahmadi are being added to the Entity List for nuclear-related activities that are contrary to the national security and/or foreign policy of the United States.

Behnam Pouremadi, Hamid Sepehrian, and Mojtaba Farhadi Ganjeh are associated with Iran's Jabber Ibn Hayan Laboratory (JHL), an AEOI lab that was designated by the UN Security Council in resolution 1803. Pouremadi has sought to acquire sensitive equipment and materials for AEOI using deceptive practices and obfuscation techniques. Ganjeh has worked with overseas Iranian procurement agents to acquire sensitive nuclear-related items, including Western items. He has also traveled overseas for training and has sought to obtain information in support of AEOI technical questions. Ahmad Nozad Gholik is associated with an AEOI subsidiary that implements various projects in the nuclear field and has worked with overseas Iranian procurement agents to procure sensitive items, including items that can be used in spent nuclear fuel reprocessing. Sayyed Javad Ahmadi is an AEOI employee who has traveled overseas for nuclear-related meetings.

MISSILE-RELATED MEASURES

Iran's development and proliferation of ballistic missiles poses a critical threat to global security. The pace of Iran's missile launches and tests did not diminish after the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2231, which weakened UN restrictions on Iran's missile program. On the contrary, Iran continues to prioritize its missile force development. In the past year and a half, Iran has launched over 50 ballistic missiles. Iran has provided missile capabilities to its partners and proxies in the region.

On September 19, as a result of U.S. action at the UN, legally-binding restrictions on Iran's missile program, including an obligation for Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using ballistic missile technology, were snapped back.

The Department of the Treasury designates two Iranian missile officials and updates the sanctions listings for another Iranian missile leader and key Iranian missile organization. One of Iran's Aerospace Industries Organization (AIO)'s subordinate organizations is the UN-designated Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group (SHIG), which is in charge of liquid-propellant ballistic missile development.

Treasury is targeting this threat by designating Asghar Esma'ilpur and Mohammad Gholami pursuant to E.O. 13382. Esma'ilpur has served as the Director of SHIG's Shahid Haj Ali Movahed Research Center. He is currently a senior official in Iran's AIO. Mohammad Gholami was a long-time SHIG Shahid Haj Ali Movahed Research Center senior official. Both Esma'ilpur and Gholami participated in and supported the launch of a space launch vehicle that was launched with support and assistance from North Korean missile specialists.

Treasury is also updating the sanctions listing for SHIG's Shahid Haj Ali Movahed Research Center, which was designated pursuant to E.O. 13382 on January 17, 2016. SHIG's Shahid Haj Ali Movahed Research Center is also known as SHIG Department 7500 and is responsible for the integration, final assembly, and testing of liquid propellant ballistic missiles and space launch vehicles. The Shahid Haj Ali Movahed Research Center has played a key role in Iran-North Korea missile cooperation. Treasury is also updating the sanctions listing for Seid Mir Ahmad Nooshin, who was designated pursuant to E.O. 13382 on January 17, 2016 and who was previously the Director of SHIG and now serves as the Director of Iran's Aerospace Industries Organization. As the Director of SHIG, Nooshin was key to negotiations with the North Koreans on long-range missile development projects.

Treasury also designated a network of two entities and three individuals associated with the provision of support to SHIG. Iran-based Mammut Industries and Mammut Diesel are key producers and suppliers of military-grade, dual-use goods for Iran's missile program. Since the early 2000s, Mammut Industries has supported the production of ballistic missile equipment for Iran's AIO and SHIG. As of late 2019, Mammut Industries continued to support SHIG's production of ballistic missile equipment. Also being designated today are Mehrzad Ferdows, an owner and the CEO of Mammut Industries; Behzad Ferdows, another owner of Mammut Industries; and Mohammad Reza Dezfulian, who has acted or purported to act for or on behalf of Mammut Diesel.

CONVENTIONAL ARMS-RELATED MEASURES

Iran has continued to defy the international community by providing arms to groups abroad in contravention of the UN arms embargo, including to terrorist organizations and Iranian partners across the Middle East, such as in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and Bahrain. These groups use Iranian weapons, training, and funding to destabilize the region and spread violence. In addition to Iran's violation of the arms embargo with regard to Iran's support for armed groups, Iran has also continued to use its arsenal of conventional weapons to directly destabilize the Middle East, including Iran's brazen September 2019 attack on Saudi Arabia.

On September 19, as a result of U.S. action at the UN, the arms embargo with regard to Iran that was set to expire in October was extended indefinitely. On September 21, 2020, President Donald J. Trump signed a new Executive Order "Blocking Property of Certain Persons with Respect to the Conventional Arms Activities of Iran" that provides a specific, durable authority to counter Iran's conventional arms acquisitions, Iran's indigenous manufacturing programs, and Iran's ability to support paramilitary organizations with arms and materiel.

Secretary Pompeo designates Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL), Iran's Defense Industries Organization (DIO) and its director Mehrdad Akhlaghi-Ketabchi, as well as the illegitimate dictator of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, for having engaged, or attempted to engage, in activity that materially contributes to the supply, sale, or transfer directly or indirectly to or from Iran, or for the use in or benefit of Iran, of arms or related materiel, including spare parts.

For nearly two years, the corrupt Iranian and Venezuelan regimes have flouted the UN arms embargo. The two states have continued to exchange defense delegations and have spent significant resources to develop plans, which likely have progressed to include arms sales. The relationship between Iran's Defense Industries Organization and its Director Mehrdad Akhlaghi-Ketabchi, the Iranian Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics, and Venezuelan officials led by the illegitimate dictator of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, are the basis for this most recent scheme. Our placing sanctions on Maduro today is a warning that should be heard clearly worldwide: no matter who you are, if you violate the UN arms embargo on Iran, you risk sanctions.

DoD seeking legislative help for ICBM replacement construction costs

https://www.defensenews.com/smr/nuclear-arsenal/2020/09/25/dod-seeking-legislative-help-for-icbm-replacement-construction-costs/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2009.28.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

By: [Aaron Mehta](#) for Defense News // 2 days ago

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Defense Department hopes Congress will approve a change in how it funds its [next-generation ICBM](#) in order to avoid what it views as unnecessary contract bureaucracy.

Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee last week, [Pentagon acquisition head Ellen Lord](#) said the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) program [was moving along as planned](#), but indicated a military construction issue remains to be solved. “We do have a lot of money allocated through the MILCON methodology, and whereas we have 500 separate items that need to be updated, that would be rather onerous to have 500 different or so projects,” Lord said. “We’re looking at consolidating that, to streamlining it. “So we’re very, very interested to see what comes out of conference, but we would ask [Congress] that we move some of that money out of MILCON to give us the flexibility on the program execution side to move forward along the timelines,” she continued. “Our job in acquisition and sustainment to not transition programmatic risks over to operational risk, and I’m afraid if we don’t move some of that money out of MILCON that’s exactly what we would be doing.”

While discussions around the GBSD program often focuses on the missiles themselves, each of the 450 existing Minuteman III ICBM launch facility locations, as well as up to 45 launch center sites tied to the current ICBM infrastructure, need to be redone in some way to [accommodate the new capability](#). Everything from the physical buildings at the staging areas above the launch sites to the doors and missile suspension systems inside the silos need to be updated.

Under current requirements, the Pentagon would have to report and budget each of the nearly 500 different building locations — spread across three operational wings, five states and 31,500 square miles — as their own military construction cases. Given that the same scope of work would be happening at multiple locations, the department believes it simply makes sense to combine those into one pot of money for ease of planning. Should that not happen, the department warns, there could be delays in getting the silos updated and ready for the GBSD program on time, warned DoD spokeswoman Jessica Maxwell, who said in a statement to Defense News that the conversion from Minuteman to GBSD “must occur on a precise timeline to maintain the operational readiness of ICBMs.”

In order to hit the target full operational capability date of 2036, Maxwell said, the Air Force needs to convert one launch facility per week for nine years. Things get complicated by the fact that some of the Minuteman ICBMs are set to age out of service during this period, meaning Pentagon planners are nervous that any delay could lead to a degradation of ICBM capability, including the goal of having 400 missiles on alert at all times. That level of synchronization will not be possible “if authorities and responsibilities for the conversion effort are split over multiple contractors, as required by current law,” Maxwell said.

As a result, the Air Force submitted a fiscal 2021 legislative proposal that would allow the use of research, development, test and engineering (RDT&E) and missile procurement funding to cover conversion costs for the launch facilities and centers. But Lord’s team is working with Congress to see if there are any options for new legislative language that would allow the projects at one installation — say, all the launch facilities tied to F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming — to be combined into one contract.

Todd Harrison, a budgetary expert with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the Pentagon’s request “makes perfect sense,” as the traditional MILCON funding “would be excessively burdensome” for the project. “They would have to break the funding up by each individual site,

which would mean about 500 different MILCON projects for this one program. If they could centralize this funding in one account (or fewer accounts) it would allow more flexibility to reallocate funding as necessary between sites and to manage the program in a more coordinated manner,” he said.

However, the way forward may be tricky, Harrison warned. MILCON appropriations go through the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations subcommittee, while RDT&E funding flows through the defense subcommittee – and crossing jurisdictional lines often creates problems in Congress.

Trump administration orders assessment on bolstering nuclear warheads as talks with Russia stall

https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/28/trump-russia-nuclear-deal-talks-422736?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2009.29.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief
U.S. diplomats are trying to play hardball with Russia in negotiations over whether to extend New START.

By [DANIEL LIPPMAN](#), [BRYAN BENDER](#) and [LARA SELIGMAN](#) for Politico // 09/28/2020 06:03 PM EDT

The Trump administration has asked the military to assess how quickly it could pull nuclear weapons out of storage and load them onto bombers and submarines if an arms control treaty with Russia is allowed to expire in February, according to three people familiar with the discussions.

The request to U.S. Strategic Command in Nebraska is part of a strategy to pressure Moscow into renegotiating the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty before the U.S. presidential election, the people said. In making the request, the Trump administration wants to underscore that it is serious about letting the treaty lapse if Russia fails to meet U.S. demands. The negotiating team is leery that Russia is dragging out the talks in the hope that Joe Biden — who has pledged to extend New START under what Moscow believes will be more favorable terms than what this White House is offering — wins the election.

“It’s a clear signal that the costs for not negotiating before the election are going to go up,” said one of the people, who requested anonymity to relay sensitive discussions. The Trump administration is “trying to create an incentive, and it’s a real incentive, for the Russians to sit down and actually negotiate.” The request for the assessment came in the last two weeks from a group of officials at the National Security Council and State, Defense and Energy departments that’s supporting Ambassador Marshall Billingslea in negotiations with Moscow to try to replace New START before it runs out in February.

The assessment will determine how long it would take to load nuclear weapons now in reserve onto long-range bombers, ballistic missile submarines and land-based silos to beef up the U.S. nuclear force in the event Russia increases its arsenal. It comes as Billingslea has publicly raised the possibility of putting more weapons on bombers and submarines if New START lapses and has sharpened his rhetoric in recent days to try to secure more concessions from the Russians.

“It would certainly be a question that you would want to ask STRATCOM,” said retired Air Force **Lt. Gen. Frank Klotz**, who oversaw nuclear forces before serving as head of the DOE’s National Nuclear Security Administration. “You would want to fully understand all the possible implications of your negotiating approach, both if it should succeed or, alternatively, if it should fail.”

But former senior arms control and military officials also consider the move a risky gambit. It could send a message that the Trump administration, which has already pulled out of two other nuclear-related treaties with Russia, is no longer interested in any limits on the world's largest arsenals. And it could goad the Russians into taking similar steps. "I call that megaphone diplomacy," said Rose Gottemoeller, who served as deputy secretary general of NATO until last year and negotiated New START when she was at the State Department.

"Do we want to end up in a less stable place? Because we would be nuclear arms racing." "It's very stupid," added a former GOP arms control official who declined to be identified because he still advises the government. "It makes absolutely no sense to threaten to upload. It becomes a valid leveraging point only if the other side can't do it. The Russians can do it, too." "But more importantly," this person added, "the systems we have deployed today are the ones we believe are necessary to provide an adequate deterrent.

There is no obvious reason and every reason not to in the absence of a change in the threat. It's not going to scare the Russians. The likelihood of success with the Russians is about nil." A State Department spokesperson declined to comment on Billingslea's behalf. Capt. Bill Clinton, a spokesperson for Strategic Command, declined to address the military's role in the deliberations. "We don't talk about future operations, and really can't speculate on arms control talks (as that is not [our] responsibility)," he wrote in an email.

An NSC spokesperson declined to comment. New START, signed in 2010, mandated both sides draw down to [1,550 deployed strategic weapons](#) and includes provisions to verify compliance, including reciprocal on-site inspections of nuclear bases. The pact is set to expire on Feb. 5 unless both sides agree to an extension for up to five years. At the outset of negotiations in June, the U.S. also insisted that China be party to any new agreement, but dropped that demand after Beijing balked.

The U.S. negotiating team has insisted on a number of Russian concessions: a commitment to follow-on talks about a new arms deal that includes all U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons; a pledge to eventually bring in China, which is projected to double its relatively small nuclear arsenal in the next decade; and strong compliance measures. Billingslea's current public negotiating position is that the U.S. and Russia must agree on at least the outlines of a new framework that both Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin can sign in order for Washington to consider extending New START.

Asked in an interview published last week by a Russian newspaper if the Trump administration would scrap the treaty if the two sides can't agree on such a "presidential agreement," Billingslea responded, "absolutely." "In such a situation, we will not extend the treaty," he told Kommersant, according to an English translation of the interview. "Given all the deficiencies of New START, we consider it disadvantageous to the United States. It imposes constraints on the United States that it does not impose on Russia."

In the same interview, Billingslea also indicated that the United States would take steps to increase the number of its deployed nuclear warheads if the pact is not extended. "If that doesn't happen, we will simply reconvert our weapons as soon as the treaty expires in February," he told the newspaper. Billingslea also said that the longer the Russians delay, the less attractive it would be for Moscow.

“I suspect that after President Trump wins reelection, if Russia has not taken up our offer, that the price of admission, as we would say in the U.S., goes up,” he said. [Billinglea has previously also threatened](#) that the U.S. could spend Russia, as well as China, “into oblivion” in a [nuclear arms race](#). Already, the U.S. and Russia have a much larger number of weapons in storage that could be placed on alert if they decided to take that course.

According to the [Federation of American Scientists’ Nuclear Security Project](#), which tracks global inventories of atomic arms, the **U.S. has 3,800 warheads** stockpiled, while **Russia has 4,310**. Some in reserve could be made ready to deploy more quickly than others, according to [Hans Kristensen](#), director of FAS’ Nuclear Security Project. Of the three legs of the nuclear triad — bombers, submarines and missile silos — the quickest would be the bombers.

“Those weapons are just a few hundred yards from the aircraft,” Kristensen said. “They could be loaded in days. Others would have to be transported to the bases. Maybe a week or so.” Next would be the fleet of Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines, beginning with those already in port and the rest when they return from deployment. Finally, there are the intercontinental ballistic missiles deployed in underground silos at bases in North Dakota, Wyoming and Montana.

“The slowest leg would be the ICBMs,” Kristensen said. “They only have so much capacity to do that. That’s a very slow process. That would take a long time for 400 silos. Many months.” Both the ICBMs and the subs currently carry only one nuclear warhead on each missile, but they are designed to carry more. If the U.S. decides to upload all of its reserve force, “it would more than double the deployed force,” Kristensen added. “The question of course is why.”

To the Trump administration, the STRATCOM assessment is necessary to be prepared for the treaty to expire, but also to strengthen its hand with the Russians. “I think there’s an element of, ‘the Russians might not make a deal, we need to be ready,’” said a former White House official who is one of the three people familiar with negotiations. “The administration is planning on what to do the day after. They want to be ready, but being ready doesn’t actually mean that they will.”

“We don’t just want to rubber stamp New START, so we need to start doing some prudent planning to see what other options there are,” the first person familiar with the discussions added. “They’re getting ready with options to raise the price.” But at what cost, asked a number of veterans of nuclear negotiations who said they were alarmed at the administration’s strategy. Gottemoeller, who is now a research fellow at the conservative Hoover Institution at Stanford University, expressed concern the approach could merely increase the chances of a new arms race if New START expires.

“**We can upload,**” she said, referring to the U.S. reserve nuclear stockpile. “But the Russians can upload, too. I would argue they could get a jump on us.” Klotz, who also served as defense attaché in Moscow during previous arms control negotiations and [is now an analyst](#) at the government-funded Rand Corporation, agreed. “It’s my personal view that the United States might initially be at a disadvantage,” he said. “The Russian nuclear modernization program is already well underway, while the U.S. program is still in its very early stages.”

Moreover, the systems the Russians have developed generally have the ability to carry more warheads than analogous U.S. systems.” The Trump administration, he added, “rather glibly says, ‘we’ll spend you into oblivion’ in any potential nuclear arms race. But wouldn’t it be far better to avoid getting into that situation in the first place, especially when there are so many other capabilities our military needs?”

Kristensen, of the Federation of American Scientists, said the prospect of setting off a new competition to increase the two sides’ arsenals “only underscores the need to keep New START to keep those numbers in check.” “Without it you don’t really know where you are going.”

Trump asks military to assess how quickly nuclear weapons could be pulled from storage

And loaded onto bombers and submarines should arms control treaty with Russia expire in February 2021

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8783209/Trump-asks-military-quickly-nuclear-weapons-pulled-storage-amid-Russia-standoff.html>

- The request is part of a strategy to pressure Moscow into renegotiating the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) before the US presidential election
- The Trump administration reportedly believes that making the request outlines how serious they are about letting the agreement lapse
- Trump’s team is said to be leery that Moscow is attempting to prolong the talks beyond the November vote in the hope that Democratic nominee Joe Biden wins
- They believe Biden’s New START pledge renewal offers more beneficial terms
- The assessment will determine how long it would take to load nuclear weapons currently in reserve onto long-range bombers, submarines and into silos
- Signed in 2010, the New START treaty limits the US and Russia to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers
- The deal is set to expire on February 5, 2021 if the two nations fail to agree

By [LUKE KENTON FOR the UK DAILYMAIL.COM](#) // PUBLISHED: 21:52 EDT, 28 September 2020 | UPDATED: 10:50 EDT, 29 September 2020

The Trump administration has asked the military how quickly it would be able to pull nuclear weapons out of storage and load them onto bombers and submarines should an arms control treaty with Russian be allowed to expire, a report suggests.

Made to the US strategic Command in Nebraska, the request is said to be part of a strategy to pressure Moscow into renegotiating the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) before the US presidential election, three sources told [Politico](#). The Trump administration reportedly believes that making the request outlines how serious they are about letting the agreement lapse should [Russia](#) fail to meet their demands.

The sources said Trump’s team is leery that Moscow is attempting to prolong the talks beyond the November vote in the hope that Democratic nominee [Joe Biden](#) wins the election. They believe that Biden’s proposals for New START renewal may be deemed more favorable by Russia. ‘It’s a clear signal that the costs for not negotiating before the election are going to go up,’ one of the sources, speaking on the grounds of anonymity, told [Politico](#). The source continued that the Trump administration is ‘trying to create an incentive, and it’s a real incentive, for the Russians to sit down and actually negotiate.’

WHAT IS THE NEW START TREATY?

Signed in 2010, the New START treaty limits the United States and Russia to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers.

It represents the only remaining nuclear arms control deal between the two countries after they both withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty last year.

The current New START treaty is set to expire on February 5, 2021, unless both sides find an agreement for a five year extension.

The position of the Trump administration, however, remains that New START is too narrow and a more comprehensive replacement that restricts a broader class of weapons – including ‘tactical’ and battlefield nuclear weapons – is needed.

The White House's request for the assessment was reportedly made within the last two weeks, and was issued by a group of officials from the National Security Council and State, Defense and Energy departments. The officials involved are currently supporting US arms control envoy Marshall Billingslea in negotiations with Moscow to try to replace New START before it runs out in February next year, [Politico](#) reported.

As requested, the assessment will determine how long it would take to load nuclear weapons currently in reserve onto long-range bombers, ballistic missile submarines and silos on land to bolster the US' nuclear capabilities should Russia increase its own arsenal. News of the request comes as Billingslea publicly touted the prospect of placing more weapons on bombers and submarines in the event New START expires.

In recent weeks he's also issued a number of warnings to Russia that experts say comes as an attempt to secure more concessions from the Russians in the New START renewal negotiations. Signed in 2010, the New START treaty limits the United States and Russia to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers. It represents the only remaining nuclear arms control deal between the two countries after they both withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty last year.

Billingslea recently said the existing New START treaty has loopholes and that any new agreement with Russia should cover all nuclear warheads and bolster verification protocols and transparency. With such an agreement in place, he said fellow superpower China ultimately would not have much of a choice and would need to join such a framework. 'The world is not going to sit by and allow China to simply do what it currently thinks it's going to do in terms of more than doubling it's nuclear stockpile,' he last week.

'So the president has made clear he doesn't want a three-way arms race. It's completely counterproductive and unnecessary.' A series of former senior arms control officials and military figures have urged the White House to be cautious with its current approach at the negotiation table, warning the move could backfire. The main basis of concern stems from the idea the Trump administration, which has already withdrawn from two nuclear treaties with Russia, may be sending out the message it's no longer concerned with placing any limits on the world's largest armaments.

Russia, in turn, then may be goaded into taking similar steps, experts fear. 'I call that megaphone diplomacy,' former deputy secretary of NATO **Rose Gottemoeller** told [Politico](#). 'Do we want to end up in a less stable place? Because we would be nuclear arms racing.' A former GOP arms control official who declined to be identified similarly called the move 'very stupid'. 'It makes absolutely no sense to threaten to upload,' he continued. 'It becomes a valid leveraging point only if the other side can't do it. The Russians can do it, too.'

The source continued to the outlet that, 'more importantly, the systems we have deployed today are the ones we believe are necessary to provide an adequate deterrent. 'There is no obvious reason and every reason not to in the absence of a change in the threat. It's not going to scare the Russians. The likelihood of success with the Russians is about nil.' The current New START treaty is set to expire on February 5, 2021, unless both sides find an agreement for a five year extension.

In December, Russian president Vladimir Putin said that Moscow would be open to extending the current arrangement without preconditions. 'Russia is willing to immediately, as soon as possible, before the year is out, renew this treaty without any preconditions,; Putin told a meeting of Defense Ministry officials on December 5, noting that Moscow had not received a response from Washington to its proposal.

Putin reiterated the offer at his end-of-year news conference two weeks later on December 19, saying that ‘we stand ready until the end of the year to extend the existing New START as is.’ The position of the Trump administration, however, remains that New START is too narrow and a more comprehensive replacement that restricts a broader class of weapons – including ‘tactical’ and battlefield nuclear weapons – is needed.

Billingslea says that the US and Russia must agree at least on the outlines of a new framework in order for Washington to consider extending the current agreement. When quizzed earlier this week as to whether the Trump administration would entirely scrap the treaty should the two nations not reach an agreement, Billingslea responded, ‘absolutely’. ‘In such a situation, we will not extend the treaty,’ he told Russian newspaper Kommersant.

‘Given all the deficiencies of New START, we consider it disadvantageous to the United States. It imposes constraints on the United States that it does not impose on Russia.’ The ambassador also said that the US would be taking steps to increase its number of nuclear warheads should the pact expire. He added that the longer Moscow delays, the less attractive the arrangement is likely to be.

‘I suspect that after President Trump wins reelection, if Russia has not taken up our offer, that the price of admission, as we would say in the U.S., goes up,’ he told the outlet. Back in May, Billingslea also warned that the US could spend Russia – and even China – ‘into oblivion’ should a nuclear arms race ensue. ‘The president has made clear that we have a tried and true practice here,’ he said. ‘We know how to win these races and we know how to spend the adversary into oblivion. If we have to, we will, but we sure would like to avoid it.’

The US and Russia both have a large number of weapons in storage that could be put on alert if such a course was taken. According to the Federation of American Scientists’ Nuclear Security Project, **the US currently has 3,800 warheads stockpiled, while Russia has 4,310.** Of those weapons, some could be made ready for deployment much quicker than others. Hans Kristensen, director of FAS’ Nuclear Security Project, told [Politico](#) that of the three legs of the nuclear triad – bombers, submarines, and missile silos – the weapons most readily available would be on the bombers.

‘Those weapons are just a few hundred yards from the aircraft,’ Kristensen said. ‘They could be loaded in days. Others would have to be transported to the bases. Maybe a week or so.’ The next would ballistic missile submarines, Kristensen said, beginning with those already in port and the rest when they return from deployment. Lastly, the intercontinental ballistic missiles deployed in underground silos at bases in North Dakota, Wyoming and Montana, would be readied.

‘That’s a very slow process,’ Kristensen said. ‘That would take a long time for 400 silos. Many months.’ Kristensen continued that if the US decided to upload all of its reserve force at once, it would more ‘double the deployed force’, but questioned why such a measure would be necessary. ‘I think there’s an element of, ‘the Russians might not make a deal, we need to be ready,’ an unnamed former White House official told the outlet. ‘The administration is planning on what to do the day after. They want to be ready, but being ready doesn’t actually mean that they will.’

STRATCOM Hopes Experiments Will Speed Nuclear Command Upgrades

https://www.airforcemag.com/stratcom-hopes-experiments-will-speed-nuclear-command-upgrades/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.01.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

By [Rachel S. Cohen](#) for Air Force Magazine // Sept. 30, 2020 |

U.S. Strategic Command is testing out parts of its future nuclear command, control, and communications enterprise in the Air Force's [Advanced Battle Management System demonstrations](#), an official tells Air Force Magazine.

STRATCOM's NC3 Enterprise Center got up and running early last year to better plan for future satellites, radios, aircraft, and other systems that connect nuclear platforms and weapons to the military and national leaders. It is working on a wholesale overhaul of the aging NC3 network as the Pentagon buys a new nuclear arsenal, hoping to modernize it for the digital age. NC3, the technology that helps military officials move nuclear aircraft and submarines around the globe and trigger weapons if necessary, sits alongside a parallel effort to update conventional command and control.

Officials have considered the possibility of a dual-use command system for conventional and nuclear assets, and the two types of warfare are growing [more closely intertwined](#). "Our core vision of NC3 Next-Generation is completely consistent with the concepts underlying [\[joint all-domain command and control\]](#)," Rear Admiral Ronald R. Fritzemeier, the center's director, told Air Force Magazine on Sept. 29.

"Fundamentally, JADC2 and NC3 Next-Gen will be ... very closely interrelated. At some level, you would say, is that a JADC2 thing, or is that an NC3 thing, and the answer is yes." The military is exploring how to keep its connection to nuclear forces intact under threat, and how to keep hackers and jammers out as the nuclear enterprise connects to the Internet for the first time. STRATCOM has "a number of activities" ongoing to try out new technology and concepts, Fritzemeier said.

Where the Defense Department has talked about its future development efforts lasting over the course of decades, agencies are looking to move faster. It's a more piecemeal approach to improve combat capability sooner, instead of waiting years for a full system to be ready. "When we see stuff that looks good, ... we can insert it right away," he said, without offering examples. "Many [of] the technologies that we're talking about are, frankly, relatively mature.

We've just not employed them from an NC3 standpoint. ... The old 10-year program now needs to be the new six-month demonstration that you actually leave behind as an operational capability." Some of that exploration has taken place under the umbrella of the Air Force's battle management exercises. "Some of the issues or things that they're focused on are not necessarily quite the same priority for us, but they're consistent. In some cases, we're just a partner, and we're watching and looking for the results.

In other cases, we're actually helping to insert demonstration-type capabilities into that work," Fritzemeier said. He declined to say what NC3 systems are taking part in the demos. STRATCOM wants to try out technology on its own as well. There's nothing specific planned, Fritzemeier said, but the NC3 Enterprise Center is trying to mimic the Air Force and Navy's outreach to Silicon Valley companies and other nontraditional defense contractors, and set up its own experiments.

Virtual or live-fly events could shape STRATCOM's understanding of what it needs in a new jet that replaces the Air Force's E-4B flying command center, which can order intercontinental ballistic missile strikes if [Airmen in command centers underground](#) can't do it themselves. Fritzemeier [told Inside Defense](#) on Sept. 25 that an analysis of what could follow the E-4B is complete. The Pentagon wants to combine the E-4B "Doomsday" plane with the Navy's E-6B airborne command post into a new aircraft dubbed the "Survivable Airborne Operations Center."

It's possible that a future aircraft could ferry high-level officials around as an executive airlift platform as well. Upgrades to the NC3 enterprise are still largely under wraps. Elizabeth Durham-Ruiz, the center's former director, [said last year](#) they had found ways to "align" certain programs to make them more coordinated and capable. She declined to provide examples. Those changes, which the Office of the Secretary of Defense reviewed, could affect how quickly systems are replaced or the capabilities they offer.

Moving forward, STRATCOM could move part of the NC3 Enterprise Center to U.S. Space Command, which was revived last year and oversees daily operations of satellites, orbital radars, and similar systems. Putting a piece of the center in SPACECOM would create a more direct line to the officials who manage nuclear communications satellites and other space-related pieces of the NC3 enterprise, to get a better understanding of their needs.

News & Opinion

US and Kazakhstan continue with HEU elimination programme

<https://www.neimagazine.com/news/newsus-and-kazakhstan-continue-with-heu-elimination-programme-8148549>

From NEI Magazine // 25 September 2020

The US Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE/NNSA) said on 22 September that the last remaining batch of unirradiated highly enriched uranium (HEU) in Kazakhstan has been eliminated.

This activity fulfilled an agreement worked out between the two countries at the 2019 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference. NNSA and the Kazakhstan Ministry of Energy worked together to remove 2.9kg of unirradiated HEU from the IGR research reactor in Kurchatov and transport it more than 200 miles to a secure facility for processing, and downblending to low enriched uranium (LEU).

“The world is a little bit safer now that this material has been downblended into a less dangerous form,” said Lisa E Gordon-Hagerty, NNSA administrator and under secretary for nuclear security of DOE. After being removed from the IGR research reactor, the unirradiated HEU fuel was shipped by truck in 25 special transportation casks to the Ulba Metallurgical Plant in Ust-Kamenogorsk.

Once delivered, the downblending process involved crushing and grinding the graphite/uranium blocks, oxidising the graphite material, dry mixing with LEU powder, dissolving the uranium, and adjusting to get the uranium oxide to 19.8% enrichment. The entire process was conducted following International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. “The uranium can now be used as fuel for LEU research reactors, further supporting NNSA's HEU minimisation efforts,” NNSA said.

Building on this cooperation, the USA and Kazakhstan signed a Joint Statement during the 2020 IAEA General Conference, committing to convert the IVG.1M research reactor at Kazakhstan's National Nuclear Centre from the use of HEU to LEU fuel in 2021. The international team has already completed testing of the IVG.1M LEU fuel and the statement marks the transition to the final phase of conversion.

The USA and Kazakhstan have been collaborating on conversion of Kazakhstan's research reactors from HEU to LEU for more than a decade. Previous accomplishments include the elimination of all HEU from the VVR-K reactor, including the downblending of 49.3kg of unirradiated HEU and the removal of 158.3kg of irradiated HEU.

Russia's Military Strength Now at Post-Cold War Peak, Report Says

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/russia-e2-80-99s-military-strength-now-at-post-cold-war-peak-report-says/ar-BB19AgPx?ocid=uxbndlbing>

By: Peter Martin for Bloomberg News // 6 hrs ago

(Bloomberg) -- Russia's military is now more capable than at any time since the end of the Cold War, a development that comes as Western nations are increasingly concerned about President Vladimir Putin's role in election meddling and conflicts from Ukraine to Syria, according to a new report.

After more than a decade of investment and reform, Russia's troops are better equipped and more professional than their predecessors, according to "Russia's Military Modernization: An Assessment," a report published on Wednesday by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. "Russia's armed forces are today a capable military tool that Moscow has demonstrated a willingness to use or to threaten the use of," according to the report.

Since 2014, Russia has annexed Crimea, engaged in protracted fighting in eastern Ukraine, and intervened in the Syrian civil war. In July, the Kremlin publicly welcomed the Trump administration's plans to withdraw about 12,000 troops from Germany, arguing that there was no justification for their continued presence. Russia began its current military modernization drive after its armed forces' poor performance in the country's brief war with Georgia in 2008, according to the report. It highlights particular improvements in Russia's nuclear weaponry and in the Russian Aerospace Forces, as well as patchier progress in Russia's ground forces and navy.

Russia Is Key to Preventing U.S.-China Cold War: Gorbachev

https://thedailycable.com/2020/09/25/russia-is-key-to-preventing-u-s-china-cold-war-gorbachev/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=dailyemail&utm_campaign=7515781&utm_term=2020-08-09&utm_content=politics

From: the Daily Cable // 27 Sept 2020

Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev has called on Russia to mediate between the U.S. and China to prevent a new destabilizing cold war.

Relations between Washington, D.C. and Beijing have collapsed amid the coronavirus pandemic, which exacerbated existing tensions between the world's two largest economies. This brewing conflict, Gorbachev told Japan's Asahi Shimbun newspaper in an article published Friday, could yet be avoided with Moscow's help. "The pandemic exacerbated a new bipolar conflict that arose as a result of increased tensions between the United States and China," the last leader of the Soviet Union explained.

"No scenario for the development of a bipolar conflict can be positive from the point of view of international politics. In the late 1980s, the principle of new thinking really found its application and proved its effectiveness in ending the Cold War," he said. "Today it would be wise for Russia to return to the new political thinking and set as a goal to diplomatically prevent a bipolar conflict between the United States and China," Gorbachev added.

Gorbachev oversaw the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, and has since been a vocal proponent of multilateral cooperation and arms restrictions between the world's most powerful nations. He has repeatedly urged the U.S. and Russia to support nuclear weapon control treaties and avoid diplomatic tensions. Gorbachev's USSR was once America's greatest strategic challenge, but there is growing bipartisan agreement in Washington that China represents the most potent threat to American hegemony.

President Donald Trump has normalized tough talk and action on China, which has been supercharged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Trump and his allies have blamed Beijing for failing to contain the virus and the president has vowed to make China pay for its alleged failings. China has framed the administration's criticism as a racist attempt to dodge blame for the pandemic's spread in the U.S., where more than 200,000 people have been killed by the virus to date.

The coronavirus blame game is part of a wider U.S.-China strategic confrontation. Trump and China hawk lawmakers are pushing for a broad “decoupling” from Beijing, reversing economic and technological integration with China, containing its growing influence and pressing the country on its myriad human rights abuses. Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden is also trying to bolster his China-skeptic credentials ahead of November’s election, having been accused of being soft on Beijing as part of President Barack Obama’s two administrations.

Trump has urged voters to plump for his more aggressive China policy, claiming—without explaining what he meant—that China “will own our county” if Biden is elected.

Abrams: Sanctions Have Kneecapped Iran

https://freebeacon.com/national-security/abrams-sanctions-have-kneecapped-iran/?utm_source=actengage&utm_campaign=FreedomMail&utm_medium=email

By: [Jack Beyrer](#) for the WFB // SEPTEMBER 25, 2020 2:15 PM

Special envoy for Iran and Venezuela Elliott Abrams [testified](#) before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Thursday, telling senators Iran’s economy lays in shambles due to American sanctions.

"Our efforts to disrupt the regime’s ability to carry out its malicious agenda have met with real success," Abrams said in his testimony. "By any measure, the Iranian regime is weaker today than when President Trump took office. The regime faces unprecedented and worsening economic and political crises that are exacerbated by the poor choices the regime makes in an effort to advance its radical ideology."

Abrams outlined statistics from the International Monetary Fund that reflect Iran's economic crisis. Iran has suffered consecutive years of GDP loss, with the economy shrinking by 5.5 percent in 2018 and 7.6 percent in 2019. Predictions for 2020 suggest that the trend will hold: Iran is likely to lose another 6 percent of its economy. Other economic metrics signal Tehran’s dire straits. Iran’s budget deficit is a whopping 26 percent of its already shrinking GDP, with little prospect for recovery.

As a result of robust oil export sanctions on Iran, the Islamic republic has lost 90 percent of its oil export revenue, totaling roughly \$70 billion. The economic recession has had impacts well beyond GDP and employment. Iran is the [largest state sponsor of terror](#) in the world, and the sanctions-induced downturn has forced major cutbacks to its ability to keep afloat terror groups that have long plagued regional stability.

Hezbollah and Hamas are now implementing austerity plans, Abrams said, which limit their capacity to commit violence and retain legitimacy with local governments that they have overtaken. "We believe the lives of innumerable Iranians, Syrians, Iraqis, Yemenis, and other innocent civilians in the regime’s crosshairs have been saved," Abrams said of terrorist budget cuts. "This administration will never hesitate to protect our national security and prevent Iran from endangering the world."

Aside from economic sanctions, retaining aggressive military and diplomatic postures toward Iran has also brought dividends. At sea, Iran’s aggressive behavior has been reduced significantly since the Obama years, as Washington continues to apply pressure with [carrier strike groups](#) in the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, a combination of pursuing snapback sanctions and striking a series of peace deals between Israel and Gulf States has continuously weakened Iran’s position in the region.

These issues in total have led to a crisis of confidence in the Iranian government, Abrams told the committee. The 2020 elections in Iran signaled the lowest turnout in Iran's history, an implicit rebuke to the state-sponsored candidates and closed elections. "Every year, the regime loses the support of more and more Iranians," Abrams said. "The Iranian people are suffering under a corrupt and radical regime whose leaders care more about filling their own pockets and sending weapons and cash abroad than providing for their people."

China's military might, aggressive policies spur talks of 'Asian NATO'

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BY GUY TAYLOR for THE WASHINGTON TIMES // 28 Sept 2020

China's growing military prowess and increasingly aggressive foreign policy have revived talk among U.S. and European officials of creating an "Asian NATO" of regional powers to contain communist Beijing's expansionist ambitions.

Past efforts for an East Asian security alliance, such as the post-World War II Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to guard against Cold Warera communism, failed to gain lasting traction. But that was before China's emergence as a rising superpower — a reality NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has said is "fundamentally shifting the global balance of power" in ways should motivate NATO itself to "become more global."

Quietly, Trump administration officials have gone further. Deputy Secretary of State Stephen E. Biegun recently suggested that the informal defense alignment between the U.S., Japan, Australia and India already known as the Quad could be the beginning of a NATO-style alliance in Asia. "It's something that I think in the second term of the Trump administration or, were the president not to win, the first term of the next president, it could be something that would be very much worthwhile to be explored," Mr. Biegun said at a U.S.-India strategic dialogue on Aug. 31.

Senior officials from the four powers — all of which had tense recent relations with China — held another virtual meeting on Friday, Indian newspapers reported. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs said the four countries called for a "free, open, prosperous and inclusive" Indo-Pacific region based on shared valued and respect for international law. Mr. Biegun said last month that the Asian NATO would be about more than simply countering China, and could focus on broadly coordinating militaries and economies of the region's smaller nations around a rules based value system.

"It is a reality that the Indo-Pacific region is actually lacking in strong multilateral structures. They don't have anything of the fortitude of NATO or the European Union. The strongest institutions in Asia oftentimes are not inclusive enough," Mr. Biegun said. "There is certainly an invitation there at some point to formalize a structure like this." The comments quickly spurred debate among proposed alliance members. Some argue the Quad — a strategic forum first initiated back in 2007 by then-Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and later embraced by the Trump administration as part of its 2017 Indo-Pacific strategy — is ripe for expansion given China's recent troubling behavior.

The catch is that the Quad, while stepping up joint military exercises in recent years, has struggled since its inception by the hesitation of some members that a more formal Asian NATO would anger China and result in a punitive economic backlash from Beijing. But as China's military and

economic muscle expand, that fear may be fading. “One country or another at one time or another has been worried about antagonizing China,” said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia program at the Wilson Center.

“But things are different now,” he added. “The Quad really has legs at this point and I think that’s because there’s a growing consensus among the Quad countries, as well as other nations in the region, that China’s activities there are not only aggressive, but increasingly threatening to global stability.” Apart from the construction of military bases on artificial islands in disputed areas of the South China Sea, Beijing’s use of so-called “Wolf Warrior” diplomacy in recent years has angered and unnerved its neighbors, Mr. Kugelman argued.

The practice, which got its name from the Rambo-style Chinese-action movie “Wolf Warrior,” often sees Chinese officials in Australia, India and Japan sharply denouncing officials and institutions in those nations who criticize China. It’s been a dramatic departure from the past when Beijing kept a low diplomatic profile sought to avoid confrontation internationally. “This use of ‘Wolf Warrior’ diplomacy has been a trigger for new momentum behind the Quad,” said Mr. Kugelman, although he cautioned that Washington is still likely to encounter challenges trying to build a fullfledged NATO collective security alliance.

That’s true even though India, a key target of the alliance idea, came close to a shooting war with China in a border clash earlier this year that has still not been resolved. New Delhi traditionally has resisted participating in such formal alliances, even with powerful and like-minded democracies such as the United States. “The U.S. and India have a strong security partnership, but the Indians continue to want to play this role of the strategic independent actor,” said Mr. Kugelman.

Daniel S. Markey, a former State Department official now at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, said in an interview that while India may be “eager to work to push back against China,” it seeks to do so “only on its own terms.” “U.S. policymakers are now well-aware that the ‘ally’ language doesn’t get a good reception in New Delhi, so turning the Quad into a new NATO-like institution is, at least for the near future, a nonstarter,” said Mr. Markey, although he acknowledged that recent Chinese actions internationally could create an opening for Washington.

The clash in the Himalayas, China’s expansive sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, and the crackdown on prodemocracy protesters in Hong Kong “may be shifting attitudes in India” in a manner that “makes the American job of convincing Indians that China is a threat easier.” The Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C., did not respond to a request for comment. However, one Indo-Pacific source familiar with India’s position told The Washington Times on condition of anonymity that China’s Himalayan aggression — as well as U.S. offers to help India respond to it — have given New Delhi renewed incentive to coordinate with the Quad.

But the source stressed that India remains staunchly against formal participation in any security alliance that’s focused on countering China militarily. “To talk about an Asian NATO is definitely jumping the gun,” the source said, “because it puts out a narrative of a military grouping, which Delhi is against.” India in 2017 even agreed to join the Shanghai Cooperations Organization (SCO), a loose confederation that China has pushed as an alternative security alliance to coordinate military and antiterrorism policies in Asia.

China itself has sent conflicting signals about the fear that the U.S. and its main Asian allies are moving toward a more formal alliance to contain Beijing's rise, according to a survey by Joel Wuthnow, a senior research fellow in the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs at National Defense University in the journal *Strategic Forum*. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in March 2018 compared reports that the Quad was attempting to "contain" China to "sea foam in the Pacific or Indian oceans" that would soon wash away because "stoking a new Cold War is out of sync with the times and inciting bloc confrontation will find no market."

But other Chinese strategists take it as a matter of course that U.S. "Indo-Pacific" policy is aimed first and foremost at preventing China from challenging the U.S. as a global superpower. "Chinese interpretations of U.S. strategy in Asia as a containment plot are deeply rooted and have persisted across recent U.S. strategic adjustments, including the rebalance to Asia," Mr. Wuthnow wrote.

Some remain skeptical that the Trump administration is serious about promoting the sort of multilateralism that an expanded Quad effort may entail, noting Mr. Trump's own touchy relations with the original NATO and his complaints the European allies have failed to pay their fair share of the collective defense costs. As part of its "America First" foreign policy, the administration has put particular pressure on South Korea, a potential player in an expanded Quad, as well as Japan, two nations that collectively house more than 80,000 U.S. troops.

"I see the Trump brand of 'America First' as toxic to advancing serious cooperation," said Patrick Cronin, the Asia-Pacific security chair at the Hudson Institute in Washington, who says a more modest approach might be best. "Bulking up" the Quad by "adding coalition partners for specific tasks, such as maritime situational awareness or cybersecurity, seems like a logical next step to advance cooperation without expecting the impossible," Mr. Cronin said. "This is also something that could be sustained in a Biden administration."

David Maxwell, a retired U.S. Special Forces Colonel and East Asia expert with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said China's "aggressive behavior" may be fueling talk of an Asian NATO but U.S. policy under Mr. Trump is undercutting the momentum. "The U.S. is behind the eight ball so to speak and I fear we will squander an opportunity," said Mr. Maxwell. Despite Mr. Biegun's recent comments, the Trump administration's "shift from an interest-, values- and strategy-based alliance philosophy to a transactional foundation undermines U.S. credibility."

"The time is ripe," Mr. Maxwell said, "[but] we may have missed the opportunity because of the current alliance and economic world views of the administration." Short of an Asia NATO, some have talked of a so-called "Quad Plus" grouping of nations, anchored around non-military initiatives such as infrastructure financing support from the U.S., Japan, Australia and others with the goal of countering China's vastly ambitious "Belt and Road" overseas investment program under President Xi Jinping.

Mr. Maxwell pointed to the establishment of the so-called "Blue Dot Network," which the U.S., Japan and Australia announced last year, aimed at assessing and certifying infrastructure development projects in Indo-Pacific and beyond. The newly created Economic Prosperity Network, which the Trump administration has pushed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce global supply chain reliance on China, may also be a foundation for expanding the Quad along non-military lines.

“Paradoxically,” Mr. Maxwell said, the pursuit of a Quad Plus paradigm through such initiatives “might provide a foundation for a Biden foreign policy structure in Asia should he be elected.” “If Trump is reelected, I hope his national security team can convince him to drop his transactional alliance philosophy, because there is a great opportunity to invest in security and economic prosperity in Asia given Chinese actions,” he said.

Mr. Kugelman said that “the big question is: How do you put more meat on the bones of the Quad” in a way that can draw in smaller nations, particularly in Southeast Asia? “Southeast Asian countries are in a tough spot right now because, despite their fears of Chinese dominance, they still want to be able to look to Beijing for economic support, particularly with regard to infrastructure, while at the same time depending on the security umbrella of the United States,” Mr. Kugelman said. “If the U.S. gets its act together and is able to step things up as a big player in the infrastructure game, nations in the region might be more willing to enter into something like an expanded Quad.

New generation of ICBMs means Nebraska will continue to be 'nuclear sponge,' warn nuke skeptics

https://omaha.com/news/state-and-regional/new-generation-of-icbms-means-nebraska-will-continue-to-be-nuclear-sponge-warn-nuke-skeptics/article_2f8f686b-05a5-5411-86f3-cad7de1a44e0.html?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2009.28.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief#tracking-source=home-the-latestSteve Liewer Sep 27, 2020

In the unhappy event that the world’s nuclear powers cut loose with their atomic weapons, Nebraska would become an especially hellish place. That’s because the Cornhusker State is one of a handful in the West and Midwest whose role in Armageddon is to soak up an unfathomable first strike of Russian bombs.

Under the weird logic of mutually assured destruction, the 450 Minuteman III missile silos containing 400 nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles in Montana, North Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and western Nebraska are meant to be sitting ducks for any first strike by Russia, or any other potential adversary.

“The specific mission of the ICBMs is to be a nuclear sponge,” said Tom Z. Collina, director of policy for the Ploughshares Fund, a group dedicated to eliminating nuclear weapons. “They’re sitting in their silos. Their only purpose is to be a target.”

Today, the nation is once again at a nuclear crossroads. Tensions between the U.S. and Russia, its biggest nuclear adversary, have simmered to a boil since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine (a U.S. ally) and used proxies to occupy the eastern part of its territory. Russia has begun modernizing its nuclear arsenal, and China is building one, leaving the U.S. in a rush to catch up because almost every plane, submarine, missile and bomb is 30 to 50 years old.

In addition, the New START arms control agreement, signed by the U.S. and Russia in 2010, expires in February. Negotiations to extend the agreement started late and have not gone far, leading to fears of a renewed nuclear arms race.

“The world has never been as dangerous,” said former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, who also represented Nebraska as a U.S. senator. The modernization of the nuclear arsenal includes construction of the new Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines (replacing the Ohio-class boats), B-21 strategic bombers (replacing the B-1, B-2 and some B-52s), and the new “ground-based strategic deterrent (GBSD),” an ICBM to replace the Minuteman III.

Cost estimates exceed \$300 billion. In Congress, the modernization has wide support in both political parties. Just this month, the Pentagon awarded defense contractor Northrop Grumman \$13.3 billion to start work on the GBSB, a down payment on a \$100 billion project. Nebraska has an outsize stake in America's nuclear enterprise. U.S. Strategic Command, which commands the arsenal, is at Offutt Air Force Base, on the east side of the state, and 82 Minuteman III silos are in the state's far western counties.

The silos are underground and heavily reinforced — sturdy, but not invulnerable to a nuclear strike. They're spaced far enough apart that it would take an enormous number of bombs to wipe them out.

"I've always wondered why the Midwest states don't raise more of a ruckus," Collina said. "You're the states that have a target on your back." He and others have raised the possibility of scrapping the ICBM leg of the nuclear triad and doing away with the "nuclear sponge." Of course, the basic idea of nuclear deterrence is that the missiles' presence means that they will never be used.

"ICBMs would only be used in world-ending situations," said Matt Korda, a researcher with the Federation of American Scientists' Nuclear Information Project. "If they don't have any purpose in post-Cold War nuclear strategy, then what is the cost of keeping them?"

The idea is that an enemy would have to expend a huge portion of its own nuclear arsenal right off the bat to destroy all those missiles, said Christopher Yeaw, research director for nuclear programs at the University of Nebraska's National Strategic Research Institute.

America's nuclear defenses should be so formidable that attacking them would be unthinkable.

"Several hundred to 1,000 nuclear strikes to the heartland of America is something that an adversary really could not contemplate," said Yeaw, who advises StratCom leaders on nuclear policy.

Since the 1960s, Russia and the U.S. have relied on a three-legged nuclear triad of land-based ICBMs, gravity bombs dropped from bombers and nuclear-tipped missiles that can be launched from submarines at sea.

The ICBMs are valued because they are instantly ready and are a massive target for an enemy to overcome. The air leg is highly flexible because the planes can fly anywhere but can also be called back. And the sea leg is both mobile and well-hidden, the sub-based missiles impossible for a foe to detect and take out in a first strike.

"The whole concept of the nuclear triad was constructed to give us offensive capabilities with options — to present to our enemy a more confusing pattern as to where we could strike," Hagel said.

Each leg, proponents say, reinforces and bolsters the two others.

“I can’t imagine how we could respond without all three legs,” then-StratCom commander Gen. John Hyten, now vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told The World-Herald in 2018. “They have to strike fear into the hearts of our potential adversaries.”

Collina and others say the ICBMs have outlived their usefulness. The nuclear sponge, they say, is too dangerous and expensive to maintain. The air- and sea-based legs of the triad offer more than enough firepower to destroy any enemy that would dare to attack the U.S.

“If you remove all the ICBMs, we would be safer than we are today,” Collina said.

He and Korda fear an accidental nuclear war because of the speed with which a president must launch the missiles if sensors detect an incoming strike.

“The president would have only a couple of minutes to decide before they are destroyed,” Korda said. “The risk of miscalculation is very high.” “The point of deterrence is if you attack us, we will devastate your country,” Collina said. “That invites the nightmare: that we might start a nuclear war by mistake.”

There were several close calls during the Cold War. But Yeaw said StratCom’s network of sensors — in the air, on land, at sea, even in outer space — is so vast and so much better now that an incoming attack would be unmistakable.

“These kinds of issues, they make great movies,” Yeaw said. “But there’s a whole chain of things that have to happen. There’s no hair trigger. In reality, these guns are locked in their holsters.”

He believes that doing away with the ICBMs and the nuclear sponge would actually be more dangerous. A potential adversary might be tempted into a preemptive strike because it could deal a crippling blow by taking out three air bases and two submarine bases.

“The calculus has now shifted grossly in favor of the adversary,” Yeaw said.

Hagel said the military should often reexamine its nuclear doctrine and make sure that it doesn’t harden into dogma.

But he, too, believes that the ICBMs are worth keeping, at least for now. Most importantly, nuclear war must remain unthinkable.

“If there’s a nuclear exchange, there’s not going to be a winner,” he said. “More than Nebraska and Wyoming and North Dakota are going to suffer.” Yeaw would like to retire the “nuclear sponge” metaphor because the whole idea of the triad is to prevent that awful day from ever happening. “Rather than thinking of it as a sponge, think of it as a sword or a shield,” he said, adding that Nebraskans should be proud of helping to prevent Armageddon for 75 years.

“It is a great opportunity to play that role for America,” he said. “To hold that shield.”

Russia and China Reject U.N. Report on North Korean Sanctions Violations

https://freebeacon.com/national-security/russia-and-china-reject-u-n-report-on-north-korean-sanctions-violations/?utm_source=actengage&utm_campaign=FreedomMail&utm_medium=email

Both countries benefit from Pyongyang's breach of sanctions

By: [Jack Beyrer](#) for the WFB // SEPTEMBER 29, 2020 6:20 PM

China and Russia, which both benefit from North Korea's international sanctions violations, rejected the findings of a United Nations report on Pyongyang's breach of sanctions, the Times of Israel [reported](#) Tuesday.

The two countries, which are both permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, said their council's findings on North Korea's violations are "based on assumptions and estimations." Published in late August, the Security Council [report](#) documented several major economic and political areas where Pyongyang has ignored international law and punitive measures taken by the international community against the regime.

Among its violations, North Korea has developed ballistic missiles, retained nuclear facilities, imported large quantities of refined petroleum, exported coal, and even imported luxury items like foreign automobiles and alcohol. Despite the international community's recent efforts to hold North Korea accountable for its malign behavior, both China and Russia continue to aid and abet the rogue state as strongman Kim Jong Un extends economic opportunities to both countries.

North Korea has opened its waters for illegal fishing to fleets of Chinese boats, and North Korean government officials also likely [paid](#) Russian cybercriminals for financial hacking assistance. Seven teams of North Korean information technology technicians also accrued more than \$1 million while working in both countries past the U.N. deadline for their repatriation, placing both Moscow and Beijing in violation of international sanctions.

In a more direct threat to American security, North Korea has also sent mixed messages on its weapons development this summer. Pyongyang, which froze its missile tests in April, appears to be developing new and improved weapons systems that would increase the range of the country's strike capacity. A possible transport vehicle for one such weapon, an intercontinental ballistic missile, was [captured](#) on satellite by an American security firm last week. Experts have voiced concern that North Korea may unveil the weapons systems next month during national parades.

China's actions present several potential debate questions

<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/518614-chinas-actions-present-several-potential-debate-questions>

BY JOSEPH BOSCO, CONTRIBUTOR to THE HILL // 09/29/20 10:00 AM EDT

In their debate this evening, [President Trump](#) and former vice president [Joe Biden](#) will be asked about their records of public service, and China is sure to be a major issue of contention. Here are several questions that moderator [Chris Wallace](#) of Fox News should consider asking the candidates:

For both

In the first televised presidential debates in 1960, [John Kennedy](#) and Richard Nixon were asked whether the United States should intervene if Communist China attacked Taiwan's islands of Quemoy and Matsu. -- Kennedy said no, unless the main island of Taiwan also was attacked. Nixon said the U.S. should defend all of Taiwan, including its main island and the smaller ones. This week, 60 years later, China is [again threatening](#) to attack Taiwan, possibly starting with Quemoy and Matsu. What should America's position be?

For Biden

In 1995, China fired missiles across the Taiwan Strait and asked what the United States would do if it attacked Taiwan. The Clinton administration answered: “We don’t know and you don’t know; it would depend on the circumstances.” That policy of strategic ambiguity has been followed by every subsequent Democratic and Republican administration. -- Should it still be the U.S. approach? Or, since China believes it can successfully pull off a military move against Taiwan, is it time to be clear on U.S. intentions and deter China from the kind of miscalculation that triggered the Korean War?

For Trump

You [told Fox News](#) recently that China knows what the United States will do if it attacks Taiwan, presumably because you or someone in your administration told Chinese officials. But does Taiwan know America’s intentions? Certainly, the American people do not yet know. -- Are you prepared to inform them tonight what U.S. policy is on defending Taiwan?

For both

A Chinese military official has said that China could teach America a lesson if it helps defend Taiwan by [sinking an aircraft carrier](#) or two and killing 5,000 to 10,000 sailors. -- Do you take such a threat seriously — and does it intimidate Washington from helping to defend Taiwan?

For both

In Xinjiang Province, China is committing what international observers describe as [genocide](#) against the Muslim Uighur people. Congress passed legislation, which the president signed, to punish Beijing by imposing sanctions on Chinese officials responsible for the persecution. That more should the United States and the international community do to get China to stop, or to make it pay an unacceptable price?

For both

In Tibet, China is committing what international experts describe as [cultural genocide](#). Congress passed legislation, which the president signed, to punish Beijing by imposing sanctions on Chinese officials responsible for the persecution. Is the United States doing all that it can to mobilize the international community against China for its oppression of the Tibetan people and destruction of Tibetan culture?

For both

In Hong Kong, China is unilaterally scrapping the commitment it made to political autonomy for the Hong Kong people under “one country, two systems.” Congress passed legislation, which the president signed, to [punish Beijing](#) by cutting off its Hong Kong access to the U.S. and international financial system, but the law has not been fully implemented because some U.S. commercial interests will be damaged. Should Washington carry out the full intent of the law and cut Hong Kong off from the international banking system?

For both

In the South China Sea, Beijing has [destroyed](#) environmentally precious coral reefs to build artificial islands, which it then militarized by constructing airfields, missile bases and other combat-ready facilities. It has illegally seized existing natural land features claimed by other countries and emplaced military facilities on them. Should the United States organize an international effort to reverse China’s militarization of the South China Sea?

For both

China has protected North Korea from international sanctions for its odious human rights violations, including [Soviet-style gulags](#) where millions of North Koreans have been incarcerated and persecuted. China also has supported and enabled North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs while telling the world that it opposes them, and undermined U.S. and international sanctions against [Kim Jong Un](#)’s regime. -- Should the U.S. impose punishing secondary sanctions against China and Chinese officials?

For both

In addition to its oppression of Uighurs in Xinjiang and Buddhists in Tibet, China's communist government is persecuting Christians and other religious and spiritual groups. It has subjected the Falun Gong and political prisoners to murderous atrocities such as the [harvesting](#) of human organs for commercial sale. -- Should the United States call upon the United Nations to investigate and publicize China's human rights violations?

For Trump

Secretary of State [Mike Pompeo](#) has called upon the international community to help the Chinese people pressure the Chinese Communist Party to change its behavior. That would require an information campaign similar to what was done during the Cold War to get the truth to populations trapped behind the Iron Curtain. But the agencies charged with carrying out that kind of program — Voice of America and Radio Free Asia — recently have been [decimated](#) by your new appointee. -- Do you plan to revive and reinvigorate those information programs to encourage peaceful reform in China?

For Biden

Do you support a Cold War approach to peaceful regime change in China?

For both

How should China be punished for its deception that enabled the coronavirus to spread worldwide into a pandemic?

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.

U.S. ICBM to Replace 1970s Minuteman May Cost \$111 Billion

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-10-01/pentagon-s-next-generation-icbm-program-may-cost-111-billion?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.02.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

- Northrop Grumman won initial \$13 billion contract last month
- Pentagon weapons buyer approved purchase of 659 missiles

By: [Anthony Capaccio](#) for Bloomberg News // October 1, 2020, 12:22 PM EDT Updated on October 1, 2020, 5:13 PM EDT

The Pentagon's next generation intercontinental ballistic missile program could cost U.S. taxpayers as much as \$110.6 billion, according to internal Defense Department estimates, adding to a wave of big-ticket nuclear weapons programs slated for the years ahead.

Ellen Lord, the Pentagon's undersecretary for acquisition and sustainment, approved the ICBM program going forward and supported the purchase of 659 missiles -- 25 for initial testing and 634 for silos, spares and later testing, according to a Sept. 21 report obtained by Bloomberg News that was marked "Unclassified/For Official Use Only." The new estimate includes a \$13 billion contract [Northrop Grumman Corp.](#) received in September to start full-scale development and eventual production of missiles intended to replace the aging Minuteman III system, the land-based portion of the U.S. nuclear triad.

The Air Force and the Pentagon's independent cost assessment office project the missile program alone -- not including the nuclear warheads they'll carry -- will cost between \$93.1 billion and \$95.8 billion. That is up from a preliminary \$85 billion Pentagon forecast in 2016. On top of that, the ICBM's W-87-1 warhead program is estimated to cost as much as \$14.8 billion, according to the National Nuclear Security Administration, which manages the project, and a new report by the Government Accountability Office.

\$1.2 Trillion Program

The ICBM contract provides momentum for U.S. plans to modernize the capacity to deliver nuclear weapons via land-based missile systems, submarines and strategic bombers, a bipartisan effort started during the Obama administration. The entire package is expected to cost as much as \$1.2 trillion through 2046 for development, purchase and long-term support, the Congressional Budget Office estimated in 2018.

The CBO said in 2017 that the combined annual costs of nuclear modernization and sustainment of the current force would peak at about 15% of the Pentagon's total acquisition costs into the early 2030s, or "more than triple the current share." As part of the broader renovation of the nuclear triad, the Navy plans to start construction this month on the first Columbia-class nuclear missile submarine, an estimated \$128 billion program that will eventually produce 12 subs.

The Pentagon assessed that the risks of production delays and cost overruns in the ICBM program were reduced during a prior "Technology Maturation and Risk Reduction" phase that pitted Northrop Grumman against [Boeing Co.](#) The cost disclosure drew varied reactions. "The ICBM leg of the triad is the least valuable leg," so "spending over \$100 billion on a new system and warhead is unnecessary and would divert funds from higher priority national security needs," Kingston Reif, a nuclear weapons analyst for the Arms Control Association, said in an email. "There are cheaper options to maintain a credible ICBM force."

Not everyone agreed.

"For a program that will be in operation until at least 2075, this cost is not just affordable, it is a vital investment in the security of the U.S. and its allies," Tim Morrison, a former National Security Council official and nuclear weapons specialist with the Hudson Institute, said in a statement. "It is madness for the United States to disarm -- which is what not recapitalizing the ICBM leg would be -- in the midst of Russian and Chinese arms racing."

Sole Bidder

The Minuteman III was originally built by Boeing and has been in service since the 1970s. Boeing announced last year that it was dropping out of the competition to develop the new missile, citing what it called a disadvantage in the bidding structure. That left Falls Church, Virginia-based Northrop as the sole bidder.

The new document also discloses:

- The Air Force projects that although it hopes to have the first missiles in operational silos between April and June 2029, it is formally projecting an initial operational capability two years later.
- The Pentagon cost office, taking into account possible project risks, also projects an April-June 2031 operational deployment.
- The cost office breaks down the ICBM costs into subgroups: a research and development phase valued at up to \$25.5 billion, a procurement phase of \$61.6 billion and military construction phase of up to \$8.7 billion. Separate long-term support costs are estimated at \$166.6 billion.

The Kremlin's Wild Card - Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons

<https://jamestown.org/program/non-strategic-nuclear-weapons-the-kremlins-wild-card/>

By: [Pavel Luzin](#) for the Eurasia Daily Monitor // September 29, 2020 05:11 PM Age: 3 days

A recent interview in *Kommersant* with Marshall Billingslea, the special presidential envoy for arms control who represents the United States in negotiations with Russia on the extension of the New START strategic nuclear weapons treaty ([Kommersant](#), September 21; see [EDM](#), September 24), highlighted a key omission in the current round of bilateral arms control talks—the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW). No international agreement covers NSNW; and for many years, Russia has adhered to the principle that it would not discuss “tactical” warheads so long as US B-61 nuclear gravity bombs remained deployed in Europe. Two primary political considerations underly Moscow’s approach: 1) the asymmetry between total and operational numbers of Russian NSNW and 2) Russia’s efforts to reassign forces responsible for NSNW strikes to instead take on strategic nuclear deterrence and/or conventional power-projection missions.

Russia’s recently adopted “Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy on Nuclear Deterrence” pointedly does not differentiate between strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons ([Kremlin.ru](#), June 2; see [EDM](#), June 4). Yet NSNW is mentioned explicitly in article 37 of the less-known 2017 “Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy on Naval Affairs Until 2030” ([Kremlin.ru](#), July 20, 2017). The latter document clarifies that, in case of conflict escalation, a demonstrative readiness to resort to military force using non-strategic nuclear weapons would be an effective deterrence measure. Put more simply, Moscow is prepared to engage in first use of NSNW in a conventional conflict. Even though such a demonstrative, first-use nuclear strike would be unlikely to cause significant or decisive damage, the explosion would aim to demoralize the adversary.

The most common expert estimates of the size of Russia’s current arsenal of NSNW vary widely: from 860–1,040 ([Rusi.org](#), November 7, 2012) to nearly 2,000 warheads ([Carnegie.ru](#), March 4, 2011; [Tandfonline.com](#), March 9, 2020). However, NSNW is useless without working delivery systems, and here the perceived importance of the Russian stockpile begins to change completely. Over the past three decades, the number of such delivery systems has decreased. Many were retired, including some types of guided-missile nuclear submarines, while others suffered from degrading technical reliability when assigned NSNW roles, such as Su-24 tactical bombers. At the same time, while Russia has been determinedly pressing forward with its efforts to develop conventional precision-strike weapons (see [EDM](#), [June 20, 2017](#), [October 2, 2018](#), [September 4, 2019](#)), the numbers of newly developed dual-capable delivery systems in its inventory are significantly lower than in Soviet times.

Further exacerbating the situation is the fact that the infrastructure maintained by the 12th Main Directorate of the Ministry of Defense, which is responsible for controlling Russia’s strategic and non-strategic nuclear warheads, bombs and related assets, is limited. This infrastructure consists of 12 central storage bases and a number of special logistic and security units subordinated to these bases and deployed close to assigned nuclear weapons combat units. So even when a particular naval, ground or aerospace forces base operates dual-capable delivery systems, if it has no special 12th Main Directorate unit close by, that base is officially not assigned to handle nuclear (including NSNW) weapons at all. Therefore, taking all these above factors together, the actual number of Russia’s operational NSNW assets arguably does not exceed 520 ([Riddle](#), May 1, 2018) and is projected to decline further this decade.

In the absence of sufficient available delivery systems, trained personnel and necessary logistical/operational infrastructure, whatever stockpiles of NSNW warheads may exist can only be used in theory, thus undermining their true battlefield significance. Consequently, Moscow is constrained in its ability to convert these weapons into tradable diplomatic capital. Their main value, thus, comes from exacerbating the West’s threat perceptions of Russia’s tactical nuclear arsenal in order to pressure the United States and Europe to reconsider one of the pillars of Transatlantic unity—the deployment of US nuclear weapons in Europe.

The second consideration for the Kremlin regarding NSNW relates to ongoing Russian efforts to reassign other roles to their delivery systems. These priorities are demonstrated by Russia's rearmament programs for 2011–2020 and 2018–2027. For instance, the modernization of 30 Tu-22M3 bombers, heretofore partially assigned to NSNW missions, will permit the same planes to carry out long-range bombing runs thanks to a new aerial refueling capability as well as the installation of engines, electronics and possibly weapons already standard in Tu-160 long-range strategic bombers ([Interfax](#), May 26). Here the nominal threshold between Russia's strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons erodes. At the same time, Russia is retrofitting its long-range nuclear bombers to be able to carry out conventional operations: it used them in this way for the first time in Syria in 2015 (see [EDM](#), November 20, 2015). In a similar vein, it is worth highlighting the ongoing modernization of the strategic missile-defense system around Moscow, which involves denuclearizing the associated interceptor missiles ([AINonline](#), June 26, 2019). Taken together, these efforts are further limiting the numbers of dedicated NSNW delivery systems within the Russian Aerospace Forces.

The same phenomenon can be observed in the Military-Maritime Fleet (Voyenno-Morskoi Flot—VMF). Russia is presently undergoing the challenging modernization of its 949A- (Oscar-II) and 971- (Akula) class guided-missile nuclear submarines. The aim is to make these vessels capable of conventional land-attack missions utilizing Kalibr and Oniks cruise missiles ([Izvestia](#), April 28, 2017; [TASS](#), August 25, 2020). Moscow wants to make its submarine forces more useful and flexible for conventional power-projection tasks in overseas operations as well as to decrease the role of NSNW in Russia's naval planning. These weapons will thus be downgraded from tactical uses to a small number of exceptional purposes such as the nuclear de-escalation of conflicts (see above).

Russia's deployment of dual-capable 9M729 (the land version of the Kalibr) ground-based long-range cruise missiles together with Iskander short-range ballistic missiles led to the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019. When equipped with conventional warheads, these missiles give Moscow offensive battlefield capabilities. However, the same missiles can be armed with low-yield, non-strategic nuclear warheads; and at that point, they become an important strategic deterrence tool against Russia's regional neighbors in Europe and East Asia—at a cost that is significantly lower than intercontinental or submarine-launched ballistic missiles (ICBM, SLBM). So even though the number of operationally usable Russian NSNW warheads has been dropping, ongoing modernization of the Armed Forces has effectively been transforming these “tactical” weapons into an essential part of Russia's nuclear deterrence strategy—a factor worth keeping in mind during New START negotiations with Moscow.

Iran's Other Threat to Civilization

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/16524/iran-emp-nuclear-attack>

by [Peter Vincent Pry](#) and [Peter Huessy](#) for the Gatestone Institute // October 1, 2020 at 4:00 am

- The US and its allies need to do everything possible never again to be caught in a state of unpreparedness.
- The Congressional EMP Commission estimates that, given U.S. current unpreparedness, within one year of an EMP attack that causes a nationwide blackout... up to 90 percent of the U.S. population could perish from starvation, disease and societal collapse. An EMP attack, therefore, would confer upon Iran an "assured destruction" capability against the United States.
- The Congressionally created EMP Commission assesses that North Korea already has super-EMP nuclear weapons and the capability to deliver them....Iran may also already -- or soon -- have the capability to deliver an EMP attack. "
- By sending a military satellite into space, Iran now has shown that it can target all American territory; the Iranian Parliament had previously warned [the U.S.] that an electromagnetic nuclear attack on the United States would likely kill 90 percent of Americans." — Iran's state-controlled Afkar News.

- The formal end of the UN arms embargo -- at the end of September 2020 -- could provide Iran with even more missile and nuclear technology possibly from Russia or China.
- "Iran should be regarded by national security decision makers as a nuclear missile state capable of posing an existential threat to the United States and its allies... The fact of Iran's ICBM capability and their proximity to nuclear weapons necessitates that Iran be regarded as a nuclear missile state — right now." — William R. Graham, Henry F. Cooper, Fritz Ermarth and Peter Vincent Pry, Newsmax, February 1, 2015.

The Islamic Republic of Iran may soon have the capability, if it does not already, of carrying out electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attacks against its enemies. Such an attack involves exploding a nuclear warhead some 30-400 miles above the United States, for instance, and unleashing a downward electronic pulse that can destroy the (currently unprotected) infrastructure. That would include such as critical electronic systems in virtually all civilian systems: food manufacturing and supply chains, automobiles, airplanes, trains, elevators, communications and the US electric grid -- actually, just about everything on which a modern country relies.

An EMP [attack could](#) black out not only the US national electric grid but also virtually all life-sustaining equipment that relies on electrical power and computer systems. An EMP attack could thus pose an existential threat to modern civilization. This would totally alter the risk-benefit calculations for the United States and its allies for being able to defend the post-1945 world order. Recently, the Iranian state-controlled Afkar News [claimed](#) that Iran is now able to carry out just such an EMP attack over the United States:

"By sending a military satellite into space, Iran now has shown that it can target all American territory; the Iranian Parliament had previously warned [the U.S.] that an electromagnetic nuclear attack on the United States would likely kill 90 percent of Americans."

Does Iran Already Have Nuclear Weapons?

Washington's [conventional consensus](#) is that Iran does not yet have nuclear weapons or missiles capable of threatening the United States with a nuclear attack. The Obama Administration [assessed](#) that Iran could develop an atomic weapon in six months to two years, prior to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which pretended to stop an Iranian A-bomb. Iran ostensibly agreed to the JCPOA five years ago, on July 14, 2015. Iran [never signed](#) the agreement, and started violating its terms almost [immediately](#).

A 2020 assessment by Israel confirmed that Iran continues to cheat on its JCPOA obligations and will be able develop atomic weapons in six months to two years. Some senior Israeli analysts and U.S. experts [disagree](#) with the "consensus view" and [assess](#) that Iran already has nuclear weapons. According to a [report](#) in Newsmax, titled "Experts: Iran Now a Nuclear-Ready State, Missiles Capable of Hitting US":

"Regardless of intelligence uncertainties and unknowns about Iran's nuclear weapons and missile programs, we know enough now to make a prudent judgment that Iran should be regarded by national security decision makers as a nuclear missile state capable of posing an existential threat to the United States and its allies...The fact of Iran's ICBM capability and their proximity to nuclear weapons necessitates that Iran be regarded as a nuclear missile state—right now."

The North Korea Connection

The Congressionally created EMP Commission [estimates](#) that North Korea already has super-EMP nuclear weapons and the capability to deliver them. North Korea and Iran are collaborating and have signed an [agreement](#) to cooperate in "science and technology." Iran may already -- or soon -- [have the capability](#) to deliver an EMP attack. It has successfully launched several civilian satellites -- in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2015 -- including on southern polar trajectories, [assisted](#) by North Korean missile technology and North Korean technicians.

On April 22, 2020, Iran orbited a military satellite over the United States, launched by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) -- the world's deadliest terrorist organization. The IRGC's Noor-1 satellite is tiny, weighing only about 30 pounds, but the Space Launch Vehicle's third stage also went into orbit, demonstrating a capability to circle over the U.S. a net payload weighing several hundred pounds -- [enough](#) for a nuclear weapon.

North Korea sold the mullahs much of the technology for Iran's most sophisticated ballistic missile, the Shahab-III, which is an improved version of North Korea's Nodong missile. Iran's Shahab-III is capable of delivering a high-altitude EMP attack over America's heartland if the missile is launched, say, from a freighter in the Gulf of Mexico. Iran has apparently already practiced launching and fusing Shahab-III missiles that could carry out a high-altitude EMP attack. Iran has also demonstrated that it is [capable](#) of launching a ballistic missile from a vessel at sea. Worse, the formal end of the UN arms embargo -- at the end of September 2020 -- could provide Iran with even more missile and nuclear technology possibly from Russia or China.

The Terrorist Connection

Iran, as the "[world's worst state sponsor of terrorism](#)," could become a conduit for giving nuclear EMP attack capabilities to terrorists. The EMP Commission [warns](#):

"Terrorists or state actors that possess relatively unsophisticated missiles armed with nuclear weapons may well calculate that, instead of destroying a city or military base, they may obtain the greatest political-military utility from one or a few such weapons by using them — or threatening their use — in an EMP attack."

Congressional testimony in 2004 by US President Ronald Reagan's Science Adviser and one of the EMP Commissioners [warns](#) of the prospects of an anonymous EMP attack launched from a freighter by Iran hired terrorists:

"DR. GRAHAM: Iran, the world's leading sponsor of international terrorism, has practiced launching a mobile ballistic missile from a vessel in the Caspian Sea. Iran has also tested high-altitude explosions of the Shahab-III, a test mode consistent with EMP attack, and described the tests as successful. Iranian military writings explicitly discuss a nuclear EMP attack that would gravely harm the United States."

Iranian Military Doctrine Endorses EMP Attack

An official Iranian [military textbook](#) from 2010, but not released until 2017, endorses a nuclear EMP attack against the United States, as well as deception measures to conceal nuclear weapons -- in violation of international agreements. The textbook is used to train officers at Iran's prestigious military academy and think tank, the Martyr Lt. General Sayad Shirazi Center for Education and Research. Strangely for a book titled Passive

Defense, its overarching focus is [offensive](#) -- how to black out electric grids -- including by nuclear EMP attack. Calculations in the book that America could be vanquished by a nuclear EMP attack appear to be correct.

Strategic Implications

The Congressional EMP Commission [estimates](#) that, given U.S. current unpreparedness, within one year of an EMP attack that causes a nationwide blackout, two-thirds or more, up to 90 percent, of the U.S. population could perish from starvation, disease and societal collapse. An EMP attack, therefore, would confer upon Iran an "assured destruction" capability against the United States. The geopolitical consequences of this development are so grave that U.S. and global security would, in effect, go into free-fall. Where the U.S. would land, into what kind of future, is of course unknown.

If Iran and North Korea both decided to use threats to America or its allies with an EMP-generated genocide, it could destroy the foundations of the existing world order. If the US can no longer be the superpower that since 1945 has halted the cycle of world wars and sustained the global advancement of freedom, the consequences would be existential and catastrophic. An EMP assured destruction capability changes the strategic calculus of risk for the United States in being able to uphold its role as a superpower and would necessarily erode the confidence of U.S. allies -- perhaps to the point where they would feel the need to develop their own nuclear weapons.

Most alarmingly, the U.S. is fast moving to a place where, for the first time, smaller failed states such as Iran and North Korea would have the power to blackmail or destroy the largest and most successful societies on Earth. These rogue states have long perceived themselves to be at war with the United States, and have already demonstrated that they are desperate, highly dangerous characters.

The US and its allies need to do everything possible never again to be caught in a state of unpreparedness. We know how to protect our electric grid and the President of the United States has [ordered](#) the government bureaucracy to take the necessary steps to do so. Progress, however, regrettably [remains slow](#). The emerging threats from Iran and North Korean outlined here should compel the United States to take faster action -- now.

Dr. Peter Vincent Pry is Director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security.

Peter Huessy is Director of Strategic Deterrent Studies at the [Mitchell Institute](#). He is also senior consulting analyst at Ravenna Associates, a strategic communications company.

USAF to assess environmental impact of Minuteman III, GBSD

InsideDefense.com, 25 Sep 20 Sara Sirota

The Air Force is preparing an environmental impact statement on plans to dispose the legacy Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile system and deploy its replacement, the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, according to a notice posted on the Federal Register today.

The service is first inviting public feedback over the next 45 days to determine the scope of its assessment and issues the EIS should focus on. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Air Force will not hold face-to-face meetings.

The service later anticipates publishing a draft statement for public comment in spring 2022, followed by a final EIS that will be released one year

later.

Disposal of the Minuteman III will occur at Hill Air Force Base, UT, Utah Test and Training Range, UT, Camp Guernsey, WY and Camp Navajo, AZ. GBSD deployment will take place at Warren AFB, WY, Malmstrom AFB, MT and Minot AFB, ND.

“During the transition from Minuteman III to GBSD, the two weapon systems would be partially operated and maintained concurrently for several years; therefore, the EIS also will analyze the overlapping actions and resulting impacts of conducting aspects of the programs in parallel,” the Air Force’s notice states.

“Expected environmental impacts are assumed to result from ground disturbing activities associated with construction of the GBSD system,” the document adds. “It is anticipated that these environmental impacts, will be mitigated to the extent practical or avoided where possible.”

Further, the EIS will assess the environmental impact of an alternative scenario in which the Air Force continues maintaining and operating Minuteman III and does not deploy GBSD.

Iran's Missiles are the Real Threat

Newsweek Online, 25 Sep 20 Seth J. Frantzman

Iran's missile program is the elephant in the room in discussions about renewed U.S. sanctions on Tehran. This month the Trump administration sought to snap back sanctions on Iran, a demand that has been met with a cold shoulder by Russia, China and even U.S. allies in Europe. While the main point of contention has generally been Iran's nuclear program, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has indicated that Iran's ballistic missile threat is also a major target of U.S. sanctions.

Iran has been building ballistic missiles for many years—reverse engineering components, building on Russian or Chinese models and even working with North Korea to increase the range and precision of the rockets. When Washington announced new sanctions on Iran in late September, a U.S. official familiar with the sanctions said that Iran had resumed work with North Korea on long-range missiles. But the controversy over Iran's missile program is frequently misunderstood.

In June there was a mysterious explosion at an alleged Iranian missile facility east of Tehran, near an area called Khojir. Days later, another explosion damaged the nuclear facility at Natanz. Iran suspects foreign sabotage. It may be a coincidence that the two incidents happened in such rapid succession. But Iran's missiles are closely connected to the country's nuclear program.

Stockpiling enriched uranium that could be used in a nuclear bomb, as Iran is doing, is only part of Tehran's nuclear agenda. Even if Iran built a nuclear bomb it would have to test it and would need a way to deliver it. Nuclear bombs can be dropped from aircraft, as the U.S. did in 1945, but the preferred method since the Cold War is to put them on long-range missiles. Iran has been using missiles for decades. These include the Shahab series started in the 1980s and the Zelzal and Fateh series of the 1990s and early 2000s.

In the last decade Iran increased the capabilities of these missiles. It said it used Fateh 313 and Qiam missiles to target U.S. forces in Iraq in January 2020 after Washington killed Iranian IRGC Quds force commander Qasem Soleimani. In 2018 it also achieved extreme precision using Fateh 110 missiles against Kurdish dissidents near Koya in northern Iraq. It also fired missiles over Iraq into Syria to target ISIS in October 2018. These are major accomplishments and should be understood to represent an achievement for Tehran. Despite many years of sanctions, it increased its ballistic missile capabilities, with longer ranges and better precision. It has also trafficked this technology and missiles to its allies, including Houthi rebels in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and militias in Iraq and Syria. Iran's own government media frequently boast about these missile capabilities and Tehran's intention to export its weapon systems.

Pompeo, who has championed the new sanctions, has frequently identified the missile program as a major threat. "Iran possesses the largest ballistic missile force in the Middle East, and it has exported both missiles and missile production," the State Department said on September 21. However the U.S. has not spelled out how it intends to counter a threat that has grown even as sanctions increased.

This is where the problem comes in. Iran keeps showing off its missiles. It shot a military satellite into space this year and continues to work on expanding both liquid- and solid-fueled rockets. Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif has dismissed US complaints about the program. This means that Iran will continue to tinker with missiles that would likely be the delivery mechanism for a nuclear bomb if the regime ever builds one. Even without the bomb, the increased precision of the missiles, combined with drone and cruise missile threats, is a growing threat to Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and U.S. bases in the Gulf and Iraq. It is a threat Iran already showed off with an attack on Saudi Arabia last year aimed at the Abqaiq oil facility.

Investing in better missile defense is one way to help protect against such an attack. U.S. support for Israeli missile defense programs such as Arrow, David's Sling and Iron Dome has proven successful. That is why the U.S. army is looking at Iron Dome as a solution for short-range threats. But the overall threat is more complex because long-range missiles can threaten sites across thousands of miles, from the Gulf of Oman to the Mediterranean. Putting in place enough missile defense batteries of multiple layers across a half-dozen U.S. allies in the region is a complex challenge.

Iran will continue to develop its missile arm. In some ways international focus on the nuclear program was a welcome distraction for Tehran, which has since poured investment into this alternative danger. Understanding what Iran has accomplished in the last few years is at least a first step toward understanding what Tehran is up to with its long-range missiles.

--Seth J. Frantzman is executive director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis, a senior analyst of Middle East affairs for The Jerusalem Post and author of After ISIS: America, Iran and the Struggle for the Middle East (2019)

'Watershed moment': U.S. facing dual nuclear threats from China and Russia

For its part, Canada should urgently consider the negotiation of a partnership in the U.S. anti-ballistic missile system

National Post (Canada), 29 Sep 20 Derek H. Burney

U.S.-China relations are reaching new levels of acrimony and concern. On the campaign circuit, President Donald Trump blames China exclusively and persistently for the dire economic fallout from what he calls the "China virus." China's U.N. ambassador fired back on the latest salvos, saying "Enough is enough. You have created enough troubles for the world already." The rancorous public exchanges between the two governments are

troubling and reveal deep strains in the relationship that extend well beyond the pandemic. In fact, the most deep-seated threat today is on the military front.

China is rapidly expanding the scope and scale of its land, maritime and air power. Artificial islands being constructed illegally in the South China Sea are intended to ensure China's air and surface dominance and to undermine America's role as a regional security partner.

Even more ominous is China's increasing nuclear weapons capability. Admiral Charles Richard, Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command and responsible for the U.S.'s nuclear arsenal, reported to Congress earlier this month that, while China's nuclear capability is modest with a little more than 200 nuclear warheads, it is expected to double this decade. He added pointedly that "China now has the capability to directly threaten our homeland from a ballistic missile submarine. That's a pretty watershed moment."

The direst warning from Admiral Richard was that "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 before." He emphasized that there was no margin of error for the U.S. to modernize its massive nuclear arsenal (3,800+ warheads) to respond to China's moves.

China's next generation of nuclear missile submarines, the Type 096, and an advanced new missile they are expected to carry would be able to target the U.S. from China's shores, thereby reducing the risk that they might be spotted in advance.

A recent Pentagon report indicated that China has built silos south of Mongolia that may be intended for the development of new, solid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and may also be constructing new silos in Henan province for its liquid-fuelled missiles.

During the Cold War, the U.S. faced a sole nuclear challenge from the Soviet Union — a threat that was managed strategically by a combination of arms-control agreements and diplomatic tactics of detente until president Ronald Reagan forced the issue with a massive military expansion and direct challenges to the lack of liberty and freedom in the U.S.S.R. The sclerotic leadership in Moscow and the stagnating Soviet economy ultimately collapsed. Even with an economy less than that of Canada — US\$1.66 trillion GDP versus US\$1.71 trillion in 2018 — Russia under Vladimir Putin still poses a real nuclear threat, especially if it could strike a modus vivendi with China.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has signalled that the U.S. is pursuing a new arms-control approach trying to establish a broad "framework" agreement with Russia while endeavouring to bring China on board later. (Pompeo had been similarly optimistic about negotiations with North Korea, but that bizarre initiative now seems sidetracked.)

China has shown no inclination to negotiate. Unlike Russia (or the Soviet Union), China's economy is expanding. While its leaders are as authoritarian as those in Moscow, they are determined and confident that their economy will soon surpass that of the United States. They have the wind at their back.

Some analysts suggest that the failure of arms control — the Russians cancelled the IRNF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces) treaty, long before Trump was elected — necessitates an incremental step of “arms racing.” One option would be to put nuclear warheads on hypersonic missiles. The U.S. is already trying to counter a Russian force that has retained, modernized and produced so many low-yield nuclear weapons that they reportedly outnumber the U.S. by a margin of eight to one. Russia has repeatedly rejected any attempt to negotiate arms controls for low-yield nuclear weapons. China is almost certain to follow a similar path.

Shifting ground and maritime hypersonic missiles to a dual-use design could arguably give the U.S. leverage and flexibility for future arms-control efforts. As Alan Cummings noted in the Texas National Security Review, “Statecraft remains the preferred solution but the U.S. should back its diplomats with the right military tools so that they can navigate today’s competitive environment and shape the future of European and Pacific deterrence.”

Arms-control negotiations may, of course, succeed. Some contend that the huge interdependence of economic links between the U.S. and China is a compelling reason to avoid nuclear confrontation. But, faced with what is an unprecedented and growing dual threat, the U.S. should intensify relations and counterweights, nurturing in select cases a nuclear capability with regional allies like Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and possibly India, which is already a nuclear power. Each of them is vulnerable to the expanding nuclear threat from China and Russia. Given Trump’s instinctive allergy to alliance leadership or cohesion, this option may be more appealing to Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden.

Alternatively, the U.S. could try to drive a wedge between China and Russia on the theory that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” — a tactic used effectively by president Richard Nixon when he opened high-level contact with Beijing. However, when dealing with authoritarian dictatorships, this option has more inherent risk than advantage. A necessary degree of trust could prove elusive.

Because our military is bloated and top-heavy with personnel and grossly mismanaged on equipment purchases, Canada does not factor into any serious calibration of global security threats. Besides, our relations with both China and Russia are in the deep freeze, lacking avenues for any constructive dialogue. We are obliged to nestle under the U.S. nuclear umbrella whether we like it or not and whether or not it ultimately proves tenable. One initiative Canada should consider urgently is the negotiation of a partnership in the U.S. anti-ballistic missile system. That would at least give us a say on our own defence.

The resurgence of great power rivalry is a geopolitical reality although some dimensions are not clear cut. It is already a mindset Russia and China have embraced, one that is guiding their approach to nuclear modernization. For Russia, it is a craving for lost respect. For China, it is a matter of destiny. They share a mutual desire to unseat the U.S. from its position as the world’s sole superpower.

Given the ebb and flow of economic and military strengths evolving among the major global powers, the prospect for global stability is fraught with complexity. (Nuisance, mini-nuclear states like North Korea and Iran present additional question marks.) Maintaining a sensible equilibrium in these precarious circumstances will be the top challenge confronting whoever wins the U.S. presidency in November.

--Derek H. Burney is the co-author of *“Braver Canada: Shaping Our Destiny in a Precarious World,”* published by McGill-Queen’s in 2020

America's military deserves timely funding from Congress

Defense News Online, 28 Sep 20 Bradley Bowman and Maj. Scott Adamson

As the federal fiscal year ends on Sept. 30, the Department of Defense once again does not have an on-time authorization or full-year defense appropriation from Congress. Sadly, the use of so-called continuing resolutions has become the norm, but this approach imposes significant costs on U.S. service members and American national security.

The importance of passing the annual defense appropriation and National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is clear. Unfortunately, over the last decade, there is but a single instance in which Congress passed both before the start of the fiscal year. Congress has instead enacted continuing resolutions, which essentially copy and paste the previous year's defense appropriation.

From fiscal year 2010 to 2019, CRs lasted on average 119 days.

During the last presidential election year, the NDAA was enacted in December, but the defense appropriation did not become law until the following May. The delay in the latter drove the DoD to operate under a CR for 217 days — roughly 60 percent of the fiscal year.

Congress' increasingly routine reliance on CRs disregards emerging and time-sensitive Pentagon requirements and priorities. In turn, this leads to misalignment of funds, delays in modernization, and substantive decreases in buying power. Further, CRs leave defense suppliers in the dark, imposing inefficiencies and delaying vital programs.

If Congress wants to minimize program delays that are often the subject of heated congressional hearing questions, passing the NDAA and defense appropriation on time would help. After all, new programs cannot start without congressional approval that CRs usually don't provide.

While these negative effects impact all of the services, consider the impacts of a CR on the U.S. Air Force's ongoing operations and modernization efforts.

Should the service experience a six-month CR, it would impact 17 new starts, six production increases, and eight military construction (MILCON) projects. Notably among these are the E-11A aircraft, MH-139 helicopter, and three infrastructure projects at Tinian.

The E-11A, with Battlefield Airborne Communications Node (BACN), enables persistent communications capability in areas where variable terrain or lacking infrastructure precludes it. The aircraft is critical to austere combat operations.

With the fleet down to three after suffering a fatal crash in January, the U.S. Air Force will be delayed in meeting increasing demands for the aircraft. This leaves U.S. forces more exposed to enemy attack in areas where communications are degraded.

The MH-139 Grey Wolf represents another critical air asset that would be delayed.

Set to replace the aging UH-1N in patrolling America's missile fields associated with the land-based leg of the nuclear triad, the new helicopter brings better speed, range, and capacity. A CR would delay U.S. Air Force plans to procure the first eight for recapitalization efforts, and keep in place response time waivers associated with the older, slower Huey.

Finally, under a six-month CR, the U.S. Air Force would be unable to fully execute MILCON projects intended to build vital infrastructure on the strategically located Pacific island of Tinian. Delays to this construction would impede U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's shift to a more distributed posture necessary to protect U.S. troops and deter Beijing.

As the People's Liberation Army continues to act with an aggressive sense of urgency, a major delay in these U.S. projects would also send an unhelpful message regarding America's commitment to the region.

Extending a CR for the duration of fiscal year 2021 would be particularly damaging. For the U.S. Air Force, it would mean delays to an additional 31 new starts, one production increase, and nine MILCON projects. And the service would lose roughly \$900 million in buying power.

Halting the MILCON alone would set back fielding of key weapon systems to include the F-35, F-16, and Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD). The U.S. Air Force stated in justification documents that without the GBSD facility, "the deployment of a weapon system vital to the defense and security of the United States and its allies could be delayed."

Viewed opposite China's pursuit to double its nuclear warhead stockpile, stalling the aged Minuteman III's replacement is unwise. This is especially true when considering that nuclear deterrence "underwrites every U.S. military operation around the world," as the commander of U.S. Strategic Command put it.

As threats grow, yet another long-term CR would erode the U.S. Air Force's combat capability, as well as its ability to conduct assigned missions and defend the nation.

The Department of Defense cannot compete effectively with China and Russia and cannot defend against serious continuing threats from Iran, North Korea, and terrorist organizations without the support of Congress. That support should start with an on-time defense authorization and appropriation each fiscal year.

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Washington's Arms Control Delusions and Bluffs

The Trump administration's stances on nuclear negotiations don't even make sense as a starting point
DefenseOne.com, 28 Sep 20 Steven Pifer

The clock for the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty runs out on February 5. The Trump administration has not taken up Russia's offer to extend the treaty, believing it has leverage to get something more from the Kremlin, and it has even threatened an arms race.

This is delusion and bluff. If the administration does not change course, New START will lapse and, for the first time in decades, U.S. and Russian nuclear forces will be under no constraints.

The terms of New START permit its extension for up to five years. Keeping Russian strategic forces limited and maintaining the current flow of information about those forces are very much in the U.S. interest. The Kremlin is ready to extend. Yet the Trump administration has laid down conditions, apparently believing that Moscow is desperate to continue the agreement.

The first condition is expanding the scope of the agreement. President Trump's arms control envoy, Marshall Billingslea, has said that Russia must agree to new negotiations that cover all U.S. and Russian nuclear arms. This is not an unreasonable goal; it was proposed by the Obama administration in 2010. But Moscow has already responded by saying that any new negotiations would have to address questions of interest to Russia, starting with missile defense — and Mr. Billingslea has made clear that limits on missile defense are not on offer.

The second condition is improved verification. Mr. Billingslea claims that New START's monitoring measures have significant shortcomings. However, the U.S. military and intelligence community deemed those measures sufficient in 2010, when the treaty was signed, and that remains the case today. Indeed, the State Department certified last spring that Russia was in compliance with New START.

Indeed, the biggest New START compliance issue has been raised by Russian officials. They express concern that the procedures used by the U.S. military to convert heavy bombers and launch tubes on ballistic missile submarines so that they will no longer be counted by New START can easily be reversed. (Mr. Billingslea seemed to confirm this in a recent interview, when he said the United States would immediately reverse the conversions if the treaty lapses in February.)

Over the summer, the Trump administration appeared to drop a third condition—that China, which has nothing to do with New START, agree to join arms negotiations with the United States and Russia—but Mr. Billingslea ten days ago said a new treaty must include China.

The Kremlin does not appear inclined to accept the U.S. conditions. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov termed them “too far-fetched and devoid of appealing elements,” even as Mr. Billingslea seems to have doubled down. He has warned that Washington may demand more if Moscow does not agree to the U.S. conditions by November. He offered no strategic reason for saying November; it appears obvious that he wants a pre-election agreement and photo op for Mr. Trump.

The U.S. arms control envoy also has threatened to spend Russia “into oblivion” with an arms race if New START ends and there is no replacement treaty. He bluntly told a Russian journalist: “we can afford it, but you can't.”

Really? The Pentagon is struggling to fund its already planned nuclear modernization programs, which are sucking up funds from conventional weapons programs. At the same time, the Navy wants to expand its current 290 large ships to 355, while the Air Force wants 386 squadrons, a 25 percent increase over the current number. The Department of Defense is developing new intermediate-range missile programs, whose costs will run into the billions of dollars. Where will the Pentagon find the money for a strategic nuclear arms race?

Moreover, U.S. strategic force modernization programs will not begin producing new weapons until the end of the 2020s. Russia, on the other hand, has hot production lines now churning out new ballistic missile submarines, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and intercontinental ballistic missiles, among other things. It could keep those lines running. If necessary, the Kremlin has nearly \$600 billion in reserves as well as a large national wealth fund on which it could draw.

Illusory leverage and empty threats will not get Russia to agree to the Trump administration's approach. Washington should agree to extend New START to February 2026, perhaps in conjunction with a short joint statement by Presidents Trump and Putin that the two countries will explore further nuclear arms reductions and the full range of related issues, including third-country nuclear forces and missile defense.

That approach would ensure U.S. and Russian strategic forces remain limited until 2026. It would give negotiators time to work through some very thorny issues. It would make Americans safer. And, most importantly for Mr. Trump, it would give him his photo op.

--Steven Pifer is a William Perry Research Fellow at Stanford's Center for International Security and Cooperation and a retired Foreign Service officer

Textron nabs contract to support GBSDs for the Air Force

UPI, 29 Sep 20 Christen McCurdy

Sept. 29 (UPI) -- Textron Systems Corporation has been awarded a contract to support the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent missile system for the Air Force.

The company announced the deal, which is part of a larger award to prime contractor Northrop Grumman, Tuesday.

"For over fifty years, Textron Systems has been developing and producing some of the most sophisticated technologies used by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to help protect our nation and its allies," said Textron Wayne Prender, Senior Vice President, "We are proud to support our partner Northrop Grumman, as the GBSD team provides a strong and reliable nuclear deterrent for the next fifty years and beyond."

Textron will provide its advanced reentry system technology to the GBSD program, which is a next-generation intercontinental ballistic missile system and an improvement over the aging LGM-30G Minuteman 3 ICBM initially put in use in 1970.

Northrop Grumman named Textron as part of its GSBD team in 2019.

Textron's press release did specify the amount of its contract with Northrop Grumman, but Northrop Grumman's deal with the Air Force is a nine-year contract totaling \$13.3 billion.

As the US pressures Russia to renegotiate the New START Treaty, it exposes its own unreliability as a negotiating partner

Inforsurhoy, 30 Sep 20 Denis Deboy

The US seeks to pressure Russia by threatening to reactivate nuclear capability mothballed under the New START treaty if Moscow refuses to renegotiate. All it will accomplish by this is prove it habitually cheats on arms control.

According to Politico, “The Trump administration has asked the military to assess how quickly it could pull nuclear weapons out of storage and load them onto bombers and submarines” when the New START treaty limiting the size of the US and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals expires in February. Politico sources its story “to three people familiar with the discussions.” According to these sources, the request was made to the US Strategic Command as “part of a strategy to pressure Moscow into renegotiating the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty before the US presidential election.”

What is curious about this report is that US Strategic Command already knows the answer to the request. To meet the level of warhead reductions mandated under the treaty, the US has decreased the number of warheads carried on the Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) from three to one, and on its Trident D-5 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) from up to 14 to around 5 or 6.

The deactivated warheads were reclassified as either active or inactive. Active warheads are kept fully assembled and subjected to the same level of maintenance and upgrades as their operational counterparts, and can be reactivated in accordance with guidelines already established by US Strategic Command. Inactive warheads have been partially disassembled, and their reactivation would take longer than for their active counterparts, but is similarly regulated by US Strategic Command directives. Moreover, the US regularly conducts tests where it reconverts the Minuteman III ICBM to a three-warhead configuration to practice for the very activities suggested in the Politico article. The timelines associated with this reversion are well known to US Strategic Command. It is not publicly known whether the US Navy conducts similar re-conversion flight tests of its Trident D-5 SLBMs.

One aspect of this request that, if it were implemented, would fall outside the existing reactivation guidelines set by US Strategic Command is if the US were to reconvert its fleet of Trident ballistic missile submarines from its current configuration under New START to one where no restrictions applied. This possibility raises some interesting questions about US compliance with New START.

According to Section 1, paragraph 3 in Part Three of the Protocol to the treaty,

“If an ICBM launcher, SLBM launcher, or heavy bomber is converted by rendering it incapable of employing ICBMs, SLBMs, or nuclear armaments, so that the other Party can confirm the results of the conversion, such a converted strategic offensive arm shall cease to be subject to the aggregate numbers provided for in Article II of the Treaty and may be used for purposes not inconsistent with the Treaty.”

To meet its obligations under New START, the US converted four SLBM launchers on each of its 14 Trident ballistic missile submarines – a total of 56 – to remove them from the permitted number of launchers. This conversion was done by removing the gas generators of the ejecting mechanism from the launch tube and bolting the tube covers shut.

On February 27, 2018, the Russian Foreign Ministry protested the American actions, noting that, in regard to the Trident conversions, they were “converted in such a way that the Russian Federation cannot confirm that these strategic arms have been rendered incapable of employing SLBMs.”

The Russians were concerned that the Trident SLBM conversions were not irreversible, as required under the terms of the treaty, and that the 56 launchers listed as having been “rendered incapable of employing SLBMs” should rather have been categorized as “non-deployed launchers” and not excluded from the total aggregate count. To put it bluntly, the Russians were accusing the United States of cheating on the New START Treaty.

If true, the threat made by Marshall Billingslea in his interview with the Russian Kommersant paper on September 21 to “reconvert our weapons”, if applied to the Trident ballistic missile submarine launch tubes, would not only confirm the Russian suspicions, but certify the US as an untrustworthy negotiating partner in any future arms control negotiations, either with Russia or China.

Washington already has one strike against it in this regard: its contention that the Mk 41 launcher used on the Aegis Ashore anti-ballistic missile system could not be used as a cruise missile launcher, and, as such, did not constitute a violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. This was shown to be a lie when, less than a month after the US withdrew from the INF Treaty, it conducted a flight test of a cruise missile fired from the same Mk 41 launcher.

If the Politico reporting is accurate, the US military has been ordered to carry out an exercise that is redundant insofar as the data is already known, and which does nothing to further US strategic capabilities. Moreover, if the US plans on increasing its SLBM launch capability by reactivating the 56 SLBM launchers ostensibly rendered inoperable under New START, Marshall Billingslea would be undermining his own stated objective of trying to pressure Russia back to the negotiating table before the November 2020 presidential election. After all, who in their right mind would be willing to negotiate with a proven cheater?

Triangularity Of Nuclear Arms Control: Possible Implications Of China’s Involvement In Nuclear

Eurasia Review, 30 Sep 20 Alexander G. Savelyev

In December 2019, the United States officially invited China to enter into a strategic security dialogue. The White House said it hoped Beijing’s consent to this proposal might become the first step towards an international agreement encompassing all nuclear weapons of the United States, Russia, and China. As expected, this proposal was rejected. China said its nuclear arsenal was much smaller than those of the United States and Russia, and it would be able to participate in such talks only when their nuclear potentials were brought to parity with its own.

In March 2020, U.S. President Donald Trump once again declared his intention to ask Russia and China to hold such talks with the aim of avoiding a costly arms race (Reuters.com, 2020). The Chinese Foreign Ministry’s response followed virtually in no time. Its spokesperson Zhao Lijian said that China had no intention of taking part in the so-called China-U.S.-Russia trilateral arms control negotiations, and that its position on this issue was very clear (ECNC.cn., 2020). He called upon the United States to extend the New START and to go ahead with the policy of U.S-Russian nuclear arms reduction, thus creating prerequisites for other countries to join the nuclear disarmament process. There is nothing new about China’s stance. A year earlier Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang, while speaking at a news conference in May 2019, made a similar statement. China refused to participate in a trilateral arms control agreement (Fmprc.gov.2019).

It is noteworthy that while advising the United States and Russia to downgrade their nuclear potentials to its level, China does not say what exactly this level is. One of the rare official statements (if not the sole one) on that score was the Chinese Foreign Ministry's statement, published on April 27, 2004, that China's nuclear arsenal was the smallest of all (Fact Sheet China, 2004). Even in that case the Chinese Foreign Ministry did not specify if it was referring to the quintet of the UN Security Council's permanent members. If so, China's nuclear arsenal, according to official statistics, consisted of no more than 190 warheads (Britain's level that year). Such (understated according to most analysts) estimates, have also been mentioned by a number of experts. For example, Harvard researcher Hui Zhang says China in 2011 had 166 nuclear warheads. There are other, higher estimates. For instance, Professor Phillip Karber of Georgetown University believes that China has 3,000 warheads at its disposal (Karber, 2011), while many other researchers call this in question.

The estimate offered by H. Kristensen and M. Korda of the Federation of American Scientists, who issue annual world surveys of nuclear arms potentials, is shared by most researchers and draws no objections from political circles in various countries, including the United States. According to their calculations as for April 2020, the United States had 3,800 deployed and non-deployed nuclear warheads, and Russia, 4,312 warheads. As for China, the same survey says it has 320 non-deployed nuclear warheads (Kristensen and Korda, 2020).

While underscoring the importance of nuclear arms cuts by the United States and Russia to China's level, Beijing does not specify if this idea applies only to strategic or all nuclear weapons. In the former case, if China's approach is to be accepted, Russia and the United States would have to slash their nuclear arsenals by 65%-75% (from 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads in compliance with the rules of the still effective New START). But if the total number of nuclear warheads on either side is to be counted, each country's nuclear potential would shrink by no less than 90%. Only after this will China be prepared to consider in earnest its participation in nuclear arms control talks.

The United States and Russia can hardly find this suitable. At the same time, these countries have not yet officially formulated their specific approaches to and basic provisions of hypothetical trilateral talks and a future agreement on this issue. For the time being, these issues are in the focus of experts' attention in a number of countries, and they have over the past few years offered a variety of possible formats and parameters of a future "multilateral" treaty. In most cases, experts delve into certain aspects of a future agreement that might be attractive to China. Very few think of what China might lose the moment it enters into nuclear arms control talks or what military-political consequences might follow if China eventually changed its mind regarding participation in such negotiations.

In my opinion, China's demand for achieving the "comparability" of nuclear potentials as a precondition for beginning a trilateral dialogue stems precisely from its evaluation of the consequences of its participation in the negotiations. This stance is neither far-fetched nor propagandistic, contrary to what some experts and politicians claim, but rests upon major political, military and strategic cornerstones. Disregard for China's arguments actually reduces to nothing all efforts, above all those taken by Washington, to engage Beijing in nuclear arms talks.

As far as the United States is concerned, the motives behind its attempts to persuade China to join nuclear arms talks are not quite clear. There may be several possible considerations that the United States is guided by in its policy on the issue. One is that Washington may be looking for a way to obtain necessary information about the current state of China's nuclear potential and plans for its development in the future in order to be able to adjust its own modernization programs accordingly. Another explanation is that the United States may be reluctant to go ahead with the nuclear

disarmament policy and hopes to use China's unequivocal refusal to participate in negotiations as a chance to blame it for the disruption of this process and for dismantling the nuclear arms control system as such. I believe both explanations may be true, but their analysis lies beyond the scope of this article.

Options of Engaging China In Nuclear Arms Control Talks

“Americans performed three very different policies on the People's Republic: From a total negation (and the Mao-time mutual annihilation assurances), to Nixon's sudden cohabitation. Finally, a Copernican-turn: the US spotted no real ideological differences between them and the post-Deng China. This signalled a ‘new opening’: West imagined China's coastal areas as its own industrial suburbia. Soon after, both countries easily agreed on interdependence (in this marriage of convenience): Americans pleased their corporate (machine and tech) sector and unrestrained its greed, while Chinese in return offered a cheap labour, no environmental considerations and submissiveness in imitation.

However, for both countries this was far more than economy, it was a policy – Washington read it as interdependence for transformative containment and Beijing saw it as interdependence for a (global) penetration. In the meantime, Chinese acquired more sophisticated technology, and the American Big tech sophisticated itself in digital authoritarianism – ‘technological monoculture’ met the political one.

But now with a tidal wave of Covid-19, the honeymoon is over” – recently wrote professor Anis H. Bajrektarevic on a strategic decoupling between the biggest manufacturer of American goods, China and its consumer, the US.

Indeed, Washington has not formulated in detail its official stance on engaging China in negotiations yet. Disarmament experts consider a number of options that may be proposed in principle. These options may be grouped into three main categories. The first one is putting pressure on China with the aim of making it change its mind regarding arms control. The second one is the search for proposals China may find lucrative enough, which the Chinese leadership might agree to study in earnest. And the third one is a combination of these two approaches.

As far as pressure on China is concerned, the United States is already exerting it along several lines. For one, China is criticized for the condition and development prospects of its nuclear arsenal. Specifically, it is blamed on being the only nuclear power in the Permanent Big Five that has not reduced its nuclear potential. Moreover, as follows from a statement made in May 2019 by Robert Ashley, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, “over the next decade, China is likely to at least double the size of its nuclear stockpile in the course of implementing the most rapid expansion and diversification of its nuclear arsenal in China's history” (Adamczyk, 2019). Both officials and many experts have been quoting this postulate as an established fact requiring no proof.

China is also accused of the lack of transparency, that is, refusal to disclose the size and structure of its nuclear forces, programs for their upgrade, and other nuclear policy aspects. The U.S. leadership argues that this state of affairs by no means promotes strategic stability and international security. Some experts believe that China's involvement in negotiations would help avoid some adverse effects, for example, another nuclear arms race under a Cold War scenario (Zhao, 2020). Rose Gottemoeller, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security in the Barack Obama administration, believes it may be possible to “make a case for the Chinese to come to the table early on intermediate-range constraints of ground-launched missiles, because they are staring at the possibility of a deployment of very capable U.S. missiles of this kind”

(Mehta, 2020).

Apparently, the United States had counted on Russia's support in such matters, especially as the Russian leadership said more than once that the New START, signed in 2010, was to become the last bilateral nuclear arms reduction treaty and time was ripe for other nuclear states to join the nuclear disarmament process. However, in late 2019 Russia made a U-turn in its stance on China's participation in negotiations. Speaking at a conference entitled "Foreign Policy Priorities of the Russian Federation in Arms Control and Nonproliferation in the Context of Changes in the Global Security Architecture," held on November 8, 2019 in Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia respected China's position concerning its refusal to participate in the talks. Moreover, he stated that declaring China's consent to participate in the negotiating process as a precondition looked "openly provocative."

Thus Russia made it clear that it had no intention of putting pressure on China regarding the issue, but at the same time it would have nothing against the Chinese leadership eventually making a decision to join the United States and Russia in nuclear disarmament talks. Russia is unlikely to alter its position even under pressure from the United States, which has long harbored plans for using the prolongation of the New START as a factor for getting China involved in the talks in some way, or even securing its consent to become a signatory to the treaty. Specifically, the U.S. president's National Security Advisor Robert O'Brian made an unequivocal statement on that score (Riechmann, 2020). Also, in May 2020, the United States came up with an ultimatum that it would not extend the New START until China agreed to participate in it. Moreover, the newly appointed special U.S. presidential representative for arms control, Marshall Billingslea, actually demanded that Russia "bring the Chinese to the negotiating table."

The United States may exert (or is already exerting) pressure on China "indirectly," for example by using such levers as the U.S.-Chinese trade war and China's alleged "responsibility" for the spread of the coronavirus (which the United States regards as proven). Such pressures may be largely exerted covertly.

Some military and political experts believe that it is worth exploring compromise options of China's participation in nuclear arms control. Such options may accommodate the interests of all partakers and match the specific structure and quantitative parameters of weapons subject to control. Establishing transparency in the given sphere would be one of the "simple" ways of involving China in the strategic dialogue. In other words, such transparency would imply mutual disclosure of information about the number of missiles and deployed warheads, their basic parameters, including range, and also specific locations and deployment sites (Tosaki, 2019). It must be noted that this seemingly "least painful" and easy-to-accomplish solution for making China join the international arms control dialogue is in fact least acceptable to it.

The long list of other proposals includes various options of a "mixed" approach to the control of missile systems. For instance, reaching an agreement on a common ceiling for intermediate-range ground-based and air-launched missiles or a similar restriction on any strategic missiles regardless of the type of deployment (ground, sea, or air launched), as well as the intermediate-range missiles of three nuclear powers—China, the United States, and Russia. The proponents of this approach believe that this may provide an approximately equitable basis for talks among the aforesaid states (Zhao, 2020).

All of the aforementioned recommendations—and a number of other ideas—for plugging China into bilateral or multilateral nuclear arms control talks are based on the past experience of negotiations on the issue. In the meantime, the specifics of China's nuclear policy are left unnoticed or

intentionally ignored. It is generally believed that inviting China to participate in negotiations is tantamount to official recognition of its status as a great power responsible, like the United States and Russia, not only for its own security but also for global security. This recognition is often considered a reason enough to expect China to consent to participate in such negotiations and the main problem is seen in the formulation of concrete proposals for discussion. In the meantime, such an approach looks erroneous.

The Fundamental Principles of China's Nuclear Policy

China's policy concerning nuclear arms and their role in maintaining national security has remained unchanged for more than 55 years, starting from its accession to the "nuclear club" in 1964. Central to that policy is China's pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons or threaten to use them against non-nuclear countries and countries in nuclear free zones. It is believed that Mao Zedong made that decision personally in 1964 (Fravel, 2019).

In accordance with this pledge, China, as it reiterates, maintains its nuclear deterrence weapons at a required minimum by declaring its readiness for retaliation against an aggressor in the event of a hypothetical nuclear attack. China vows it does not participate in a nuclear arms race against any country. These provisions have remained unchanged for many years and can be found in many Chinese fundamental military and strategic planning documents, available from open sources (The State Council, 2019), and are repeatedly quoted by the Chinese mass media (Xinhuanet.com., 2019).

In contrast to the classical nuclear deterrence formula China does not demonstrate its retaliatory strike capabilities; on the contrary, it conceals them for various reasons. Enhancing the survivability of retaliatory strike systems is one. Such "existential" means of deterrence enables the country possessing a relatively small nuclear potential to keep a potential aggressor in a state of strategic uncertainty as it cannot be certain that its first strike would "disarm" the defending opponent by eliminating all of its nuclear weapons with a surprise counterforce strike.

To confirm its adherence to the no-first use principle, China declares that it limits its nuclear potential to the "minimum" defense requirements, while all upgrade programs are geared mostly to ensuring the survivability and reliability of retaliatory strike systems. China's nuclear forces have become more survivable due to the creation and deployment of mobile ICBMs, and measures to shelter a considerable part of its nuclear potential, including mobile ICBMs and shorter-range missiles in a network of underground tunnels—the Underground Great Wall of China. Also, other means of hiding nuclear weapons are used, such as mock ICBM silos and shelters for nuclear submarines inside coastal rocks.

As the information about the condition, development prospects and size of China's nuclear potential remains scarce, its nuclear policy issues are in the focus of attention of many specialists and think tanks in the United States and other countries. Most of them (but far from all) believe that China's declared policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons and estimates of its nuclear potential (around 300 warheads) agree with reality (Pifer, 2019). But other researchers maintain that under certain circumstances China may revise its attitude to the no-first-use principle and abandon the minimum deterrence concept in favor of gaining opportunities for conducting limited nuclear war. Such conclusions are made on the basis of data showing the growth of qualitative parameters of China's nuclear forces—greater accuracy of nuclear warheads, the deployment of MIRVs on ICBMs, forecasts for a considerable increase in the overall number of nuclear weapons at the country's disposal, etc. (Giacomdetti, 2014; Yoshihara and Bianchi, 2019; Schneider, 2019).

It should be acknowledged that the lack of official information about the condition and development prospects of China's nuclear arsenal and implementation of programs in the strategic field (creation of a heavy ICBM, research and development of a missile attack warning system, deployment of a missile defense, and others) afford ground for a variety of speculations over China's compliance with the professed principles regarding nuclear weapons. In the meantime, this by no means contradicts the fundamental principle of China's nuclear policy—no-first-use of nuclear weapons—which will remain unchanged in the foreseeable future. Even if one assumes that China does participate in the nuclear arms race (which is also a subject of speculations), it is by no means its instigator.

Certain changes are possible, though. China may acquire real capabilities for a limited response to a limited nuclear attack. In other words, the country's military-political leadership, empowered to make a decision to use nuclear weapons, will acquire extra opportunities and options for retaliation other than a massive nuclear strike against the enemy's major unprotected targets, such as cities and industrial centers. At the same time there is no reason to say that the improvement of parameters of China's strategic nuclear forces increases the risk of a first counterforce strike against a would-be aggressor just because the nuclear potentials of China and the two leading nuclear powers are incomparable. In this case size does matter.

Effects of Arms Control On China's Nuclear Strategy And Policy

Should China agree to participate in negotiations or draft an agreement on control of its nuclear weapons, its nuclear strategy and policy will most likely undergo the most serious changes. And these changes, in the author's opinion, may be far from positive. They will result not from possible restrictions imposed on China's nuclear forces or disadvantageous terms of a future treaty forced upon China, but the very fact of concluding such an international treaty.

A close look at Soviet-U.S. and Russian-U.S. nuclear arms control agreements reveals how the parties' approaches to solving the problems of national security and strengthening strategic stability have been changing. At early stages the two sides managed to come to terms regarding the overall number of ground-based launchers of strategic ballistic missiles, SLBM capable submarines and SLBM launchers. Later, the class of strategic weapons was expanded to incorporate heavy bombers armed with long-range cruise missiles and gravity nuclear bombs. Some types of nuclear weapons, for instance, strategic air-launched ballistic missiles were banned. Next, there followed restrictions on nuclear warheads deployed on delivery vehicles and then their reductions. A total ban was applied to ground-based intermediate- and shorter-range cruise missiles. An attempt was made to outlaw ICBMs with multiple warheads. Each clause of the concluded treaties was scrutinized by the expert community and drew worldwide interest.

In addition, efforts were made to develop a mechanism to verify compliance with the assumed commitments. The first Soviet-U.S. agreements SALT-1 (1972) and SALT-2 (1979) assigned the control function to "national technical means of verification"—intelligence satellites. The contracting parties pledged to refrain from creating impediments to their operation. Also, the signatories undertook "not to use deliberate concealment measures which impede verification by national technical means of compliance." In the next agreements—the INF Treaty (of 1987) and, particularly, START-1 (1991) — a comprehensive system of control and verification was developed and adopted. It envisaged exchanges of data (including the geographical coordinates of each ICBM silo) and various notifications and on-site inspections, which made it totally impossible to conceal even the slightest violations of these agreements. This system of verification functions within the framework of the still effective Russian-U.S. New START, concluded in 2010.

It is hard to imagine a hypothetical agreement with China not including compliance verification procedures. And it is very unlikely that the system of verification in such an agreement will be “soft,” as was the case with the one established under the earlier SALT-1 and SALT-2 treaties. On the contrary, as follows from statements by U.S. officials, the United States is determined to pay the closest attention to the verification and control of compliance with all future agreements. U.S. Acting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Christopher Ford has made an explicit statement on this score.

Even if such an agreement does not impose any obligations on China, requiring reduction of its nuclear potential, Beijing will be expected to provide exhaustive information about its nuclear weapons and deployment sites. Also, China will have to give up measures to conceal its nuclear forces, change the locations of mobile missile systems and allow foreign inspectors to visit classified facilities (including the Underground Great Wall of China) in order to confirm that the provided information is correct and proper action has been taken under assumed commitments. Besides, China will have to notify other signatories of the commissioning of new nuclear weapons and withdrawal from operational duty or elimination of older systems, the redeployment of weapons, etc. All these measures will make it possible to keep under full control China’s nuclear potential and nuclear arms delivery vehicles.

These measures, understandable from the standpoint of an arms control treaty, may have truly disastrous effects on China’s entire official nuclear policy. Information disclosure and control measures would make China’s nuclear arsenal totally vulnerable to a first nuclear strike and partially – to a non-nuclear strike. A potential aggressor, possessing a considerable advantage in nuclear weapons and full information about the deployment sites, will have a guaranteed capability to destroy the adversary’s entire nuclear potential. Theoretically, it would spend far more nuclear weapons than the victim of the aggression (in this particular case, China) would lose, but still retain an enormous attack potential. In a situation like this, there will be no weapons available to deliver a retaliatory strike. All this will mean that China’s declared no-first-use policy will lose credibility. In other words, it will turn into a propaganda slogan, with no real resources to rely on to implement this policy in practice.

Apparently, it is precisely these considerations that are behind China’s refusal to participate in nuclear arms control talks, and they will remain in place at least until the strategic situation in this field undergoes fundamental change. One of the most important conditions for China to enter into such negotiations (it says so openly) is further reduction of nuclear arsenals by Russia and the United States to levels comparable with China’s potential. As it has been already stated, this condition, described as a political one, has fundamental strategic, military and technical grounds.

Likely Consequences of China’s Participation In A Nuclear Arms Control Treaty

As has been said above, China’s consent to enter into nuclear arms control negotiations and conclusion of a corresponding agreement will be unlikely in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, it is worth pondering on what decisions in the military and political field the Chinese leadership may adopt if it has to give in to U.S. pressure. One of the most important decisions is, to my mind, the possibility of China remaining committed to the no-first-use principle.

Currently, this principle is ensured not so much by the quantitative parameters of China’s nuclear arsenal, but as its stealthy deployment, concealment measures, and refusal to provide relevant information. In order to retain a retaliatory strike potential in a situation where the information about the

deployment sites of China's nuclear forces has been disclosed while the amount of nuclear arms available remains considerably inferior to those of the "partner" or "partners," China will have to exert major efforts to ensure the invulnerability of at least some of them. Doing this will be impossible without a major buildup of the nuclear potential, above all, of the least vulnerable strategic systems (mobile ICBMs and SLBMs). All of this will require considerable expenses and time. Even if the work on a new treaty takes two or three, or even five years, one can hardly expect any considerable changes in the quantitative and qualitative structure of China's nuclear forces by the moment this work is finalized.

The problem of strategic nuclear forces' vulnerability may theoretically be resolved (at least to a certain extent) by developing and deploying missile defenses around deployment sites. But this would entail heavy spending, too. Also, such a program can hardly be implemented within tight deadlines. The problem of greater vulnerability of China's strategic nuclear forces can also be resolved by adopting the "launch-under-attack" concept or "launch on warning" concept. Their adoption might be considered, although with great reservations, to conform to the no-first-use principle, but in this case it will be essential to build a warning system based on early warning satellites and radars. However, still there will be no guarantees that such a system will be able to issue a timely notification to the military and political leadership of a missile attack against China, if such a strike is carried out with U.S. SLBMs having short flight-in time and counterforce capability. Under such a scenario China's strategic forces will have to remain on high alert all the time. This means that China will be forced to give up keeping missile warheads in store separately and to deploy them on strategic delivery vehicles, thus demonstrating its readiness for instant retaliation in case of an attack warning.

The above arguments prompt the conclusion that China, if it agrees to the drafting and signing a nuclear arms control treaty, will certainly have to depart from the principle of no-first-use of nuclear weapons, with all the ensuing negative consequences. This may also trigger an enhanced arms race and induce China to adopt more aggressive nuclear arms concepts.

It is nakedly clear that China finds it far easier to refuse to hold nuclear arms control talks than address the adverse military and strategic effects its participation in such an international agreement is bound to entail. In this situation the United States should give more thought to its policy of engaging China in nuclear arms control talks and focus on Russian-U.S. strategic relations, including the prolongation of the New START without any linkages and preconditions.

As far as Russia is concerned, its current policy of avoiding pressure on China to make it engage in nuclear arms talks looks reasonable. From the political standpoint—alongside with other considerations—a trilateral agreement would mean that Russia officially regards China, albeit formally, as a "partner" (if not a "potential adversary"), just as the United States, and that strategic relations among such parties are based on the concept of nuclear deterrence, the balance of nuclear forces, and their capabilities to deliver first and retaliatory strikes. Incidentally, China's participation would have the same implications for Russia. Lending this dimension to bilateral relations hardly meets the interests of the two countries.

-Alexander G. Savelyev, Dr. of Political Science, Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Moscow, Russia, Center of International Security, Chief Research Fellow

CONGRESSIONAL

By Susan Cornwell

Overnight Defense: Senate passes stopgap spending bill

https://thehill.com/policy/defense/overnights/519049-overnight-defense-senate-passes-stopgap-spending-bill-hours-before?utm_source=thehill&utm_medium=widgets&utm_campaign=es_recommended_content

- [*Passed Just hours before shutdown deadline*](#)
- [*Brief military mentions in chaotic first Trump, Biden debate*](#)
- [*Lawmakers grills Pentagon officials over Germany drawdown*](#)

BY [REBECCA KHEEL](#) for THE HILL // 09/30/20 06:45 PM EDT

THE TOPLINE: The Senate has [passed a short-term funding bill](#) just hours before the deadline to prevent a government shutdown.

Senators voted 84-10 on Wednesday to keep the government funded at current levels through Dec. 11, setting up another funding fight after the November elections and right before the holidays. The funding bill, passed by the House earlier this month, now heads to [President Trump](#)'s desk, where he is expected to sign it before midnight to keep the government running. The last-minute passage of the legislation comes after the Senate punted the bill last week as a burgeoning fight over the Supreme Court has diminished day-to-day cooperation in the chamber.

Republicans had hoped to pass the **continuing resolution (CR)**, which continues funding at fiscal 2020 levels, last week, but argue Democrats wanted to keep them off the campaign trail in the final stretch of the election. See you back here in December: To avoid a shutdown on Dec. 12, lawmakers and the Trump administration will need to pass either another CR or a dozen fiscal year 2021 funding bills.

Getting a deal on all 12 appropriations bills would be a herculean task given the deep disagreements between the two parties and the short timeframe. The outcome of the November elections will also play a role: If Democrats win back the White House and the Senate majority they could try to pass another CR into early 2021, when they would have more leverage. Though the House has passed 10 of the 12 fiscal 2021 spending bills, the Senate has not taken up any amid a disagreement in the Appropriations Committee about the amendment process.

ABOUT LAST NIGHT: Tuesday night marked the first debate between Trump and Democratic presidential nominee [Joe Biden](#). The debate was generally considered a chaotic mess caused by Trump's frequent interruptions of Biden and debate moderator [Chris Wallace](#), and defense issues were not really discussed. But there were a couple mentions of the military we can recap:

Biden hits Trump over 'losers' and 'suckers' scandal:

Biden called out [Trump for reportedly calling fallen service members](#) "suckers" and "losers." Invoking his son Beau Biden, who served in Iraq and died of brain cancer in 2015, Biden said "he was not a loser. He was a patriot. And the people left behind there were heroes." In response, Trump quickly turned to attacking Biden's other son, Hunter. "Oh, really? Are you talking about Hunter?" Trump asked Biden on Tuesday.

When the former vice president said he was talking about his deceased son Beau, Trump replied: "I don't know Beau, I know Hunter." Trump's preoccupation with Hunter Biden and his work at a Ukrainian energy firm in an effort to dig up dirt on Biden was what led to the president's

impeachment. Trump on Tuesday also launched a new personal attack on his Democratic rival by focusing on Hunter Biden's 2014 dismissal from the Navy for cocaine use. Hunter Biden received an administrative discharge after failing a drug test.

Trump mischaracterized the Navy's actions against Hunter Biden, saying he was dishonorably discharged. Biden shot back on Tuesday that his son wasn't dishonorably discharged and that like a lot of Americans his son had a drug problem but was "working on it" and had "fixed it," adding that he's proud of his son.

308,000 dead?:

Early in the debate, Trump also lobbed an attack line at Biden that left many defense watchers scratching their heads. After Biden mentioned the more than 200,000 Americans who have died from the coronavirus, Trump claimed that Biden's actions in office led to "308,000 military people dying because you couldn't provide them proper healthcare in the military." Later in the debate, Trump said the Department of Veterans Affairs "was a mess under him, 308,000 people died because they didn't have proper health care."

Trump did not elaborate at all during the debate, but his Twitter account later tweeted out a [CNN article on a 2015 VA inspector general](#) report. The report did not find what Trump suggested it did. According to the report, about 307,000 pending applications for VA health care out of nearly 900,000 it looked it belonged to veterans who likely had already died. But because of "data limitations," according to the report, investigators could not determine how many of the veterans actually applied for healthcare and when. In some cases, veterans died years beforehand. For example, in one case, a veteran who died in 1988 was listed as awaiting approval to enroll VA healthcare until January 2015.

LAWMAKER FUME OVER GERMANY DRAWDOWN:

Defense officials [faced a bipartisan grilling](#) Wednesday over the Trump administration's plans to slash the U.S. troop presence in Germany by nearly 12,000 service members. Lawmakers in both parties have previously expressed their opposition to the plan, but Wednesday's House Armed Services Committee hearing offered the panel's first opportunity to publicly question the Pentagon since the department officially rolled out the plans in July.

Pentagon officials defended the plans, but had few details for lawmakers on specifics such as cost, consultations with allies, the department's decision-making process and how the move would affect U.S. deterrence against Russia — a dynamic that appeared only to frustrate members further. "This is just not acceptable from the Department of Defense that on a move of this kind — whatever you guys may think of Congress, whatever you may think of this committee, it is our responsibility to exercise oversight of this," House Armed Services Committee Chairman [Adam Smith](#) (D-Wash.) said in the middle of the hearing.

"The American people in their infinite wisdom have put us in these chairs, and we are not getting the level of insight in this decision that we should," he added. "The level of detail that we're getting here is just not acceptable for us to exercise our oversight and for what the Pentagon should be putting in front of us. I just want that on the record from my perspective, and I have a strong sense that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle would agree with me on that point.

So on this and other decisions, we just need to hear better what the hell's going on, so that we can exercise our oversight." Rep. [Mac Thornberry](#) (Texas), the top Republican on the committee, put blame on the White House, arguing Defense Secretary [Mark Esper](#) has kept the panel

informed about other troop reviews. “What’s different is that a couple staffers in the White House decided that they wanted to try to sell the president on an absolute troop cap for Germany,” said Thornberry, who is retiring from Congress at the end of this term.

“They clearly hadn’t thought through the consequences, they didn’t know how it would be implemented, and so what’s happened is Secretary Esper and the folks at the Pentagon are trying to put lipstick on the pig or make lemons out of lemonade or whatever colloquialism you want to use.” The committee was hearing testimony from James Anderson, acting under secretary of Defense for policy, and Lt. Gen. David Allvin, director for strategy, plans and policy at the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Anderson told the committee there would be a “much more mature plan to share with Congress” in early 2021.

House Republicans Move to Cripple China’s Growing Military

https://freebeacon.com/national-security/house-republicans-move-to-cripple-chinas-growing-military/?utm_source=actengage&utm_campaign=FreedomMail&utm_medium=email

Landmark report calls for blacklisting of companies tied to PLA

By: [Adam Kredo](#) and [Jack Beyrer](#) for the WFB // SEPTEMBER 30, 2020 6:20 PM

The Congressional China Task Force unveiled a legislative proposal Wednesday to cripple China’s military industrial base by blacklisting any company tied to Chinese armed forces.

After months of closed-door interviews with policymakers, experts, and military officials, the task force presented multiple proposals, including a boycott of companies known to aid China's military. The goal is to economically isolate the People's Liberation Army (PLA), one of the primary instruments of China’s expanding influence. The report also calls for major increases to the U.S. defense budget to "modernize our nuclear triad and conventional weapons, [and] develop cutting-edge capabilities to counter China in space and cyberspace," Rep. Liz Cheney (R., Wyo.), the China Task Force's deputy chair, told the Washington Free Beacon.

Lawmakers and congressional sources told the Free Beacon the task force's findings should serve as a wake-up call for the American public about the pressing threat China poses. The report includes nearly 200 legislative proposals that officials hope will undermine China's growing military and ensure the United States has the resources for any potential conflict. The task force, which Congressional Democrats boycotted and labeled a "distraction," hopes the report will serve as a template for GOP leaders as they push a range of policies meant to undermine China.

Rep. Michael McCaul (R., Texas), the China Task Force's lead member, said financial blacklists would force American companies to divest from China’s military and its supporting industries. "We shouldn't be using our capital to support companies that are building weapons aimed at the United States," McCaul told the Free Beacon. "As an investor, is it a good long-term strategy to invest in these types of companies when they have a very high potential to come under U.S. government sanctions in the future?"

Along with the blacklists, GOP lawmakers are also considering a proposal to require any companies tied to China's military sector to divest. The recommendations are meant to identify and address Beijing's fusion of military, business, and politics, according to a senior congressional aide who worked on the report. China currently boasts the largest navy in the world, rapidly expanded amphibious capacity, and significant leaps in its space and communications technologies.

These developments point toward Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s ultimate goal—replacing the United States as the world’s foremost military, economic, and technological power by 2049. The task force report contains a comprehensive list of key military investments the United States must make to maintain its edge over China, including defense budget growth of at least of 3-5 percent each year. Congressional leaders also say the United States must forward deploy troops in the Indo-Pacific region and partner with allies to help push back Communist forces.

DoD seeks legislative help for ICBM replacement construction costs

https://www.defensenews.com/smr/nuclear-arsenal/2020/09/25/dod-seeking-legislative-help-for-icbm-replacement-construction-costs/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2009.28.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

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

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Defense Department hopes Congress will approve a change in how it funds the [next-generation intercontinental ballistic missile](#) in order to avoid what the department views as unnecessary contract bureaucracy.

Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee last week, [Pentagon acquisition head Ellen Lord](#) said the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent program [was moving along as planned](#), but she indicated that a military construction issue remains unsolved. “We do have a lot of money allocated through the MILCON [military construction] methodology, and whereas we have 500 separate items that need to be updated, that would be rather onerous to have 500 different or so projects,” Lord said. “We’re looking at consolidating that, to streamlining it.”

“So we’re very, very interested to see what comes out of conference, but we would ask [Congress] that we move some of that money out of MILCON to give us the flexibility on the program execution side to move forward along the timelines,” she added. “Our job in acquisition and sustainment [is] to not transition programmatic risks over to operational risk, and I’m afraid if we don’t move some of that money out of MILCON, that’s exactly what we would be doing.”

While discussions around the GBSD program often focus on the missiles themselves, each of the 450 existing Minuteman III ICBM launch facility locations, as well as up to 45 launch center sites tied to the current ICBM infrastructure, must be redone to [accommodate the new capability](#). Everything from the physical buildings at the staging areas above the launch sites to the doors and missile suspension systems inside the silos would require updates.

Under current requirements, the Pentagon must report and budget each of the nearly 500 different building locations — spread across three operational wings, five states and 31,500 square miles — as their own military construction cases. Given that the same scope of work would be happening at multiple locations, the department believes it simply makes sense to combine those into one pot of money for ease of planning.

Should that not happen, there could be delays in updating and preparing the silos for the GBSD program on time, warned Pentagon spokeswoman Jessica Maxwell, who said in a statement to Defense News that the conversion from Minuteman to GBSD “must occur on a precise timeline to maintain the operational readiness of ICBMs.” To hit the planned full operational capability date of 2036, Maxwell said, the Air Force must convert one launch facility per week for nine years.

Things get complicated by the fact that some of the Minuteman ICBMs are set to age out of service during this period, meaning Pentagon planners are nervous that any delay could lead to a degradation of ICBM capability, including the goal of having 400 missiles on alert at all times. That level of synchronization will not be possible “if authorities and responsibilities for the conversion effort are split over multiple contractors, as required by current law,” Maxwell said.

As a result, the Air Force submitted a fiscal 2021 legislative proposal that would allow the use of research, development, testing, engineering and missile procurement funding to cover conversion costs for the launch facilities and centers. But Lord’s team is working with Congress to see if there are options for new legislative language that would allow the projects at one installation — say, all the launch facilities tied to F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming — to be combined into one contract.

Todd Harrison, a budget expert with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the Pentagon’s request “makes perfect sense,” as the traditional MILCON funding “would be excessively burdensome” for the project. “They would have to break the funding up by each individual site, which would mean about 500 different MILCON projects for this one program. If they could centralize this funding in one account (or fewer accounts) it would allow more flexibility to reallocate funding as necessary between sites and to manage the program in a more coordinated manner,” he said.

However, the way forward may be tricky, Harrison warned. MILCON appropriations go through appropriations subpanels focused on military construction and veterans affairs; meanwhile, research, development, testing and engineering funding flows through the defense subpanels. And crossing jurisdictional lines often creates problems in Congress.

America’s military deserves timely funding from Congress – (NDAA)

https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2020/09/28/americas-military-deserves-timely-funding-from-congress/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2009.29.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

By: Bradley Bowman and Maj. Scott Adamson for Defense News // 21 hours ago

As the federal fiscal year ends on Sept. 30, the Department of Defense once again does not have an on-time authorization or full-year defense appropriation from Congress.

Sadly, the use of [so-called continuing resolutions](#) has become the norm, but this approach imposes significant costs on U.S. service members and American national security. The importance of passing the annual defense appropriation and National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is clear. Unfortunately, over the last decade, there is but a [single instance](#) in which Congress passed both before the start of the fiscal year. Congress has instead enacted continuing resolutions, which essentially [copy and paste](#) the previous year’s defense appropriation.

From fiscal year 2010 to 2019, CRs [lasted](#) on average 119 days. During the last [presidential election year](#), the NDAA was enacted in December, but the defense appropriation did not become law until the following May. The delay in the latter drove the DoD to operate under a CR for 217 days — roughly 60 percent of the fiscal year. Congress’ increasingly routine reliance on CRs [disregards](#) emerging and time-sensitive Pentagon requirements and priorities.

In turn, this leads to misalignment of funds, delays in modernization, and substantive decreases in buying power. Further, CRs leave defense suppliers in the dark, imposing inefficiencies and delaying vital programs. If Congress wants to minimize program delays that are often the subject of heated congressional hearing questions, passing the NDAA and defense appropriation on time would help. After all, new programs cannot start without congressional approval that CRs usually don't provide.

While these negative effects impact [all of the services](#), consider the [impacts of a CR on the U.S. Air Force's](#) ongoing operations and modernization efforts. Should the service experience a six-month CR, it would impact 17 new starts, six production increases, and eight military construction (MILCON) projects. Notably among these are the [E-11A aircraft](#), MH-139 helicopter, and three infrastructure projects at Tinian.

The E-11A, with Battlefield Airborne Communications Node (BACN), [enables](#) persistent communications capability in areas where variable terrain or lacking infrastructure precludes it. The aircraft is [critical](#) to austere combat operations. With the fleet down to three after suffering a [fatal crash](#) in January, the U.S. Air Force will be delayed in meeting increasing demands for the aircraft. This leaves U.S. forces more exposed to enemy attack in areas where communications are degraded.

The MH-139 Grey Wolf represents another critical [air asset that would be delayed](#). Set to [replace](#) the aging UH-1N in patrolling America's missile fields associated with the land-based leg of the nuclear triad, the new helicopter brings better speed, range, and capacity. A CR would delay U.S. Air Force plans to procure the first eight for recapitalization efforts, and keep in place response time waivers associated with the older, slower Huey.

Finally, under a six-month CR, the U.S. Air Force would be unable to fully execute MILCON projects intended to [build](#) vital infrastructure on the strategically located Pacific island of Tinian. Delays to this construction would impede U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's shift to a more distributed posture necessary to protect U.S. troops and deter Beijing. As the People's Liberation Army continues to act with an aggressive sense of urgency, a major delay in these U.S. projects would also send an unhelpful message regarding America's commitment to the region.

Extending a CR for the duration of fiscal year 2021 would be particularly damaging. For the U.S. Air Force, it would mean delays to an additional 31 new starts, one production increase, and nine MILCON projects. And the service would lose roughly \$900 million in buying power. Halting the MILCON alone would set back fielding of key weapon systems to include the [F-35](#), [F-16](#), and Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD).

The U.S. Air Force [stated in justification documents](#) that without the GBSD facility, "the deployment of a weapon system vital to the defense and security of the United States and its allies could be delayed." Viewed opposite China's pursuit to [double](#) its nuclear warhead stockpile, stalling the aged Minuteman III's replacement is unwise. This is especially true when considering that [nuclear deterrence](#) "underwrites every U.S. military operation around the world," as the commander of U.S. Strategic Command put it.

As threats grow, yet another long-term CR would erode the U.S. Air Force's combat capability, as well as its ability to conduct assigned missions and defend the nation. The Department of Defense cannot compete effectively with China and Russia and cannot defend against serious continuing threats from Iran, North Korea, and terrorist organizations without the support of Congress. That support should start with an on-time defense authorization and appropriation each fiscal year.

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Bipartisan congressional task force recommends extending nuclear treaty with Russia

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/bipartisan-congressional-task-force-recommends-extending-nuclear-treaty-with-russia/ar-BB19xNET?ocid=uxbndlbing>

By: Rebecca Kheel for the Hill // 3 hrs ago

A bipartisan congressional task force is recommending the extension of a nuclear arms treaty between the United States and Russia that is set to expire in February.

The recommendation to extend the New START treaty was one of several in the final report of the Future of Defense Task Force, a panel of eight House Armed Services Committee members from both parties tasked with examining long-term strategy to meet emerging threats. "With a rapidly approaching expiration date, the United States and Russia should extend the highly successful Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) while negotiating a follow-on agreement," the task force wrote in its [87-page report](#) released Tuesday after a year of work.

The recommendation comes as the Trump administration has been ramping up pressure on Russia to meet its demands on conditions for extending the treaty. The New START treaty caps the number of deployed nuclear warheads the United States and Russia can have at 1,550 a piece. It also places limits on weapons capable of delivering the warheads and establishes a verification regime.

The treaty is set to expire in February, but has the option of a five-year extension without needing new approval from either country's legislature. President Trump's arms control envoy, Marshall Billingslea, has said he would recommend extending the pact if Moscow also agrees to a separate political framework that pledges China's participation in future arms control talks and an expansion of the treaty to include more classes of weapons. Billingslea recently said U.S. demands would increase after the November presidential election.

Arms control advocates fear the Trump administration is making unreasonable demands to run out the clock, warning their real intention is to scrap the treaty. In the task force report, lawmakers noted that New START remains the last treaty constraining the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals after the Trump administration withdrew from the separate Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019.

"Its lapse at a time when China and North Korea (and potentially Iran) are increasing their nuclear capabilities and arsenals would send a harmful message to adversaries and partners alike while further undermining the global Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)," the report added. The recommendation on New START came in a broader call for strengthening existing alliance and security agreements while forging "new and creative partnerships," such as increasing cooperation with nontraditional allies in Asia and Africa.

The task force was co-chaired by Reps. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.) and Jim Banks (R-Ind.), and consisted of Reps. Susan Davis (D-Calif), Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.), Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.), Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.), Paul Mitchell (R-Mich.) and Michael Waltz (R-Fla.).

"America needs a plan to confront the dual threats of Russia's aggression and China's rise," Moulton said in a statement. "This is it. For the first time, there is agreement among both parties in Congress about the path forward, we can take it no matter the outcome of the November election." In a separate statement, Banks said the report "details a vision of the future of defense --specifically a smart, whole-of-nation strategy addressing the rise of China -- and I will be dedicating the rest of my career on the House Armed Services Committee to making sure it comes to fruition."

The report said Russia poses the most immediate threat to the United States because of its nuclear arsenal and efforts to undermine Western democratic governments. But, the report added, China represents the most significant economic and national security threat to the United States over the next 20 to 30 years. The report also highlighted as a threat divisions within the United States that "have become incubators for disinformation campaigns and subversion by the Russian and Chinese governments, who have mastered the ability to weaponize a free and open society."

It also identified climate change as a "threat multiplier," something Defense officials have also said but have tip-toed around amid Trump's [approach to climate change](#). To counter emerging threats, the report recommends several sweeping reviews, including studying all legacy platforms to determine their relevance in 50 years and requiring every major defense acquisition program evaluate using artificial intelligence.

"Using the Manhattan Project as a model, the United States must undertake and win the artificial intelligence race by leading in the invention and deployment of AI while establishing the standards for its public and private use," the report said. The report also called for a reconfiguration of the national security structure that was built "primarily to focus on the rise of communism." Under the reimagined structure, according to the report, the State Department would partner with the Pentagon "to ensure diplomatic parity and leadership."

The report went on to say that the United States should lead the formation and ratification of a global treaty on artificial intelligence; expand voluntary national service programs because "an engaged and informed electorate is essential for a republic to endure"; commit to spending at least one percent of the country's gross domestic product on government-supported research and development in order to increase investment in foundational science and technology research; and increase funding for Pentagon innovation projects such as the Defense Innovation Unit, AFWERX and Army Futures Command.

It also called for Congress to pass an updated authorization for the use of military force (AUMF). The United States relies largely on the 2001 AUMF passed after the 9/11 attacks for legal authority for military operations around the world. "Emerging threat streams require the United States to make strategic choices and prioritize its military actions," the report said. "Revising the AUMF ensures that the United States can operate in a dynamic threat environment while signaling to both allies and adversaries that America is committed to the lawful pursuit of its military endeavors."

AROUND THE WORLD



RUSSIA:

Russia's state-of-the-art weapons Peresvet, Avangard, Kinzhal on track - Deputy PM Borisov

MEDIA: Interfax (Russia) // DATE: September 28, 2020

MOSCOW -- The creation of the Avangard missile systems, the Peresvet weapons, and the Kinzhal hypersonic missiles is continuing as planned, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yury Borisov said.

"Yes, everything is proceeding as planned," Borisov said on the television program News on Saturday with Sergei Brilyov, answering a question about the creation of these Russian state-of-the-art weapons. The Russian defense industry has adjusted to the coronavirus pandemic and the production schedules have not been seriously affected, he said. "I have a hope that there will be no losses in the amounts and speed of production in the defense industry following this difficult year. We will fulfill all plans and show quite a serious growth, no less than 3-5% is guaranteed," Borisov said.

Since April, logistics and personnel's work at defense enterprises based on the compliance with all sanitary protection means, he said. "Overall, everything enable to ensure the presence of 40-50% of the main personnel at their work places, which effectively prevented all possible production halts," he said. On March 1, 2018, Russian President Vladimir Putin said in his address to the Federal Assembly that Russia had developed hypersonic weapons, - the Avangard missile system, Kinzhal missile, and Peresvet combat lasers.

The Peresvet combat lasers were put on duty since December 1, 2018. At present, Peresvet laser systems are used to cover the movement of strategic missile systems. Peresvet can deter airstrikes and fight satellites, the Russian Defense Ministry said. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said on December 24 that Peresvet laser systems had been deployed in the missile deployment areas of five divisions of the Russian Strategic Missile Forces.

Avangard is Russia's new strategic missile system with the hypersonic glide vehicle capable of reaching Mach 27 velocity. It was developed at the Reutov-based NPO Mashinostroyeniya. According to the Russian military, the Avangard system will be an effective response to the deployment of the U.S. air defense system. The Kinzhal is the aviation system equipped with high-precision hypersonic aeroballistic missile based on the upgraded Mikoyan MiG-31 long-range interceptor fighter. According to the Russian military, it is capable of striking targets at the distance of over 2,000 km and it is guaranteed that the missile can overcome all existing and prospective air defense and missile defense systems.

The Avangard strategic missile system with a hypersonic glide vehicle devaluates the missile defense system which is being built in the United States, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yury Borisov said. "When it [hypersonic glide vehicles] changes the trajectory of its movements, it is

impossible to forecast where it ends up next and where to send an interceptor missile. This is why [it] devalues all the efforts the U.S. makes today in the first places to build its missile defense system," Borisov said on the television program News on Saturday with Sergei Brilyov.

"Perhaps, an antidote against glide vehicles would be found sooner or later, primarily involving laser weapons. But today it is still theory, and we have a good head-start in this area," he said. Avangard is Russia's new strategic missile system with the hypersonic glide vehicle capable of reaching Mach 27 velocity. It was developed at the Reutov-based NPO Mashinostroyenia. The first missile regiment armed with the Avangard strategic complex featuring the hypersonic glide vehicle was put on combat duty in the Orenburg region in December 2019. It was 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.

Kremlin's World War III Propaganda Meltdown Shows Putin Is Cornered

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/kremlins-world-war-iii-propaganda-meltdown-shows-putin-is-cornered?ref=scroll>

The Kremlin's well-oiled propaganda machine is reaching hysterical levels as Western sanctions bite. -- 'BUY CANNED FOOD'

By: [Anna Nemtsova](#) // Updated Sep. 26, 2020 10:07AM ET / Published Sep. 26, 2020 12:25AM ET

MOSCOW—Russia these days may look frightening to Americans, who hear often of [election meddling](#) and [poisoning](#) among other ill deeds. But consider for a moment the view from the other side of the divide, or at least the view presented to Russians by their television sets.

The looming potential for World War III has become a regular topic on Russian state propaganda shows. Night after night, Vladimir Soloviev, who is often described as the Kremlin's top propagandist, condemns the West's "economically suffocating" strategy of imposing sanctions and suggest war is the logical outcome. The conclusion reached by Soloviev and his like-minded panel of guests is that the country's politicians and titans of business should break all ties with the West, including communicating with their relatives.

A long history of grievances spills out; Soloviev says the conflict between Russia and the West started in the 13th century: "They believe we are barbarians and they are civilized, so they have a right to point out to us how we should live and behave." The show, which is broadcast nightly on state channel 1, heats up quickly. This week, Sergei Kurginyan, a pro-Kremlin political expert close to the secret services, accused the West of tearing Russia apart by creating a fifth column in the Far East, where thousands of Russians have been marching in anti-Putin rallies for two months. Putin's nemesis Alexei Navalny was out East bolstering the opposition rallies when [he was poisoned with a deadly nerve agent](#).

Kurginyan has been consistently criticizing the Russian elite for pursuing naïve dreams about becoming part of European society: "Our elites have grown together with Europe through family connections, children, grandchildren. But in the current situation they will have to tear these connections apart. That will be terribly painful but you will have to do that," he said. A popular newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda announced in plain language on Friday that: "The world is under a threat of the Third World War over the Russian COVID-19 vaccine." The paper claimed the European Union and the U.S. were furious about Russia selling millions of doses of its vaccines to Brazil and Africa.

The Russian nationalist publication Tsargrad also carried an overheated headline on Friday, claiming an invented military victory: "NATO Exercises Failed: Russian Ships Scared Americans and Ukrainians Away."

What has caused this latest storm of anti-Western propaganda?

This week, the U.S. imposed new commercial restrictions on Yevgeniy Prigozhin, the oligarch known as “Putin’s chef.” The companies operated by Prigozhin, one of Putin’s most trusted lieutenants, are linked to the Wagner mercenary army and troll farms responsible for U.S. election interference. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also suggested this week that the order to poison Navalny came from senior Russian officials, the pressure grows on Putin to explain the poisoning or face yet more sanctions. Both the European Union and Britain are also preparing sanctions against Putin’s partner in Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, after a violent crackdown on the opposition and a fraudulent election.

The age-old theme of a “conflict of civilizations” between East and West has been resurfacing on state media outlets. This undercurrent is at the core of the West’s issues with Russia, the propaganda outlets insist. If the West continues to punish Vladimir Putin’s allies with economic sanctions and block Russian movement around the world, they say, Moscow will come up with a new strategy building on alliances with other Western antagonists. “We have not sent forces to Ukraine, to Kyiv only for the sake of our relations with Europe. By the new strategy we would deploy the forces and surely our allies in Turkey and China would respect us for such a strong decision,” prominent Kremlin-aligned political analyst Sergey Markov tells The Daily Beast.

The propaganda outlets portray Putin and his allies withdrawing from the world, as if in a [besieged castle](#), to isolate and defend themselves. Russia’s ability to respond in kind with sanctions is limited. A few weeks ago, the Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov [imposed sanctions](#) against Pompeo after the U.S. State Department sanctioned members of his family. But this was widely seen as little more than a joke since Pompeo has no property or bank accounts in Chechnya. Still, the story made the Russian-speaking news. Olga Skobeyeva, a host of one of the more popular political talk shows, 60 Minutes, praised Kadyrov’s “cool” sanctions.

Germany and France are demanding that the Kremlin investigate [last month’s poisoning](#) of Navalny with the Soviet-era chemical weapon Novichok. But the last two decades of Russian history show how strongly Putin resists any demand imposed by the West. Instead, they are ramping up the propaganda. “They say, ‘Oh, you once again want to tear us apart, here is our answer to you.’ And Putin comes out with a speech about the most powerful hypersonic weapon,” a commentator on independent Rain TV, Pavel Lobkov, told The Daily Beast.

Last weekend, on Russia’s Day of the Gunsmith—an obscure holiday which is usually ignored—Putin went on television to discuss Russia’s latest nuclear weapons. They can reach anywhere in the world, he said. The Avangard hypersonic glide vehicles can wipe out a territory the size of Texas or France, viewers were told. Putin blamed the U.S. for the withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic-Missile treaty back in 2002. “We had to create these weapons in response to the U.S. deploying a strategic missile defense system, which in the future would be able to actually neutralize, nullify our entire nuclear potential,” Putin said.

On Friday, Putin asked the White House for a truce on the “information war,” which is laughable since Western intelligence agencies say the Kremlin has already been targeting the 2020 presidential election. Nonetheless, Markov explains that Moscow is expecting incoming rhetorical fire during the height of the American election season: “Russian intelligence has informed Vladimir Putin earlier this year of rough attacks on him personally coming up,” he said. “That might happen during the U.S. elections, the conflict might enter a hot phase, so it is time to buy canned food.”



CHINA:

China is doubling down on its territorial claims and that's causing conflict across Asia

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/26/asia/china-asia-territorial-claims-conflicts-explainer-intl-hnk-scli/index.html>

By [Jessie Yeung](#), for CNN // Updated 8:50 PM ET, Sat September 26, 2020

(CNN) Since taking power in 2012, Chinese President Xi Jinping has helped cement China's position as a global superpower -- and pushed forward an aggressive foreign policy, making bolder moves in several key flashpoints across Asia.

From the South China Sea to the Himalayan Sino-Indian border, and even in one of its own cities, China has doubled down on its claims of territory, and taken a harder line in response to perceived challenges. And as those disputes escalated this year with renewed and rising tensions, Xi has bulked up the military and increased its budget, with the instruction to "resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests." Here's what you need to know about China's key flashpoints in the Asia-Pacific region.

Why are countries fighting over the South China Sea?

Dotted with small islands, reefs and shoals, the South China Sea is a crucial global shipping route and home to a messy territorial dispute. Who claims what: China claims it owns almost all of the 1.3 million square mile South China Sea, but at least six other governments also have overlapping territorial claims in the contested waterway: the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Taiwan.

The United States doesn't have any claims in the waters, but has repeatedly challenged China's claims. China went ahead and built islands anyway: Since 2014, China has turned numerous obscure reefs and sandbars -- far from its shoreline -- into man-made artificial islands heavily fortified with missiles, runways and weapons systems, prompting outcry from the other governments.

The US and its allies have pushed back by sailing warships through the South China Sea close to features claimed or occupied by China, in what it calls freedom of navigation operations (FONOPS). They say such patrols enforce the right of free passage in international waters; China argues these are violations of its sovereignty. But things are escalating now: The US has stepped up its challenges this year; it [formally rejected](#) China's claims as illegal, and [sanctioned](#) dozens of Chinese companies for building the artificial islands.

In July, two US Navy aircraft carriers conducted joint military drills in the sea for the first time in six years -- a strong show of force. All this has sparked Chinese fury and escalated tensions; China launched a series of ballistic missiles into the sea, with state-run media warning that "China does not fear a war." Why this matters: Under international law, whoever owns the contested string of islands in the sea will have the rights to all the resources in its nearby waters like fish, oil and gas. More broadly, whoever controls this sea will also hold power over one of the world's most valuable trading routes -- it hosts one third of all global shipping.

What's the deal with Taiwan?

Taiwan is a self-governing democratic island of around 24 million people, which split from mainland China in 1949 after the end of a bloody civil war. China insists Taiwan is its territory: Authorities in Beijing claim full sovereignty of Taiwan, even though Taiwan has never been controlled by China's ruling Communist Party. The two sides have been governed separately for more than seven decades.

For years, Beijing has attempted to impose diplomatic, trade and military pressure on Taipei, marginalizing it in the international community -- for instance, China has successfully blocked Taiwan from joining global agencies like the World Health Organization. What this means for other countries: Most countries abide by China's demand that Taiwan not be recognized as an independent nation, publicly observing Beijing's view there is "one China" -- though many governments also maintain close unofficial ties with Taiwan.

Things escalated this summer: Recent months have seen a warming relationship between the US and Taiwan -- much to China's ire. Two high-profile US officials [visited Taiwan](#) in the space of two months, in a symbolic show of support by the Trump administration. In August, the US also sold 66 fighter jets to Taiwan, the [biggest arms sale to the island in years](#). In response, China carried out a series of military drills and aircraft incursions in the waters and airspace near Taiwan -- marking a significant escalation in tensions.

Chinese officials [warned in September](#) that "China firmly opposes any form of official exchanges between the United States and Taiwan." Some have also hinted at the threat of sanctions against US officials. President Xi has been clear in his ambitions to "reunify" the island with the mainland, and has refused to rule out the use of force. Recent military drills were described in Chinese state media as a "rehearsal for a Taiwan takeover" and threats of invasion have increased sharply as tensions with the US rise.

Why are China and India clashing in the Himalayas?

The China-India conflict is centered around a [long-disputed border](#) in the Himalayas. After fighting a bloody border war in 1962, the two countries drew up a loosely-defined demarcation line called the Line of Actual Control (LAC). But they disagree on its location: Though the LAC shows up on maps, the two nuclear powers do not agree on its precise location and both regularly accuse the other of overstepping it, or seeking to expand their territory.

They have an uneasy status quo: The countries signed a series of agreements in the 1990s to try to keep the peace, including an agreement that neither side shall open fire within 2 kilometers (1.24 miles) of the LAC. But things got ugly this year: This June saw the [bloodiest Sino-Indian clash](#) in more than 40 years. Troops at the border fought with fists and stones, in a brawl that killed at least 20 Indian soldiers; China didn't acknowledge any casualties. Both sides accused the other of overstepping the border.

Things heated up in September after each side accused the other's troops of [firing warning shots](#). It's believed to be the first time shots have been fired along the border since 1975. Where things stand now: Officials are now in de-escalation talks; in late September, [both sides agreed](#) to stop sending troops to the border, and to strengthen communications. But a meaningful peacekeeping mechanism could be a long way off -- partly because of the increasingly assertive foreign policy on both sides.

Why is China fighting Japan over a few tiny islands?

Both China and Japan have claimed a rocky, uninhabited island chain in the East China Sea as their own. Located 1,200 miles (1,900 kilometers) southwest of Tokyo, the islands are known as the Senkaku Islands in Japan and the Diaoyu Islands in China. The islands are also claimed by Taiwan, where they are known as the Tiaoyutai islands. The overlapping claims: Both China and Taiwan say their claims to the island chain extend back to the 1400s, when it was used as a staging point for Chinese fisherman.

However, Japan says it saw no trace of Chinese control of the islands during an 1885 survey, so it formally recognized them as Japanese sovereign territory in 1895. The US occupation of Japan after World War II complicated things -- but the islands were eventually returned, and Japan has administered them since the 1970s. Why this matters: The area has much-coveted resources; it holds a rich fishing ground, and recent surveys suggest that the waters around the islands may contain oil and natural gas deposits.

How things escalated: China and Japan have engaged in tit-for-tat struggles for years, with the issue escalating sharply in September 2012 after the Japanese government formally purchased the islands from their private Japanese owner. This resulted in some of the largest protests seen in major Chinese cities in decades. Tensions rose again this June after [a Japanese city council bill](#) asserted that "the islands are part of Japanese territory."

China, meanwhile, has flexed its military muscles; Japan [announced in June](#) that Chinese government ships have been spotted in waters near the islands every day since April. [And in July](#), Chinese coast guard ships intruded into Japan's territorial waters multiple times, forcing the Japanese coast guard to block them from approaching Japanese fishing boats. The number of warplanes from China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) flying close or around Japan's southwest air zone, which includes the contested island chain, has also [increased exponentially in recent years](#), according to Japan's Air Self Defense Force (JASDF).

Where things stand now: The two countries have stepped up their rhetoric; Japan has lodged diplomatic protests, and China has accused Japan of infringing on its sovereignty. The escalation this summer has raised international alarm; under a mutual defense pact with Tokyo, the US is obligated to defend the islands as part of Japanese territory.

What's going on in Hong Kong?

The semi-autonomous Chinese city of Hong Kong was plunged into a political crisis in 2019 as anti-government protests brought much of the territory to a standstill. Protesters had many complaints, including alleged police brutality and limited democratic freedoms -- but at the heart of it all is the city's conflicted relationship with the central government in Beijing.

Is Hong Kong part of China? Yes -- but as a former British territory, it was granted freedoms of press, speech, and assembly when it was handed back to China in 1997. Hong Kong also has its own legal and political systems, currency and trade. These freedoms stand in stark contrast to China's authoritarian leadership and strict censorship.

So what's the conflict? Under the handover agreement, Hong Kong is supposed to keep its limited autonomy [until 2047](#) -- but many Hong Kongers say China is violating that promise and encroaching on their freedoms. This fear was heightened by a controversial extradition bill last year, which kicked off the protests and was later scrapped. Meanwhile, China has criticized the movement as a threat to security and stability.

Some protesters have also called for Hong Kong independence, and asked other countries for assistance, which China condemned as an unacceptable challenge to its national sovereignty. How things escalated: In June, China cracked down by imposing a [national security law](#) for Hong Kong, entirely bypassing the city's own legislature. Details of the law weren't released to the public until it had passed.

China said the law, which grants Beijing sweeping new powers, is necessary to curb unrest; critics say it's a devastating blow for Hong Kong's freedoms. Where things stand now: The law has already been used to make numerous arrests; for instance, several people were arrested in September for using protest slogans, which are now criminalized. Those convicted under the law could face sentences of up to life in prison. Since it came into force, political parties have disbanded, protest signs were pulled down across the city, and [Hong Kongers are fleeing](#) to seek asylum or refuge in other countries.

China's propaganda mouthpiece claims China will start war if US troops return to Taiwan

https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=12368575

By: Jamie Seidel for news.com.au, New Zealand // 28 Sep, 2020 1:52pm

China's Chairman Xi Jinping this week told the UN he had no intention to fight a "hot war". Days later his chief propagandist warned "war will come" over Taiwan.

The editor-in-chief of the Chinese Communist Party-controlled Global Times news service was incensed by suggestions the US could send troops to support the island democracy's independence. "Once they take the step of returning US forces to Taiwan, the PLA will definitely start a just war to safeguard China's territorial integrity," Hu Xinjin declared. He was responding to an essay published by a US Marine Corps captain in the Military Review.

In *Deterring the Dragon*, Captain Walker Mills warned that the vast military imbalance between China and Taiwan made a surprise invasion "more likely". Positioning US troops on the island as a trip-wire could deter such a hostile act, he argued. Hu asserted the Communist Party's line that Taiwan was simply a wayward province, even though the island never surrendered to Chairman Mao Zedong's 1949 revolution.

"China's Anti-Secession Law is a tiger with teeth," Hu tweeted. "No country has the right to dominate global affairs, control the destiny of others or keep advantages in development all to itself," Chairman Xi told the UN this week, calling for "international order underpinned by international law". But Beijing has a very national interpretation of international law – as the Philippines, Vietnam, India, Malaysia, Japan and Indonesia can attest to.

Fighting words

Which is precisely the point of the US Military Review essay. Captain Mills said the balance of power in the Western Pacific and South-East Asia was shifting away from the United States. This, he argues, means US forces will need to be pre-positioned in the area "if it is committed to defending Taiwanese sovereignty". He warned that a quick, successful invasion of Taiwan by China would result in a long, costly military campaign "with a far from certain outcome".

But the relatively low-level mention of 'trip-wire', or pre-positioned, forces have Beijing outraged. "I have to say advocating such a thing is lunacy because it's bound to trigger a war in the Taiwan Straits," Hu stated in a supplementary Global Times video published on Tuesday. "China's anti-secession law stipulates three conditions for resolving the Taiwan question with military means. The US forces returning to Taiwan would meet these conditions, and the People's Liberation Army would definitely take action and engage in a just war to liberate Taiwan".

Taiwan's elected government, however, has a different point of view. It does not regard being placed under Beijing's rule to be 'liberation'. And how can it succeed from a government it never capitulated to? Taipei has reacted with growing alarm to the harsh crackdown upon Hong Kong's dissidents, independent judiciary and representative parliament. It argues Beijing's oppressive behaviour in the former British colony puts the lie to its proclaimed 'One China, Two Systems' policy.

'War will come'

"If the US and Taiwan don't take the mainland's red line seriously, war will come," Hu threatened, reiterating Beijing's demands. Chairman Xi has repeatedly warned that any open move towards formal independence by Taiwan would be met with force. His Beijing-based government has pushed hard to exclude Taipei from all international forums – including the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now Beijing is angered by the presence of US officials on the island. Washington, for its part, argues such diplomatic visits have been ongoing for decades. "If the US sends higher-level officials to visit Taiwan, the mainland will without a doubt react with more than flying PLA fighter jets over the so-called 'middle line' of the Taiwan Straits – such as PLA fighter jets flying over Taiwan to declare sovereignty," a defiant Hu states.

Chinese combat aircraft began incursions into Taiwan airspace late last week when a high-level US envoy arrived in Taipei for the funeral of a past, pro-democracy president. Subsequent breaches were observed on two additional days as large-scale Chinese military drills continued around the island. Taipei condemned these moves as "harassment and threats". The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act binds the US to the defence of Taiwan in the face of invasion.

The treaty followed the First Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1954 where China seized several islands in the narrow waterway between the two countries. President at the time, Harry Truman, had sent the US Navy's Seventh Fleet into the area to deter a mainland attack on the then Nationalist Party-held main island. Hu obliquely referenced this standoff in his video threat: "The People's Liberation Army is powerful now. Even if we were a little weaker than we are now, if the US and Taiwan insist on playing their cards like this, this is a war we must fight to the end, at any cost. This determination is real."

China's missile power play in the Pacific

https://washingtontimes-dc.newsmemory.com/?token=844b223d26f276b2ca61594e3835db68_5f7306a3_d3019ac&selDate=20200929

People's Liberation Army (PLA) missiles could soon splash into Pacific Ocean, and China's aggression must be checked

By Jeffrey T. Vanak for the Washington Times 29 Sept 2020

While COVID-19 distracts the world, China is making missile moves that could put the United States and its allies at a major disadvantage.

After a decade of development, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has brought its most capable conventional deterrent from the test ranges (and parade ground) to international waters, firing anti-ship ballistic missiles into the South China Sea in each of the past two years. The world will not be able to overlook the next target ... the Pacific. Within the next two years, PLA missiles could splash into the Pacific Ocean carrying with them geopolitical ramifications that, if left unchecked, would cede strategic ground to Beijing.

However, with deliberate planning, the United States can exploit this aggression to expand its diplomatic and regional standing in ways not previously possible. Last year, China launched more ballistic missiles than the rest of the world combined. This is part of President Xi Jinping's drive to "strengthen long-range precision strike forces and enhance strategic counter-balance capability."

At this arsenal's forefront are anti-ship ballistic missiles specifically designed to counter the greatest U.S. power projection capability in the region, the U.S. Navy. In July 2019, the PLA launched six anti-ship ballistic missiles, likely the DF-21D, into the South China Sea. In August of this year, these launches were not only repeated but China may have upped the ante by firing the newer and longer-range DF-26.

Despite the flurry of activity, China has yet to employ ballistic missiles in realistic combat training in the Pacific as conducted by other PLA elements. Last year, the PLA Navy deployed an aircraft carrier task group for its first Far Seas combat exercise and the PLA Air Force conducted multiple bomber flights to "demonstrate China's ability to range Guam with air-launched missiles." China has been expectantly cautious launching missiles beyond the

First Island Chain given the risk of missile failure and the potential international backlash. However, as Beijing struggles to manage the rising tensions with its neighbors and the United States, the strategic deterrent value of these weapons may soon outweigh the risks. Xi Jinping himself tasked the PLA with making missile "breakthroughs in strategic deterrence capability." Soon, he will leverage his anti-ship ballistic missiles to this end.

Anti-ship ballistic missile launches into the western Pacific would carry three geopolitical aims for China:

- **First**, it would send a clear message to U.S. allies and partners that the U.S. military may be incapable of or dramatically slowed in responding during a crisis. The threat of isolation could weigh heavily on Japan's willingness to negotiate during a Senkaku crisis or on Taiwan's ability to withstand the constant pressure for reunification. Additionally, it would serve as another reminder to those embroiled in territorial disputes in the South China Sea, that the only viable option for peace is bilateral negotiations with Beijing.
- **Second**, China's view looking out to the oceans has been defined by geographic barriers and U.S.-alliances running from the Strait of Malacca to the Japanese islands. Looming large over any Beijing decision to escalate is the threat of a distant blockade hindering China's access to much-needed resources from the rest of the world. Successful missile launches into the western Pacific would symbolize the PLA's ability to break beyond these constraints.
- **Finally**, in response to China's aggression inside the First Island Chain, the United States has implemented a whole-of-government approach, including diplomatic outreach with non-traditional partners, economic sanctions and increased military operations. Missile launches into the Pacific would alleviate this pressure by diverting U.S. focus away from China's Near Seas to its Far Seas, creating the maneuver and negotiating space necessary for China to solidify its control within the Nine-Dash Line.

The prospect of China anti-ship ballistic missiles in the western Pacific is not a question of “if” but “when,” and the United States must be primed to rapidly respond to the provocation. Above all, U.S. responses must be led by a coherent messaging campaign. We can look to China, of all countries, to see how this is accomplished. Launching a ballistic missile into international waters is complicated and time-intensive during peacetime, taking months of preparation and work.

However, that is not what China would have you believe. Following the anti-ship ballistic missile launches in August 2020, headlines around the world indicated that the training exercise was in direct response to U.S. provocations. For example, Taiwan News headlines read “China fires ‘carrier killer,’ ‘Guam killer’ missiles in retaliation for U-2 flyover.” China’s information operations not only convinced the world it acted due to U.S. destabilizing activities but indirectly messaged the capability to launch missiles with less than a days’ notice.

Similarly, the United States must be prepared to fight and win in the information domain. Every U.S. response, whether it occurs moments after a launch or in the months following, must be explicitly linked back to Beijing’s aggression. The battle of the narrative is as important as the military and diplomatic actions themselves. Next, the United States must avoid succumbing to China’s trap of shifting focus to the Pacific.

For every PLA action in the Far Seas, the United States should have an equal and opposite response in the Near Seas, be it increased military operations, possibly including a joint patrol with Japan in the vicinity of the Senkaku Islands, or diplomatic outreach to ASEAN countries. While expanding its presence and influence inside the South and East China seas, the United States must be efficient in how its force is employed elsewhere.

As an example, the U.S. Navy’s Rim of the Pacific Exercise, held with partners from around the region, would be the ideal setting for a unified blockade exercise to demonstrate China’s inability to breakout from the First Island Chain. Finally, PLA missile launches offer an unparalleled opportunity to expand engagement with Taiwan. PLA missile operations over the island provide the perfect backdrop for U.S. port visits and joint interoperability training with the Taiwan military.

Diplomatically, the United States set a precedence of coordinating with Taiwan during a crisis when the U.S. Health secretary visited Taipei in response to the COVID pandemic. Similarly, the United States should establish robust ties with Taipei across other echelons of government in response to this new crisis. In the maritime environment of the Indo-Pacific, the demonstration of anti-ship ballistic missiles beyond the First Island Chain underpins Beijing’s strategy to diminish confidence in U.S. intervention capabilities and reduce overall U.S. influence throughout the region.

Fortunately for the United States, these launches will also create an opportunity not seen since the expansion and militarization of South China Sea features. U.S. government agencies must commence planning now, both internally and with allies and partners, to avoid the inaction which plagued the response to China’s South China Sea militarization. With the proper coordination, actions and diplomatic outreach, the United States could turn what Xi Jinping believes to be a strategic asset, his anti-ship ballistic missile arsenal, into a strategic vulnerability.

Jeffrey T. Vanak, U.S. Navy commander, is a national security affairs fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution. He is a naval intelligence officer and operational planner. The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Navy, U.S. Department of Defense or the U.S. government

China says it 'doesn't recognize Union Territory of Ladakh

China makes provocative remark, says Ladakh illegally established by India'

<https://zeenews.india.com/india/china-makes-provocative-remark-says-it-doesnt-recognize-union-territory-of-ladakh-illegally-established-by-india-2313323.html>

The remark comes even as Indian Air Force (IAF) chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria said that an 'uneasy status' prevails at northern frontiers with China.

Written By: [Zee Media Bureau](#), Edited By: [Ananya Das](#) // Updated: Sep 29, 2020, 16:29 PM IST

Highlights

- Amid the prevailing border tension between India and China, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson made a provocative remark on Union Territory of Ladakh.
- The remark comes even as Indian Air Force (IAF) chief said that an 'uneasy status' prevails at northern frontiers with China at present.

Amid the prevailing border tension between India and China, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin made a provocative remark on Indian Union Territory of Ladakh on Tuesday. The remark comes even as Indian Air Force (IAF) chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria said that an 'uneasy status' prevails at northern frontiers with China at present in an apparent reference to the heightened border tension with Beijing.

As reported by the Global Times, a mouthpiece of the administration in Beijing, Wenbin stated that China doesn't recognize the Union Territory of Ladakh "illegally established by India". Wenbin also said that China opposes the infrastructure construction in "disputed border areas" for military control purposes. In an apparent response to India building roads along the border, Wenbin said, "China does not recognize the so-called Union Territory of Ladakh illegally established by India, and opposes infrastructure construction in disputed border areas for military control purposes."

He added, "According to the recent consensus reached between China and India, neither side should take any actions in border areas that would complicate the situation, so as not to affect the efforts of both sides to ease the situation." Earlier, the IAF chief said at the moment "no war, no peace" status was holding along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) despite concerted efforts to end the ongoing standoff at several friction points in eastern Ladakh.

Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria, however, added that the armed forces are prepared for any eventuality and that the Air Force particularly is resolved to counter "any misadventure". "Airpower will be a crucial enabler in our victory in any future conflict," the IAF chief said. Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria was quick to add that the recent induction of Rafale fighter jets along with Chinook, Apaches and other aircraft fleet has given a fillip to the Indian Air Force's tactical capabilities.

"Present security scenario along our northern frontiers is at an uneasy — no war, no peace status... The recent induction of Rafales along with other aircraft has provided the IAF with substantial practical and strategic capability enhancement," Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria said. The remarks from Bhadauria in the backdrop of reports that the Indian Army is preparing itself for the long haul in Ladakh this winter.

The Army has rushed tanks, heavy weaponry, ammunition, fuel, food and essential winter supplies to high-altitude areas in eastern Ladakh where it is engaged in a standoff with the People's Liberation Army of China. Military sources said last week that the aim is to prepare the force and ensure its combat readiness through the treacherous winter which lasts for some months in Ladakh. The operation has been described as one of the biggest in decades as far as military logistics are concerned.

Anticipating possible misadventure from China, the Indian Army has flown in T-90 and T-72 tanks, artillery guns and infantry combat vehicles to several sensitive locations including Chushul and Demchock sectors in eastern Ladakh. The Army has also sent clothes, tents, food items, communication equipment, fuel, heaters and other supplies in large quantities to forward posts and mountain passes which are located at a height of more than 16,000 feet. The operation is being personally supervised by Chief of Army Staff Gen MM Naravane.



[NORTH KOREA:](#)

[North Korea Has Agreed to Denuclearization](#)

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/north-korea-has-agreed-denuclearization-could-donald-trump-achieve-success-169549>

*If re-elected, Trump should resume diplomatic efforts, including offering aid for compliance. **Could Donald Trump Achieve Success?***

by [Bruce W. Bennett](#) & [Soo Kim](#) for The National Interest // September 25, 2020

Editor's Note: *The following is part of a new symposium here in Korea Watch that will analyze potential U.S. policy options towards North Korea should Donald Trump win reelection. Check back soon for more contributions in the coming days.*

President Trump came into office [determined to rein-in](#) the North Korean nuclear weapon program. The President viewed the North's nuclear weapons with their ballistic missile delivery means as a clear threat to the United States and its regional allies. The feverish pace of North Korean [ballistic missile](#) and nuclear weapon tests in 2017 demonstrated the North Korean capabilities, creating great regional anxiety.

Throughout 2017, President Trump was clear that he would apply [“maximum pressure”](#) on North Korea, not even ruling out [military action](#). Many in Northeast Asia and beyond feared that President Trump's actions [could even lead to war](#). They recognized that North Korea had been very clear: for years the North had stated repeatedly that it would [never give up its nuclear weapons](#).

It was a surprise then in March 2018 when Kim Jong-un offered to negotiate the [dismantlement of his nuclear weapons program](#). President Trump [accepted this offer](#) and held [two summit meetings](#) with Kim Jong-un. The President has chosen to emphasize a peaceful, personal relationship with Kim rather than resolving the North's mid- to long-term nuclear weapon threat.

Which is to say that there has been no North Korean denuclearization. Quite the opposite: the North continues building nuclear weapons and [has increased its capacity to do so](#). Satellite images indicate Pyongyang has been consistently [developing](#) its ballistic missile delivery capabilities, as well as the Kim regime's continued [sanctions-skirting](#) illicit activities to fund its weapons of mass destruction programs, and Pyongyang's statements articulating its resolve to bolster its nuclear deterrent.

This is shocking in light of the [April 2018 Panmunjom Declaration](#) by Kim Jong-un and South Korean President Moon, part of which says that North and South Korea will fully implement all of their previous agreements and declarations. The previous [1992 South/North Denuclearization Declaration](#) is clear: “South and North Korea shall not test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons. South and North Korea shall use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes.

South and North Korea shall not possess nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities. ...” Should there be any question, Kim said in his [2019 New Year’s Address](#): “Accordingly, we declared at home and abroad that we would neither make and test nuclear weapons any longer nor use and proliferate them...” With regard to a second term, [President Trump has said](#), “We’ll make deals with North Korea very quickly.” But South Korean President Moon has already beaten President Trump to the key North Korean denuclearization agreement.

What President Trump could try to do is to get Kim Jong-un to implement the commitments. That could be difficult because it has become quite apparent that the North has [no intention of giving up its nuclear weapons program](#). The United States and South Korea could make it clear that North Korea is already [in serious violation](#) of its commitments. They could then decide on the initial steps to bring North Korea into compliance with these commitments.

The first of which could be to insist that North Korea implement a nuclear weapon and ballistic missile production freeze. North Korea will not do so without a significant U.S. offer of compensation, but the United States could make such an offer contingent on North Korea aligning its behavior with U.S. expectations. Given the desperate food circumstances in North Korea this year, [one such offer](#) might be to provide North Korea with 50,000 tons of humanitarian aid per month starting six months after its most recent major provocation.

Such an offer could be designed to provide North Korea incentives not to initiate new provocations this fall, as [many experts are expecting](#). Some in Washington and Seoul may not be very happy with early steps that leave the North’s nuclear weapon and ballistic missile capabilities largely intact, but such steps have the advantage of focusing on not allowing the North Korean capabilities to continue to grow at a significant pace.

Without such a first step, South Korea and Japan may face a potentially heightened threat perception towards Pyongyang as well as doubts about the viability of the U.S. extended deterrence in the region. This, of course, could have ramifications not only on their immediate security interests, but on the strength and reliability of the U.S. alliance.

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North Korea threatens US with nuclear weapons should war break out with South

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1301226/world-war-3-north-korea-nuclear-weapons-south-korea-tensions-latest-news>

NORTH Korea has threatened to use nuclear weapons on the United States should there be war with South Korea.

By [GRACE MACRAE](#) for the UK Express // PUBLISHED: 03:10, Fri, Jun 26, 2020 | UPDATED: 07:28, Fri, Jun 26, 2020

Tensions between North and South Korea have been rising in the wake of Kim Jong-un’s regime blowing up a liaison office with South Korea on the border.

The US currently has 24,000 troops stationed in South Korea and remains an ally in the fight against the North. As the countries commemorated the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean war, when the North invaded the South, Pyongyang’s embassy in Russia issued a menacing statement. North Korea marked the anniversary with visits by its citizens to monuments to soldiers as well as with anti-US. rhetoric.

North Korea also released newspaper editorials praising its fighting in the Fatherland Liberation War. North Korea said it would deploy its nuclear weapons against the US in "a particularly sensational event" should war break out again. A statement carried by the Russian state-owned news agency TASS said Pyongyang was "capable of mercilessly punishing those who dare to raise their hand at it".

The threats come in the wake of reports suggesting Pyongyang is stockpiling nuclear weapons. The reports came as South Korea moved troops to the border in response to the North's aggression. "This year, the US military has been carrying out various kinds of military maneuvers in South Korea and its vicinity with the purpose of striking North Korea quickly," said its statement. "A new round of the Korean War will add a particularly sensational event to the history of mankind, which will put an end to another empire, whose name is the United States."

An institute run by the North's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that "we will continue to build up our strength to overwhelm the persistent nuclear threats that the US has launched at us". In South Korea Defence Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo and military leaders paid their respects at a national cemetery in Seoul, where about 130,000 war dead are buried. On Wednesday, North Korea said leader Kim Jong-Un put off planned steps to end the 2018 deals with South Korea after he and other senior ruling party officials in charge of military affairs took stock of the prevailing situation.

North Korea has momentarily suspended its military aggression towards the South, but a defence secretary warned the dictatorship could strike at any time not with its nuclear arsenal, but with its masses of biological weaponry. Kim Jong-un gave a statement last week saying that he had taken the "prevailing situation" into consideration and decided to do a U-turn. Pressure had been mounting from the North in recent weeks with a string of threats – both verbal and physical.

The first came after 500,000 balloons landed in the North from the South, each carrying anti-Kim propaganda leaflets. Kim's sister, Kim Yo-jong branded those responsible for the leaflets as "human scum" calling the South "the enemy". After cutting a telecommunications line between the two that had been in daily use between Pyongyang and Seoul since 2018, Yo-jong said further strategic military action would follow.

A few days later, the North blew up a joint liaison office with the South in the border city of Kaesong. Although tensions have since simmered, many experts have reasoned that the North will likely bare its teeth later in the year. The US has since been forced to devise several protocols and action plans due to fears North Korea will use nuclear weapons. One plot is known as the "decapitation" method.

In his 2018 report, journalist Yochi Dreazen explained how "decapitation strikes are part of the current US and South Korean war plan for a conflict with North Korea". Dubbed **OPLAN 5015**, the war plan explicitly talks about targeting Kim, his inner circle, and other top leadership figures. The plan looks to remove "Kim and his inner circle, most likely by assassination, and replacing the leadership with a more moderate regime willing to open North Korea to the rest of the world".

North Korea tells UN it now has 'effective war deterrent'

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/30/north-korea-tells-un-it-now-has-effective-war-deterrent>

North Korea is struggling under international sanctions imposed for its nuclear and ballistic missiles programmes.

From Al Jazeera News Service // 30 Sep 2020

North Korea has a “reliable and effective war deterrent for self-defence” and was now focusing on developing its sanctions-hit economy, Kim Song, North Korea’s United Nations ambassador said on Tuesday.

In an address to the UN General Assembly, Kim said North Korea was still threatened by military hardware like stealth fighters being used on the Korean Peninsula and “nuclear strike means of all kinds are directly aimed at the DPRK”. “Genuine peace can only be safeguarded when one possesses the absolute strength to prevent war itself,” Kim said. “As we have obtained the reliable and effective war deterrent for self-defence by tightening our belts, peace and security of the Korean Peninsula and the region are now firmly defended.”

Already weighed down by tough international sanctions for its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, Pyongyang is also facing significant economic damage from strict border closures and other measures aimed at preventing a coronavirus outbreak. It is also struggling to cope with damage from recent storms and flooding. Kim said the pandemic situation in the “under safe and stable control” as a result of measures taken by the government to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

North Korea has said it has no confirmed cases, though some have cast doubt on that claim. “Based on its reliable guarantee for safeguarding the security of the state and people, the DPRK is now directing all its efforts to economic construction,” said Kim, using his country’s formal name – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. “It is a matter of fact that we badly need an external environment favourable for economic construction,” he said. “But, we cannot sell off our dignity just in a hope for brilliant transformation – the dignity which we have defended as valuable as our own life. This is our steadfast position.”

Flouting sanctions

A UN report on Monday said North Korea was flouting nuclear sanctions by exceeding a 500,000 barrel restriction on petroleum imports and continuing to send workers overseas. Independent sanctions monitors reported to the Security Council in August that North Korea was continuing with its nuclear weapons programme and several countries believed it had “probably developed miniaturised nuclear devices to fit into the warheads of its ballistic missiles”.

Jenny Town, a Stimson Center fellow and deputy director of 38 North, said that the envoy’s speech contained “no overt threats or hints of shows of force or demonstrations of power in the near future. It was very focused on rebuilding and recovering the internal situation.” She added that while North Korea wants sanctions relief, “they aren’t going to simply give up their weapons on promises of a brighter future” and there would need to be tangible moves to prove that relations with the United States had changed before Pyongyang could justify taking measures that would jeopardise its security.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump have met three times since 2018, but have made no progress on US calls for Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons and North Korea’s demands for an end to sanctions. North Korea’s governing party is planning a congress in January to decide a new five-year plan, state media reported last month, after a party meeting noted serious delays in improving the national economy and living standards.



SOUTH KOREA:

NSTR



IRAN:

Iran Guards Unveil New Naval Ballistic Missile

<https://www.barrons.com/news/iran-guards-unveil-new-naval-ballistic-missile-01601215205>

From: AFP - Agence France Presse // September 27, 2020

Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Sunday unveiled a new naval ballistic missile with a potential range of over 700 kilometres (430 miles), local media reported, following months of tensions with arch-enemy the United States.

The missile, dubbed "Zolfaghar Basir", is the naval variant of the surface-to-surface Zolfaghar ballistic missile, according to Tasnim news agency. Its range is more than twice that of the Islamic republic's other naval missiles, including the "Hormuz-2", with a range of 300 kilometres, which Tehran said it successfully tested in March 2017. Tasnim did not specify whether or not the new missile has been tested yet.

Images published by Tasnim showed the Zolfaghar Basir installed on a launcher truck during the inauguration of Tehran's National Aerospace Park on Sunday. "This exhibition shows the comprehensive plan of the deterrent power of the (Islamic republic's) system," Guards commander Major General Hossein Salami said at the inauguration, according to Tasnim. Iran's Guards used the Zolfaghar in 2017 and 2018 against the Islamic State group in Syria in retaliation for terrorist attacks carried out in the country.

The missile was also used in January to target bases in Iraq housing US troops, according to IRNA news agency, days after the US killed Iran's top general Qasem Soleimani in a drone strike in Baghdad. The unveiling of the Zolfaghar Basir comes more than a week after an American aircraft carrier crossed the strategic Strait of Hormuz, and days after the Guards opened a new naval base near the waterway, through which a fifth of the world's oil passes.

The vital shipping lane and nearby Gulf waters were the scenes of heightened US-Iranian tensions late last year when ships were mysteriously attacked, drones downed and oil tankers seized. Tensions have soared between Washington and Tehran under US President Donald Trump, who pulled out of a landmark 2015 nuclear accord and unilaterally reimposed sanctions on Iran. The arch-enemies have twice come to the brink of direct confrontation since June 2019.

Washington suffered a setback in mid-August when it failed to win support from the United Nation's Security Council to extend an arms embargo against Tehran that will progressively expire starting on October 18.

Iranian president accuses U.S. of savagery after new sanctions

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-rouhani/iranian-president-accuses-u-s-of-savagery-after-new-sanctions-idUSKBN26H0BK>

By Reuters Staff // SEPTEMBER 26, 2020 4:15 AM - UPDATED 2 DAYS AGO

(Reuters) - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani accused the United States on Saturday of “savagery” for inflicting \$150 billion of damage on Iran due to sanctions, and said Iranians should direct their anger at the White House.

“With their illegal and inhuman sanctions, and terrorist actions, the Americans have inflicted 150 billion dollars of damage on the people of Iran,” Rouhani said in televised remarks, his voice shaking with anger. “We haven’t seen such an extent of savagery ... The address for Iranian people’s curses and hatred is the White House.” Tensions between Washington and Tehran have soared since U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew in 2018 from the Iran nuclear deal struck by his predecessor and began reimposing sanctions that had been eased under the accord.

Iran, in turn, has gradually breached the central limits in that deal, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including on the size of its stockpile of low-enriched uranium as well as the level of purity to which it was allowed to enrich uranium. Washington imposed new sanctions on Monday on Iran’s defence ministry and others involved in its nuclear and weapons programme.

On Thursday, Washington blacklisted several Iranian officials and entities over alleged gross violations of human rights, including imposing sanctions on a judge it said was involved in the case of an Iranian wrestler sentenced to death. Rouhani gave no details on the breakdown of the economic damage he said had been incurred due to the sanctions.

Editing by Alison Williams



INDIA:

India successfully test fires nuclear capable SRBM Prithvi-II Missile

<https://americanmilitarynews.com/2020/09/india-successfully-test-fires-nuclear-capable-srbm-prithvi-ii-missile/>

By: SAURAV CHORDIA for American Military News // SEPTEMBER 25, 2020

On September 23, India’s Premier Defense Lab DRDO conducted a night-time test of the indigenously developed and deployed Prithvi-II Missile at the Integrated Test Range off the coast of Orissa in Chandipur.

DRDO carried out the test from a mobile launcher from launch complex-3 of the ITR, a DRDO official said, according to [Economic Times](#). The official said the trial entailed tracking the missile trajectory with radars, electro-optical tracking systems, and telemetry stations. The test was considered routine and part of user trial and operational accessibility procedures to check and analyze parameters of the missile's functionalities on short-notice deployment.

The missile is said to be chosen at random from India's Strategic arsenal by DRDO to test and further assess military preparedness from the missile operating force under the Defense Ministry of India. The entire test was hosted by Strategic Forces Command (SFC) the sole operator and keeper of the Nuclear arsenals in India, and the test was monitored by scientists of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of the training exercise.

There was a deployed downrange team onboard a ship at sea that was tasked to monitor the terminal phase of missile and splashdown in the sea at its impact point. The last testfire of Prithvi-II was also conducted successfully from the ITR at night on Nov. 20, 2019. Prithvi-II is a Short Range Ballistic Missile designed and developed by DRDO under Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) with its Predecessor Prithvi-I, The missile development was spearheaded by the former president of India Dr.APJ Abdul Kalam who was a lead aerospace scientist during the project.

The missile is capable of hitting its target at a range of 350km with single-digit CEP accuracy. It can carry 500 to 1,000 kg of warheads including nuclear and conventional both while the missile is powered by liquid propulsion twin engine rocket motors. Already inducted in 2003, the missile is part of India's nuclear deterrent policy and is operated by Strategic Forces Command (SFC).

With this test, India is able to keep its arsenal in check for potential wartime scenarios. India is one of a few countries that operate short-range ballistic missiles with a nuclear warhead option since India's adversarial nations are its neighbors — Pakistan and China.



PAKISTAN:

NSTR



UNITED KINGDOM:

NSTR



FRANCE:

NSTR



ISRAEL:

Netanyahu warns Iran will soon have enough enriched uranium for two nuclear weapons during UN address

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/netanyahu-warns-iran-will-soon-have-enough-enriched-uranium-for-two-nuclear-weapons-during-un-address/ar-BB19xSnN?ocid=uxbndlbing>

By: Zachary Halaschak for the Washington Examiner // 4 hrs ago

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the United Nations General Assembly that Iran will have enough nuclear material to produce two bombs in just a matter of months.

Netanyahu delivered his annual address before the General Assembly on Tuesday and used the platform to criticize the “shameful” 2015 Iran nuclear deal and call on the international community [to stand against Iranian nuclear pursuits](#). He pointed out that he was the leading dissenter of the deal, dubbed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. “I opposed it because the nuclear deal did not block Iran’s path to the bomb. It actually paved its way to it.

I opposed it because the deal’s restrictions on Iran’s nuclear program were only temporary and were no way tied to Iran’s change of behavior,” Netanyahu said. “Now, Iran has violated even those temporary restrictions,” the prime minister continued. “Because of these violations, Iran will have enough enriched uranium in a few months for two nuclear bombs.” Since President Trump pulled the United States from the pact in 2018, Iran has continued to expand its nuclear capabilities.

In June, the International Atomic Energy Agency issued a report that concluded [Iran has violated all of the deal’s strictures](#), including the enrichment and stockpiling of uranium. During his Tuesday speech, Netanyahu also said that Iran has been working on much more powerful nuclear centrifuges and cautioned the U.N. that the technology would greatly expand its ability to enrich uranium.

“Iran has been working on a new generation of centrifuges. It’s called the IR-9, which will multiply Iran’s enrichment capability 50-fold,” he said. “Ladies and gentlemen, there is no question that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons.” Despite the ominous claim, the Jerusalem Post reported after Netanyahu’s speech that a functioning IR-9 centrifuge is “[not even close to working](#).” In July, a facility in Natanz, Iran, that was working on the new generation of centrifuges exploded, with the blast believed to have been caused by sabotage.

The explosion reportedly set back the country's new centrifuge development by between one and two years. Netanyahu also used his speech to reveal what he said was a secret Hezbollah arms depot located in a Beirut neighborhood close to the city's international airport. The revelation came after a massive explosion rocked Beirut earlier this year and killed more than 180, wounded more than 6,000, and [left between 250,000 and 300,000 people homeless](#) in Lebanon.

“Here is where the next explosion could take place ... This is the Beirut neighborhood of Janah. It's right next to the international airport. And here, Hezbollah is keeping a secret arms depot,” Netanyahu said, showing aerial images of the suspected arms depot along with notations that show it is surrounded by gas companies and civilian housing. In Iranian President [Hassan Rouhani's General Assembly speech earlier in September](#), he used the platform to rail against the U.S. for its “maximum pressure” sanctions campaign, which is designed to stifle Iran's economy and force the country into submission. Rouhani called them “the harshest sanctions in history” and said they were imposed in “blatant and gross violation of the charter of the United Nations.”

Advantageous Ambiguity: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal

<https://carnegie.ru/commentary/82790>

A unit of newly-deployed Patriot anti-missile missiles stands near Israel's nuclear research reactor at Dimona in the Negev desert, Israel. Military officials called the exercise of deploying the units routine.

By: [Viktor Esin](#) for the Carnegie Institute – MOSCOW // 25.09.2020

MOSCOW -- Israel's “anonymous” nuclear arsenal will remain the most important component of the military balance in the Middle East for the foreseeable future, and a significant driver of discord between Tel Aviv and other states in the region, complicating prospects for strengthening the non-proliferation regime in the Middle East. The international community generally considers Israel to be a nuclear state, but the country's military and political leadership maintains its long-standing policy of ambiguity, neither confirming nor denying that Israel possesses nuclear weapons.¹ Information about Israel's nuclear arsenal and plans for its potential use remain closed and isolated from other developments in the country. This article presents an open-source assessment of Israel's nuclear capabilities, nuclear arsenal, and nuclear strategy.

Nuclear Capabilities

Israel launched its nuclear program in 1952 with the creation of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission, headed by Ernst David Bergmann: an organic chemist who is considered the father of the Israeli nuclear program. Scientific and technological cooperation with allies, above all France and the United States, played a major role in the formation and development of the Israeli program. France and Israel began joint nuclear research back in 1949. In the 1950s and 1960s, Israeli experts participated in the development of the French nuclear bomb. The French later shared data obtained in the course of their nuclear tests in the Sahara Desert from 1960 to 1964.³

In addition, France helped Israel create an industrial base for producing weapons-grade plutonium. Under a secret French-Israeli agreement signed in 1956, the French company Saint-Gobain Nucleaire (SGN) built the Israeli Research Reactor-2 (IRR-2) natural uranium-fueled heavy-water reactor at Dimona (located 120 kilometers southeast of Tel Aviv in the Negev desert), which had an initial power level of 26 megawatts.⁴ This reactor was brought online in 1963 and modernized in the 1970s: according to estimates, its power level was increased to 75–150 megawatts. As a result, production of weapons-grade plutonium may have increased from 7–8 kilograms to 20–40 kilograms per year.⁵

After launching the IRR-2 reactor, Israel took an important step toward fielding its own nuclear program—and not just a military nuclear program. The Negev Nuclear Research Center (NNRC) was formed around the reactor. It became Israel’s main nuclear facility, where the main thrust of work on producing fissile materials for nuclear weapons is carried out. In addition to the IRR-2, the center houses an industrial radiochemical plant for the extraction of plutonium from spent reactor fuel;[6](#) a uranium ore processing plant;[7](#) an experimental set of gas centrifuges for separating uranium isotopes; production lines for metallic uranium and plutonium, as well as fuel for nuclear reactors; a complex for the production of heavy water (tritium), lithium-6, and deuterium;[8](#) and a number of research laboratories, including those devoted to the laser and magnetic separation of uranium isotopes.

The second most important Israeli nuclear facility is the Soreq Research Center, located 20 kilometers south of Tel Aviv. The center formed around the pool-type, light-water IRR-1 reactor, which has a power level of 5 megawatts.[9](#) It was brought online in June 1960.[10](#) A complex of buildings constructed later houses a number of laboratories that conduct nuclear science and technology research, including research with military applications. In particular, this facility is believed to handle the research and design of nuclear weapons.[11](#) A factory for the assembly of nuclear weapons is located elsewhere—in Yodefat (130 kilometers northeast of Tel Aviv).[12](#)

Israel has cooperated on the military use of nuclear energy with other nations in addition to France and the United States, including South Africa in the 1970s. In 1977, a Newsweek editorial asserted, citing experts from the U.S. intelligence community, that a South African nuclear bomb was an Israeli device.[13](#) On September 22, 1979, at precisely 01:00 GMT, sensors aboard the American VELA 6911 surveillance satellite recorded two flashes in the Indian Ocean in the vicinity of South Africa’s Prince Edward Islands, representing credible evidence that nuclear tests had been conducted. The “list of suspects” was quickly narrowed down to South Africa and Israel.[14](#)

The Israeli leadership made a political decision to create nuclear weapons in 1955, and the resulting program developed rapidly following the Suez Crisis in the fall of 1956.[15](#) It is believed that Tel Aviv was pushed in this direction by the threat of nuclear weapons being used against Israel, a threat made in a speech at the height of the crisis by Nikolai Bulganin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union.[16](#) According to estimates by Rosatom’s Institute of Strategic Stability (ISS), the first Israeli nuclear weapons may have been made in 1967–1968,[17](#) while the American think tank Global Security asserts that Israel already had two nuclear bombs by the time the Six Day War broke out in 1967.[18](#) Since then, production of nuclear weapons in Israel has steadily increased and their range has expanded: in addition to nuclear bombs with a power of 20 kilotons, Israel’s stockpile now includes nuclear warheads for various types of missiles.[19](#)

Assessments of Israel’s nuclear arsenal vary widely. For example, experts such as Shannon Kile and Hans M. Kristensen of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimate that Israel has about 80 nuclear weapons: 50 missile warheads and 30 gravity bombs that can be delivered by fighter jets.[20](#) Rosatom’s ISS suggests that Israel’s total arsenal may range from 130 to 200 weapons.[21](#) Former U.S. secretary of state (2001–2005) Colin Powell assessed the Israeli arsenal at 200 nuclear weapons.[22](#) There are also experts who believe that Israel already had about 400 weapons by the late 1990s.[23](#)

Given the uncertainty surrounding Israel’s current nuclear arsenal, the most substantiated approach to assessing it is that based on the country’s stockpile of weapons-grade plutonium. The most convincing estimates are those of SIPRI, which suggests that as of 2017, Israel may have had 770–

1,030 kilograms of separated weapons-grade plutonium.²⁴ Furthermore, SIPRI experts believe that production of weapons-grade plutonium in Israel continues, which serves as indirect evidence that Tel Aviv intends to keep building up its nuclear capabilities.

It is generally accepted that 5 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium is enough to produce one nuclear weapon.²⁵ Based on this assumption, Israel could have produced 154 to 206 nuclear weapons using its entire existing stock of weapons-grade plutonium as of 2017. However, Israeli nuclear experts would not have been likely to use up the whole stockpile of weapons-grade plutonium to produce nuclear weapons. It can be assumed that, in keeping with the practice of other de jure unrecognized nuclear states, Israel saved up to a quarter of its weapons-grade plutonium reserves for unforeseen needs. Thus, by the beginning of 2018, Israel may have had between 115 and 155 weapons in its nuclear arsenal.²⁶ It is entirely rational that the number of the weapons (with estimated yield of 20 to 40 kilotons) corresponds to the number of Israel's launchers (which will be discussed below).

The information presented above indicates that Israel has built a full-fledged research and production base for its nuclear industry, which enables it to not only support its current nuclear capabilities, but also expand them if necessary. Tel Aviv's interest in developing thermonuclear weapons cannot be excluded, but that would require nuclear tests. Israel signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in September 1996, although it has not yet ratified the treaty. There is little reason to believe that Tel Aviv would decide to conduct full-scale nuclear tests without extreme need, considering how much its image in the eyes of the international community would suffer following such a move.

Nuclear Forces

Expert analysis indicates that the Israeli armed forces (Israel Defense Forces) currently possess a nuclear triad that relies on dual-use delivery systems: tactical aircraft, mobile missile systems, and diesel-electric submarines.²⁷ The only aircraft in the Israeli Air Force fleet that can be used as carriers of nuclear bombs are the American-made F-15 and F-16 tactical fighters.²⁸ There is an estimated total of 40–50 such aircraft, each able to carry one atomic bomb.²⁹

The F-15 Eagle (Israeli modification F-15I) has a combat range of 1,650 kilometers without mid-air refueling, and a maximum flight speed of 2,650 kilometers per hour at an altitude of 11,000 meters (its operational ceiling is 18,000 meters). The F-16 Falcon (Israeli modification F-16I) has a combat range of 1,500–1,600 kilometers without mid-air refueling, and a maximum flight speed of 2,100 kilometers per hour at an altitude of 11,000 meters (its operational ceiling is 18,000 meters).

In early 2012, reports surfaced that Israeli F-15Is and F-16Is were now capable of being armed with Popeye air-to-surface nuclear cruise missiles.³⁰ If this information is correct, the combat capabilities of the Israeli nuclear triad's aerial component have increased significantly, considering that the Popeye's range exceeds 1,000 kilometers. In addition to aircraft, the Israeli Air Force is armed with Jericho II and Jericho III ballistic missiles on mobile launchers, which can be equipped with either conventional or nuclear warheads.³¹

The solid-fuel, medium-range, two-stage Jericho II entered service in 2002. It has a launch mass of around 14 tons and a range of 1,500–1,800 kilometers with a warhead mass of 750–1,000 kilograms.³² The missile's circular error probable is around 800 meters. The solid-fuel, medium-range, three-stage Jericho III entered service in 2011. It has a launch mass of 29–30 tons and a range of over 4,000 kilometers with a warhead mass of 1,000–1,300 kilograms.³³

Between 2013 and 2018, Israel test-launched an upgraded version of the Jericho III ballistic missile (with a new, more powerful engine). The missile was equipped with a warhead containing two or three independently targeted reentry vehicles. The missile has a maximum range of about 6,500 kilometers.³⁴ According to unverified information, this ballistic missile, classified as intercontinental, may have entered service in 2019. Israel is not expected to have this type of ballistic missile in its possession for military purposes in the foreseeable future, since all of its potential antagonists—first and foremost Iran—are located within the range of Israel’s operationally available Jericho III intermediate-range ballistic missiles. For this reason, it is expected that the deployment of this missile will be a very measured process.

As of January 2018, the Israeli Air Force was estimated to have up to 80 mobile launchers for Jericho II and Jericho III ballistic missiles and about 50 nuclear warheads for these missiles. Squadrons with mobile launchers are stationed at the Kfar Zekharya missile base 38 kilometers south of Tel Aviv. During peacetime, the launchers are not deployed, but are located in specially equipped, highly protected underground facilities.

As for the potential development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, Israel is carrying out experimental design work on creating an intercontinental three-stage, solid-fuel missile known as the Jericho IV. Its first test flights are expected to be conducted in 2022–2023. Tel Aviv apparently believes that the introduction of nuclear intercontinental missiles with a range of 10,000–12,000 kilometers will enable it to create the potential—however minimal—for a nuclear deterrence in regard to any nuclear power capable of posing a threat to Israel. This will allow it to avoid situations like that seen in 1956 during the Suez Crisis, when Israel was forced to yield to the nuclear superiority of the Soviet Union. Israel not only ceased its military action against Egypt, whose armed forces had essentially been decimated; it also had to completely withdraw its troops from territory it had captured from Egypt.

Testing and combat training launches of ballistic missiles and low-orbit space boosters using the Shavit space launch vehicle are conducted at the Palmachim test site 22 kilometers southwest of Tel Aviv. In addition to this test site, a towable marine platform located in the basin of the Mediterranean Sea is also used for the testing and combat training launches of ballistic missiles. The naval component of Israel’s nuclear triad consists of German-made Dolphin-class diesel-electric submarines armed with cruise missiles capable of carrying either conventional or nuclear warheads.

The Israeli navy has six of these submarines (the first three were acquired from Germany in 1999–2000, the next three in 2013–2019).³⁶ After being delivered from Germany, the submarines were further equipped by Israeli specialists; each submarine was outfitted with ten launch tubes for firing cruise missiles from below the surface. There are no reliable data on the type of cruise missiles deployed on these submarines. According to some sources, they are an Israeli modification of the American Sub-Harpoon cruise missile with a range of up to 600 kilometers.³⁸ Other sources suggest that the submarines are armed with Israel’s own Popeye Turbo, developed from the Popeye air-to-surface cruise missile. The range of the Popeye Turbo is up to 1,500 kilometers.³⁹

An estimated 30–40 nuclear weapons have been allocated for the cruise missiles deployed on the Dolphin-class submarines. In January 2019, the German government agreed to deliver another batch of three more Dolphin-class submarines to Israel.⁴⁰ These are expected to replace the first three of the class (acquired in 1999–2000), allowing Israel to maintain a fleet of six submarines. The delivery of the latest batch of submarines is expected to begin in 2025–2026, and they may go into service starting in 2027. Thus, Israel now has a fairly wide range of means of delivering nuclear

weapons, and an impressive nuclear arsenal by regional standards. In order to ensure the survivability of its nuclear capabilities, Israel has focused on developing its naval component. This is logical and rational, as Israel is quite vulnerable to attack by weapons of mass destruction due to its small territorial size.

Unspoken Nuclear Strategy

The existence of an Israeli nuclear force implies the existence of a nuclear strategy, though one has never been declared. Analysis of statements made by Israeli officials, however, suggests a strategy based on the following key principles:

- Israel's nuclear arsenal is intended primarily to deter potential adversaries. It is obvious that the huge geopolitical and demographic (as well as potential military) advantages of the Arab and Muslim countries such as Iran surrounding Israel are generally regarded by the Jewish nation-state as an imperative to rely on nuclear weapons, which act as an incontestable guarantor of security.
- Nuclear weapons are considered a last resort by Israel. They could be used first in the event of a conventional attack on Israel if that attack threatened the very existence of the state.
- In the event of a nuclear strike against Israel (or an attack using other weapons of mass destruction), the surviving nuclear forces would be used in retaliation against the aggressor.
- Unless there is a fundamental change in the regional security situation, Israel will continue its policy of official silence regarding its nuclear arsenal. This policy has proved to be something of a military and political resource that Tel Aviv will not squander.⁴³ Public acknowledgment of the existence of such weapons, without consenting to their restriction or elimination, would give surrounding Muslim countries justification to pursue their own nuclear weapons, or at least to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Israel pursues every means of preventing the possible development of nuclear weapons by its potential opponents.⁴⁴ Accordingly, it was largely at the instigation of Israel that in 2018, the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action regulating Iran's nuclear program that had been approved by the UN Security Council in 2015, and introduced harsh sanctions against Iran aimed at forcing it to abandon its nuclear program entirely. In addition to political and diplomatic measures, Israel does not exclude the use of force—even in violation of international law—to achieve this goal of containing its enemies' nuclear potential.

On the whole, there is no incentive now or in the foreseeable future for Israel to give up its nuclear weapons, seeing as it finds itself in a more threatening and hostile environment than any other nation in the world. A regional peace treaty with Israel has been signed by only two Middle Eastern states: Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. In 2020, Israel established diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates. The remaining countries in this region have yet to recognize Israel's sovereignty, while Iran has until recently openly and officially denied that Israel has any right to exist.

Israel's "anonymous" nuclear arsenal will remain the most important component of the military balance in the Middle East for the foreseeable future, and a significant driver of discord between Tel Aviv and other states in the region, complicating prospects for strengthening the non-proliferation regime in the Middle East. In this context, it is not surprising that Israel, with U.S. support, resisted the convening of a UN conference in New York

in November 2019 on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles in the Middle East.⁴⁶ Accordingly, Israel and the United States did not take part in the conference.

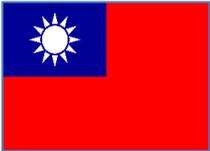
Following the five-day conference, the participating states adopted a political declaration, expressing a commitment to pursue in an open and inclusive manner the elaboration of a treaty on establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the states of the region. All states of the Middle East and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council were invited by the General Secretary of the UN to support the declaration and participate in future sessions of the conference. At the same time, since disagreements between key groups of players in the Middle East (Iran and the League of Arab States on the one hand, and Israel and the United States on the other) remain unresolved, there is no hope that the current position of Israel and the United States will change and that they will join the dialogue on the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East in the foreseeable future.

In view of the above, it is likely that Israel will remain a nuclear state for years to come. Even if the process of global nuclear disarmament, much hoped for by the international community, ever begins, Israel will be among the last remaining nuclear states. This text is an updated version of a chapter of the [Russian-language book “A Polycentric Nuclear World.”](#)



JAPAN:

NSTR



TAWIAN:

Taiwanese prepare to defend themselves from Chinese invasion

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/09/27/taiwanese-prepare-defend-chinese-invasion/>

by: Nicola Smith, for the UK Telegraph 27 Sept 2020

When fighter jets and military helicopters streaked across the skies over the Taiwanese capital, Taipei, at 6.30am on Thursday morning, social media lit up with anxious posts.

The defence ministry quickly clarified that the sorties were a practice run for Taiwan’s National Day in October, but the timing had been unfortunate – Chinese military aircraft have been intercepted over 40 times since mid-September while flying uncomfortably close to Taiwan’s airspace, fraying

public nerves. For decades, democratic Taiwan has grown accustomed to threats of invasion from China's Communist leadership, which has never ruled the island of 24 million yet claims it as its own territory.

But the recent rise in military intimidation, warnings of war from state media and an increasingly belligerent Chinese foreign policy have raised fears in recent months that conflict across the Taiwan Strait is a realistic possibility. "It's certainly a Chinese Communist Party that is no longer biding its time," said Enoch Wu, 39, a rising political star who recently launched a resilience training programme to teach individuals and communities how to organise shelter and deliver First Aid in the event of a catastrophic invasion.

"In the worst case scenario, we have this belief that defending Taiwan will take a whole of nation, whole of society approach, especially if you consider the fire power that the People's Liberation Army has built up, whether that is in the number of missiles or the airstrike payload," he said. In August, at the first of what will be monthly sessions, 400 people applied for 60 places. The 12-hour event began with lectures and training from disaster response professionals followed by a mass casualty simulation in a Taipei park.

Mr Wu said he created the initiative after touring Taiwanese university campuses and civic groups with his NGO, Alliance Forward, which aims to raise awareness about defence challenges and national security. "Over the last ten, twenty years, the PLA has been very clear about their force-building objective and at the top of that mission set is unifying Taiwan by force," he said. "When we give these talks around the country, the question people ask always come back to this – 'what can we do?'"

My sense is that there is this angst, there's anxiousness to be more prepared." As we travel across TW raising awareness of emerging threats and advocating for defense reform, this is the question we hear most: "what can I, as an individual citizen, do to help?" We are encouraged and optimistic, bc our public wants to step up. Public disquiet has heightened this year as Chinese President Xi Jinping's foreign policy grows increasingly assertive, stoking tensions with the US, India, and in the South China Sea, and prompting speculation he is trying to deflect attention from domestic troubles over the pandemic and economy.

For Beijing, absorbing Taiwan into the mainland has long been at the top of its expansionist ambitions and President Xi has publicly committed to taking the island – which operates like any other nation with its own democratic government – by force if it refuses to accept Chinese rule. China has stepped up military drills simulating the takeover of Taiwan, practicing underwater mine clearance to create safe passage for warships and landing forces, and repeatedly flying fighter jets across the median line, which has served since the 1950s as the unofficial demarcation of the Taiwan Strait.

The military intimidation campaign intensified during a visit to Taipei earlier this month by Keith Krach, US undersecretary of state for economic growth. Beijing, which rejects Taiwan's right to diplomatic relations, was infuriated by the visit and by signals from the US, Taipei's biggest arms supplier, that it intends to sell it \$7 billion in coastal defence missiles, drones and mines.

While increased US support had boosted Taiwan's morale, it also carried a security risk, said Bonnie Glaser, senior adviser for Asia at the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies. "On the one hand we reassure Taiwan that we care about them, on the other hand we are the cause of this great military pressure," she said. "I think this administration is almost hugging Taiwan too tightly."

Euan Graham, senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies Asia, warned that the period between the US election and the inauguration, while it was preoccupied domestically, could “frame a window of opportunity” for China to take action against Taiwan. It may not necessarily be a “full across-the-beach invasion,” he said, and could take the form of a cyber attack, blockade or assault on an outlying island. But he added: “You can’t dismiss it as bluff and bluster because they are serious that they want to reunify and they have built a world class military that is built essentially for that purpose.”



SAUDI ARABIA:

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TURKEY:

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