

ICBM Ear: Weekly Report to the ICON for October 9, 2020

Previews of Coming Distractions and Recent Nuclear Developments

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NDAA & DEFENSE APPROPS:

The Chairmen of the HASC and SASC respectively believe the NDAA will be completed in December following the election. Chairman Smith of the HASC says there are fewer contentious issues this year compared to FY2020. As for the appropriations bill for defense, the CR takes things through December 11, 2020 but then there will be two choices depending in part on how the election results some out—those controlling the White House and Congress in 2021 will want to wait and craft a new appropriations bill for the remainder of FY2021 and the new budget for FY2022, rather than have a lame-duck Congress and administration deal with the issues. The CR does protect going forward with 2 Columbia class submarines.

NEW START:TRUST BUT VERIFY

On the New START treaty, the administration proposed that the US and Russia commit to freezing their deployed strategic nuclear forces at the New START level in return for an extension of the treaty for some portion of the five year extension

allowed by the treaty itself. As Marshall Billingslea, the US New START negotiator has explained, the Russian breakout or upload capability is quite substantial and is one of the areas the administration seeks to correct in an amended or new agreement, as well as deal with such issues as portal monitoring, encryption of telemetry, warhead attribution and how better verification. All these elements were part of the START I verification measures. The Russia initial reaction was to reject the administration's proposal and to insist that an extension of the treaty would have to come first before any discussion of a future framework for a new treaty would be contemplated.

KEY DOCUMENT:

CNA: Prevailing Under the Nuclear Shadow

[https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/CRM-2020-U-027973-Final%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/CRM-2020-U-027973-Final%20(002).pdf)

New START negotiations are covered extensively by these six WSJ articles by Michael Gordon; they are linked here.

U.S., Russia Move Toward Outline of Nuclear Deal, Administration Says

Trump administration official's comments suggest the two sides might be able to come to terms on broad principles

U.S. and Russian negotiators made progress Monday on a new framework accord that would freeze each side's nuclear arsenal and outline the parameters for a detailed treaty that would be negotiated next year, a senior Trump administration official said.



arms3.pdf



Arms2.pdf



arms5.pdf



arms1.pdf



arms4.pdf



arms6.pdf

Previous & Forthcoming National Security and Nuclear Events of Interest

On Tuesday, October 13, Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control, Ambassador Marshall Billingslea, will join the Heritage Foundation to discuss China's nuclear ambitions. (See details [here](#)) **Webinars**

[Behind the Great Wall of Secrecy: China's Nuclear Buildup](#)

Tuesday, October 13, 2020
3:00 PM - 3:45 PM (EDT)

Featuring
Ambassador Marshall Billingslea
Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control

Hosted by
Peter Brookes
Senior Research Fellow

REPORTS OF INTEREST—Iran, China, and North Korea: Nuclear and Missile Developments

Report: [United States Should Derail Prospects for an Iran–China Alliance](#)

James Phillips, Senior Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs

Although Tehran has trumpeted its pending cooperation agreement with China, Beijing has publicly said remarkably little about what the agreement will entail. Close cooperation with U.S. allies is necessary to increase U.S. leverage over both China and Iran and help constrain, if not preclude a full-blown Sino–Iranian alliance.

Report: [The Iran-North Korea Axis Rides On](#)

Peter Brookes, Senior Research Fellow

Audrey Pederson, Member of the Young Leaders Program

Iran and North Korea have resumed cooperation on a long-range missile project, including the transfer of critical parts. It makes sense that the Trump administration has reinstated punitive economic sanctions on Iran over its bad behavior, including attempting to extend the international arms embargo on Tehran.

Report: [The U.S. Must Respond to North Korea's Emerging Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile Program \[More on this report is posted below\].](#)

Peter Brookes, Senior Research Fellow, Davis Institute for National Security & Foreign Affairs

North Korea's SSB/SLBM program may become operational sooner than the best U.S. and allied intelligence assessments expect, especially if outside assistance is obtained. With this in mind, now is the time to think about and act on North Korea's evolving SLBM threat. Nuclear SLBMs deployed aboard North Korean SSBs are likely very much part of our and our allies' national security future

Essays to Read on ICBMs and Nuclear Related Issues

Loss of ICBMs: Biden will almost certainly abolish this indispensable deterrent

By Dr. Peter Vincent Pry - - *Tuesday, October 6, 2020*

"Both in politics and war, what matters is speed."

— *Julius Caesar*

In the 2020 elections, perhaps the most important, and least appreciated, issue: a Biden administration will almost certainly abolish unilaterally America's 400 land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

ICBMs, according to U.S. Strategic Command, are "the bedrock of our strategic posture" but the Minuteman III, a half-century old, needs to be replaced by a new ICBM. The anti-nuclear left has persuaded top Democrats ICBMs are unnecessary.

ICBMs are the most important weapon in the U.S. nuclear Triad — faster, more combat-ready, and more responsive than strategic bombers and missile submarines.

Every day, anytime, in the few minutes required to receive an Emergency Action Message and turn two keys, [U.S. ICBMs](#) can launch 400 of the most powerful, accurate, effective nuclear warheads, delivering them anywhere in 30 minutes or less.

The awesome capabilities of U.S. ICBMs for decades prevented the Cold War from becoming World War III. Today, U.S. ICBMs continue their role as the most immediate and most powerful nuclear deterrent, overshadowing every big military and diplomatic move on the global chessboard by Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran.

U.S. ICBMs are the Sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of America's enemies, protecting the U.S. homeland and allies from surprise attack.

Yet, almost immediately after the 2018 elections gave Democrats control of the House, the House Armed Services Committee held hearings to make the case for abolishing U.S. ICBMs and nuclear bombers — two-thirds of the nuclear Triad — and relying only on ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).

House hearings also proposed halving U.S. SSBNs from 12 to six boats, barely enough to sustain just two SSBNs on patrol at sea.

These radically irresponsible ideas, that used to be the fantasies of the anti-nuclear left — including groups like Ploughshares, Union of Concerned Scientists, Federation of American Scientists, and the Arms Control Association — are now mainstream thinking for Democrats.

President Clinton's former Secretary of Defense, William Perry, and many other Democrat defense professionals likely to influence a Biden administration, vociferously advocate banning ICBMs. (See the report "Rethinking Land-Based Nuclear Missiles" Union of Concerned Scientists: June 22, 2020).

Democrats now subscribe to nuclear deterrence minimalism, which theory assumes that only a small number of SSBNs are needed to deter nuclear war, and that

nothing can go wrong with their warheads, missiles or the submarines — assumptions which defy all of military history.

The nuclear Triad was invented by the Great Generation who survived and won World War II where, for the Allies at the beginning, confidently propounded pre-war military theories and sophisticated weapons went wrong. France's "impregnable" Maginot Line was rendered obsolete by Nazi Germany's Blitzkrieg strategy. Allied infantry and tanks were overwhelmed and outclassed by Axis panzer divisions. Battleships were rendered obsolete by aircraft carriers at Pearl Harbor. U.S. torpedoes did not work, but dive bombers miraculously saved the day at Midway.

As in World War II, a lot can go wrong with the best laid plans and weapons in a nuclear World War III.

The nuclear Triad is designed with multiple redundant delivery and weapon systems just in case things go wrong, to assuredly deter and defeat a nuclear aggressor:

- Bombers can deliver nuclear or conventional weapons and can be recalled. But they need to be generated, are the slowest delivery system, might not penetrate air defenses, and could all be destroyed on their 3 bases with just a few warheads in a surprise attack.
- ICBMs can strike fastest, deliver the most accurate and effective warheads, are rapidly retargetable, have the most secure-survivable communications, each carries one warhead so can be used singly and selectively or massively as circumstances demand. Located in 400 hardened silos spread across several states, destruction of all U.S. ICBMs would require a big, highly coordinated, and costly attack, needing at least 400 enemy warheads. However, as adversary weapons become more accurate and stealthier, U.S. ICBMs are increasingly vulnerable.

- SSBNs are far more vulnerable than ICBMs to surprise attack, as two-thirds of U.S. missile submarines are berthed at two ports, where they could be destroyed by nuclear or conventional weapons, highly tempting targets as every submarine sunk eliminates 20 strategic missiles and 60-80 warheads. SSBNs at sea are supposed to be “invulnerable.” Assumptions about “invulnerability” are often the first fatalities in war.

Surprise attack is the nightmare scenario — most likely to happen because it maximizes U.S. vulnerabilities — against which 400 ICBMs that can launch-on-tactical-warning are sentinels.

Surprise attack would find at sea just 4 U.S. SSBNs — nonresponsive as ICBMs. Most submarine missiles are MIRVed with 3-4 warheads, unsuited for many limited nuclear operations.

SSBNs are designed never to be used, a survivable reserve at sea intended to deter attack on U.S. cities.

Instead of banning U.S. ICBMs, critics should support space-based missile defenses and terrestrial Phalanx or Iron Dome defenses for ICBM silos to make unnecessary launch-on-tactical-warning, and ease unwarranted fears about an alleged nuclear “hair-trigger.”

U.S. ICBM critics fear the wrong ICBMs. While [U.S. ICBMs](#) exist to prevent war — Russia, China and North Korea favor ICBMs because they are ideal for nuclear blackmail and surprise attack.

- *Dr. Peter Vincent Pry, director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, served as chief of staff on the Congressional EMP Commission, and on*

the staffs of the House Armed Service Committee and the CIA. He is author most recently of "The Power and The Light" (Amazon.com).

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/oct/6/loss-of-icbms-biden-will-almost-certainly-abo>

Our ICBMs Are Necessary and No They Are Not on Hair-Trigger Alert

By [Rebeccah Heinrichs](#)

October 03, 2020

A flurry of opinion pieces has called into question the Air Force's decision to award the contract to begin building the country's new intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). For example, in an [article](#) by William D. Hartung, he asks, "What's the rush?" My answer to that is: half a century is hardly a rush.

That is how old the current Minuteman IIIs are, and senior officials across Republican and Democratic administrations have said for years that we could no longer extend the life of those old systems without unacceptable risk. Following ten years of study, rigorous analyses, and development, the U.S. will replace the Minuteman III with the Ground-based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD).

One of the most persistent criticisms of GBSD is less about the system and more about ICBMs, generally. Indeed, Mr. Hartung is transparent about his ultimate objective, which is "eliminating land-based nuclear missiles altogether." Critics claim ICBMs put the country at risk of barreling us into a nuclear holocaust because they are on "hair trigger alert." Mr. Hartung lauds Former Defense Secretary William J. Perry's warning: "The highest probability of starting a nuclear war is a mistaken launch caused by a false alarm and a rushed decision to launch nuclear-armed ICBMs..."

If we are going to look to Secretary Perry for counsel on this matter, it merits considering his 2009 report, which he co-authored with former Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger. Regarding "hair trigger alert," the two former Secretaries of Defense [penned](#): "This is simply an erroneous characterization of the issue. The alert postures of both countries are, in fact, highly stable. They are subject to multiple layers of control, ensuring clear civilian and indeed presidential decision-making." Secretaries Perry and Schlesinger also stated in this study that "The [ICBM] force is also immediately responsive in a highly controlled manner."

The beauty in our ICBMs' alert status is that they offer the United States a powerful prompt response option that can hit any target on the other side of the planet. But one should not conclude that an on-alert status means that we are a hair's breadth away from launching ICBMs at an unsuspecting country accidentally or due to the wrong belief that we are under nuclear attack.

The United States fields an extensive array of sensors to provide warning of a massive launch of ICBMs against our missile fields. We have satellites to detect the infra-red plumes, an array of radars to detect inbound missiles, other satellites to detect the movement of mobile ICBMs and other forces, and other intelligence assets. And, realistically, should an enemy decide to launch a nuclear attack against the United States, barring an act of insanity, it would occur within a broader context of tensions. So, this hypothetical nightmare scenario, where we would have a *believable* warning of enemy launch that is, in fact, a false alarm, is highly unlikely.

Strategic Commanders have repeatedly pushed back on the notion of “hair trigger alert” over the years, but Admiral Richard W. Mies said it so well [before a Senate committee](#) in 2001 it is worth repeating here at length:

I would also like to challenge the perception that our forces are on "hair-trigger" alert – a characterization routinely used to justify de-alerting proposals. Multiple, stringent procedural and technical safeguards have been in place and will remain in place to guard against accidental or inadvertent launch. Rigorous safeguards exist to ensure the highest levels of nuclear weapon safety, security, reliability, and command and control. Additionally, the policy of the United States is not to rely on "launch on warning." As I stated earlier, our forces are postured such that while we have the capability to respond promptly to any attack, we will never need to rely upon "launch on warning." The diversity, flexibility, and survivability of our strategic forces and our command and control networks are designed to ensure we are never faced with a "use them or lose them" dilemma, and we are always capable of an assured response.

It is no wonder the Obama administration affirmed the triad's salience and eschewed calls to shelve any leg after rigorous analysis. ICBMs continue to provide an indispensable role in bolstering the effectiveness of that deterrent, especially now, when the United States faces adversaries with the ability to pose a strategic threat to the United States and our way of life.

The country's 400 Minuteman IIIs are housed in silos and dispersed in Montana, Nebraska, and North Dakota. An enemy would need to launch a large-scale attack against the American homeland to diminish this leg of the triad. To quote Secretaries Perry and Schlesinger again: “The ICBM force imposes on a prospective aggressor the need to contemplate attacking only with a very large number of nuclear weapons, substantially depleting its forces while ensuring a devastating response by the United States.” Put another way, our ICBMs significantly raise the bar for any enemy who is even contemplating a strategic attack against the U.S. homeland.

The United States should be looking for ways to further complicate an adversary's calculations, not simplifying them. Without U.S. ICBMs, adversaries could focus their targeting only on the sea and air legs of the triad. Our bombers and submarines operate from a handful of bases. This creates a more than plausible nightmare scenario wherein fewer bases tempt adversaries to contemplate executing a first strike that would have a devastating impact on the survival of the United States.

The challenge for policymakers and strategists is to ensure the triad is credible to deter our adversaries from concluding that a strategic attack is ever worth the cost. A credible nuclear

force is one that is reliable, safe, and leverages modern technology to meet the challenges of today and for decades to come. The decision to replace the Minuteman III program with the GBSD program is a welcome move toward this end.

Rebecca L. Heinrichs is a senior fellow at Hudson Institute where she specializes in nuclear deterrence and missile defense.

Japan Unveils Record \$52 Billion Military Budget (Thanks to China and North Korea)

Japan's government hasn't been silent about noting that it has felt threatened by China's vast military resources, which come amidst territorial disputes, as well as an ever-unpredictable North Korea.

The National Interest · by Peter Suci · October 6, 2020

Last week Japan's defense ministry unveiled a military budget that took many by surprise. The island nation's military budget has been steadily rising for nearly a decade, but the record-setting budget request, which was for \$52 billion, comes as part of a push to maintain military readiness as Tokyo faces pressure from [China](#) and [North Korea](#).

Japan's government hasn't been silent about noting that it has felt threatened by [China's vast military resources](#), which come amidst territorial disputes, as well as an ever-unpredictable North Korea. As a result, the Ministry of Defense asked for 5.49 trillion yen—\$52 billion—for fiscal year beginning April 2021, which would mark nine straight years of increases and a roughly eight percent rise from the 5.3 trillion yen requested for the current year.

This is the first military budget under Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who came to power this month with the pledge to continue the policies of his predecessor Shinzo Abe. Under Abe, the Japanese military was expanded, which was highly circumscribed due to the country's pacifist power-World War II constitution.

More Advanced Fighters

[Defense News reported](#) that the latest budget request includes potential funding for Tokyo to purchase additional Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters. The ministry has expressed a desire to purchase four more [F-35A](#) conventional takeoff and landing variants, the same version used by the United States Air Force, for a cost of approximately \$308.5 million; as well as two additional [F-35B](#) short takeoff-and-vertical-landing (STOVL) variants, which are used by the United States Marine Corps.

With an eventual plan to be equipped with 105 F-35As and 42 F-35Bs, Japan would become the largest operator of the fifth-generation stealth fighter aircraft outside of the United States. The F-35B aircraft would reportedly be operated onboard the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) [helicopter destroyer *Izumo*](#), which been undergoing a retrofit so that it can deploy the Lockheed Martin fighters.

In December 2018, the Japanese Cabinet approved a plan to [convert the ships](#) into a class of aircraft carriers that could operate with several SH-60K/J helicopters or F-35Bs. Along with the sister ship *Kaga*, these are currently the largest surface combatants of the JMSDF.

Additional Missile Capability

The increased budget would also include items related to Japan's air and ballistic missile defense capability, Defense News also reported. This could include an additional \$370 million to acquire more Patriot Advanced Capability-3 Missile Segment Enhancement missiles—but Tokyo recent backtracked on a plan to acquire the ground-based Aegis Ashore system following technical difficulties.

The plan had been to build the system in two locations on the main island of Honshu to protect against possible North Korean attacks, but now the Ministry of Defense is considering an option for an [interception system at sea](#). That could entail using ships or mega-floats, or by building structures similar to offshore oil

rigs. Officials in Tokyo have determined that a price can't be attached to the system until the government actually determines how it will proceed.

An additional \$218.6 million of the budget has been earmarked to go towards the research and development of Japan's [hypersonic weapons program](#), while an additional \$144.9 will go to the development of a standoff long-range electronic warfare aircraft based on the C-2 airlifter. A further \$67.2 million has been requested for the acquisition of onboard systems for that platform.

Space and Cyber Space

Japan's Ministry of Defense is also addressing the need for less traditional defense, including research and operation of space and cyber units and a new electromagnetic warfare unit—the latter being based at the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force's Asaka base, north of Tokyo.

The Self-Defense Force plans to launch a new cyber unit with 540 personnel, while the Space Operations Squadron, which was launched in May as part of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, could have at least seventy new personnel who would add to the twenty initial members. The goal is to grow the unit to at least 100 members when it is fully operational in 2023.

None of this is actually a “done deal.” The budget request will now be reviewed by Japan's Finance Ministry, which will decide on funding allocation and announce the final budget later this year.

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

Meeting with Chief of the General Staff of Russia's Armed Forces – First Deputy Defence Minister Valery Gerasimov (via videoconference).

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Good afternoon, Mr. Gerasimov. Go ahead, please.

Chief of the General Staff of Russia's Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov: Good afternoon, Comrade Supreme Commander-in-Chief,

Here is what I have to report. At 7:15 am yesterday, the frigate Admiral Gorshkov deployed in the White Sea, for the first time fired a Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile at a sea target in the Barents Sea.

The goal has been achieved. The test firing has been declared successful. The missile destroyed the target in a direct hit.

The missile covered a distance of 450 kilometres. The maximum altitude of its trajectory was 28 kilometres. The flight lasted 4.5 minutes. The missile reached the hypersonic speed of over Mach 8.

Following the state tests, the Tsirkon system will be deployed on submarines and surface ships.

This concludes my report.

More on NK Submarine Capability

FIRST LOOK: NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR SUBS A [report out today](#) from the conservative Heritage Foundation warns that North Korea has made steady progress in recent years in developing a sea-launched missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead — and that preventing Pyongyang from delivering nuclear weapons from land and sea requires more urgency.

Pyongyang conducted its first successful test of a sea-launched ballistic missile, called the Pukguksong, in 2016, followed by a more advanced variant in 2017. In 2019, it successfully tested the Pukguksong-3, which reportedly climbed to an altitude of 950 km and traveled 450 km before splashing into the sea.

“The deepening and diversification of the DPRK’s nuclear arsenal from a monad to a dyad would increase the overall military threat from North Korea and could complicate U.S. and allied policymaking, strategic deterrence, and ongoing diplomatic efforts to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula,” says the report by [Peter Brookes](#), a former deputy assistant secretary of defense for Asia and Pacific affairs.

What to do about it? The United States and its allies need to “bolster political and military deterrence in the Pacific to deter, dissuade, and if necessary, destroy the North Korean nuclear threat,” the report says. “Although China’s military buildup is of tremendous importance, the threat emanating from North Korea is perhaps most likely to reach the crisis stage.”

**Warning Shot Across the Bow: Growing View on Left and Right:
US at War too much, has too many nukes & consequently losing
friends.**

[The Presidency and Endless War](#)

Miller Center

Since 1776, the United States has been at war 93 percent of the time—227 out of 244 years, according to Global Research. Why is that? And what does it mean for the future of our nation, at home and abroad?

[Understanding America's Declining Global Influence](#)

Net Assessment

Why is America’s global influence in decline? And what can be done to get it back?

[Forgotten Bombs: US Nukes in Europe](#)

Press the Button

Mike Sweeney, a fellow at Defense Priorities and former think tank analyst focused on US foreign policy and defense planning, joins Press the Button for a discussion on why the United States should take its nuclear weapons out of Europe.

[Tomorrow the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy](#)

Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft

In his new book, *Tomorrow, the World*, Stephen Wertheim reveals how American leaders suddenly and unexpectedly decided to turn the United States into the world's armed superpower — and never looked back. [He says the US decided to be a global power in the 1970s and particularly after 9-11 with the adoption of the GWOT.]

MORE DETAILS ON THE US-RUSSIAN NEW START NEGOTIATIONS

Russia, US to Hold Strategic Stability Consultations on Monday, Deputy FM Says

MOSCOW (Sputnik) - Representatives from Russia and the United States will hold consultations on the issue of strategic stability in the Finnish capital Helsinki on Monday, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said.

"A single day of consultations will be held on October 5 in Helsinki, continuing the discussions that took place in the summer," Ryabkov said on Sunday.

When asked if the New START treaty, the last remaining arms control agreement in force between Russia and the United States, would be on the agenda, the deputy foreign minister replied in the affirmative.

"Yes, of course," Ryabkov said.

Under the New START, which was signed in 2010, the US and Russia agreed to reduce the number of strategic nuclear missiles by half and limit the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550 each.

The New START treaty is set to expire in February 2021. [Both Washington and Moscow have disagreed over the terms](#) of its extension, particularly with regard to the US insistence that China be included in any future deal.

U.S., Russia Move Toward Outline of Nuclear Deal, Administration Says

Trump administration official's comments suggest the two sides might be able to come to terms on broad principles

Monday's meeting between Marshall Billingslea, the top U.S. negotiator, and a Russian official was arranged on short notice.

By

Michael R. Gordon

U.S. and Russian negotiators made progress Monday on a new framework accord that would freeze each side's nuclear arsenal and outline the parameters for a detailed treaty that would be negotiated next year, a senior Trump administration official said.

The accord, if it comes together in the coming month, would give each side something it has sought. President Trump would have a demonstration that his diplomacy toward Moscow has borne fruit, arriving before the November election. Russia would get an extension of the New START treaty, which cuts long-range arms and is due to expire in early February.

"This is the first time the U.S. has heard concrete proposals from the Russian Federation," said the administration official. "We have an agreement on the way forward in terms of form. Where we have a lot of work to do is in terms of substance."

A week ago, the two sides said they were far apart on core issues in the negotiations and that the prospects for a framework accord this year appeared dim.

But the developments described by the administration official on Monday suggested that the U.S. and Russia might be able to come to terms on some of the broad principles of a future treaty while deferring some thorny issues to future negotiations over the concrete provisions of that agreement.

Monday's meeting, which was arranged in Helsinki on short notice, was conducted by Marshall Billingslea, the top U.S. negotiator, and Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov.

It built on a Friday meeting in Geneva between national security adviser Robert O'Brien and his Russian counterpart, Nikolai Patrushev, and earlier discussions Mr. Trump had with Russian President Vladimir Putin, U.S. officials said.

Russian officials haven't publicly discussed their proposals, and Mr. Ryabkov didn't respond to an emailed request for comment.

Though neither side disclosed the details of the Monday discussion, the administration official said the framework accord under discussion would include a politically binding commitment to freeze the total number of nuclear warheads on each side.

As described by the U.S., that freeze would cover warheads that are deployed on systems of all ranges as well as those that are in storage. It would be linked to the extension of the New START treaty for a year or longer, which would provide time for talks on the more far-reaching treaty.

Diplomats said that each side had presented new ideas at the Monday meeting, which now need to be digested. Mr. Billingslea and Mr. Ryabkov plan to talk by phone next week to see if there is a basis for moving forward.

Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists said that a freeze would leave each side with an ample arsenal of long-range and short-range systems.

The U.S. has deployed 1,750 nuclear weapons on its long-range and shorter-range delivery systems, among the 3,800 nuclear warheads in its stockpile, according to Federation notes. Russia has 1,572 deployed warheads among the 4,310 in its stockpile, the FAS notes.

By extending New START, each side would be precluded from restructuring their arsenal to vastly increase the number of warheads carried by their long-range land-based ballistic missiles, submarine-launched missiles, and bombers. That accord, which both sides have observed, sets a limit of 1,550 on the number of warheads that can be deployed on long-range systems.

Mr. Billingslea and Mr. Ryabkov held two previous negotiating sessions in Vienna, where the two sides were far apart on the Trump administration's central demand that a future treaty limit all Russia, Chinese and U.S. warheads and include more intrusive verification.

In an effort to step up the pressure on Moscow, Mr. Billingslea told the Russian newspaper Kommersant last month that the U.S. would move to expand its arsenal if the two sides remained stalemated and the New START treaty lapsed.

Mr. Ryabkov countered in an interview with The Wall Street Journal last week that Russia was prepared to respond to such steps and wasn't willing to secure the extension of New START "at the price which the U.S. wants us to pay."

But even as the negotiators outlined tough stances, interest in Washington and Moscow in further talks continued. After Mr. O'Brien's Geneva session with his

Russian counterpart, Mr. Billingslea cut short a diplomatic swing through Asia and flew to Helsinki from Hanoi.

One major sticking point has been Mr. Trump's longstanding demand that a future treaty limit China's nuclear forces—a demand Beijing has long rebuffed.

In August, however, the Trump administration shifted course and signaled that it was prepared to negotiate a separate framework accord with Moscow and attempt to bring China on board later once negotiations on a comprehensive treaty are under way.

Russia has said that it is prepared to sign a treaty that covers the forces of several countries. But Moscow has said that it is up to China to decide if it wants to be included and that it is more important to include British and French nuclear forces.

A possible diplomatic solution, former officials say, may be for a framework agreement that says that a future treaty should be multilateral without specifically mentioning China.

The senior administration official summed up the meeting this way: "substantial progress but no breakthrough yet."

Arms-control proponents say a framework accord would be valuable if it leads to the extension of New START, but they caution that the negotiation of a future treaty could prove difficult given how far apart the sides have been on what that agreement should cover.

Joe Biden, the Democratic nominee, has said that he favors the extension of the New START treaty as a foundation for future arms-control arrangements. But he hasn't spelled out the details of what those arrangements should be.

Write to Michael R. Gordon at michael.gordon@wsj.com

Appeared in the October 6, 2020, print edition as 'American-Russian Arms Talks Edge Forward.'

Russia Rebuffs Trump's Arms-Control Proposal

Moscow dismisses U.S. pressure for an election-year deal to extend the old nuclear arms-control treaty while negotiating a broader, new one

By

Michael R. Gordon

Oct. 1, 2020 9:04 am ET

Russia's top arms-control negotiator has rejected the Trump administration's core requirements for a new nuclear arms-control treaty, dealing a blow to the White House's hopes of concluding an election-year framework agreement with Moscow.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told The Wall Street Journal that the Trump administration's demands that a future treaty cover all Russia, Chinese and U.S. warheads and include more-intrusive verification is "clearly a nonstarter for us."

He also warned that Moscow is prepared to respond if the U.S. allows the New START treaty, a nuclear arms-reduction agreement that entered into force in 2011, to lapse and moves to expand its nuclear arsenal.

"We would be ready to counter this," he said.

The Trump administration has built its negotiating strategy on the premise that Moscow is eager to avoid an intensification of the arms race with the U.S., which has a larger military budget than Russia and has begun to upgrade its nuclear forces at a cost of more than \$1 trillion.

An undated file photo of a Russian intercontinental ballistic missile lifting off from a truck-mounted launcher in Russia.

In August, U.S. officials urged their Russian counterparts to agree on a framework accord that would spell out the terms of a future treaty that would limit all nuclear warheads, including those on Russia's short-range nuclear systems, impose stringent monitoring measures and cover China's comparatively small but growing nuclear force.

In return, the U.S. would give Russia something it has long sought: A temporary extension of the New START treaty, which cuts long-range nuclear arms and is due to expire in February.

Can the U.S. implement a new arms-control agreement with Russia this year? Why or why not? Join the conversation below.

In a blunt signal to the Kremlin that time was running out to strike such a deal, Marshall Billingslea, the top U.S. negotiator, told the Russian newspaper Kommersant in September that the administration would stiffen its demands for extending New START if Moscow dragged its feet in the talks.

"If Russia does not accept our offer before the elections, the entry price will go up," Mr. Billingslea told the publication, according to an English translation of his interview.

With five weeks left until the Nov. 3 vote, Mr. Ryabkov delivered his response Tuesday in a telephone interview from Moscow.

“We are not going to buy this extension of the New START at any price, especially not at the price which the U.S. wants us to pay,” he said. “I think our positions are currently very far apart.”

U.S. officials had no immediate comment on Mr. Ryabkov’s comments. A U.S. official said that the administration is in the early stages of discussing possible steps to expand U.S. nuclear forces as outlined by Mr. Billingslea in the Kommersant interview.

Marshall Billingslea, the top U.S. arms-control negotiator, spoke at a news conference after meeting with Mr. Ryabkov in Vienna in June.

Mr. Ryabkov said that it is reasonable to ask China, Britain, and France if they want to join a new arms-control arrangement, but that the U.S. and Russia should be prepared to work on their own agreement. China has said repeatedly that it doesn’t want to join an arms accord.

“We know pretty well the positions of Beijing, Paris and London,” Mr. Ryabkov said. “They are not particularly interested in this. So, the second-best option would be that we continue our dialogue on a bilateral basis” while the New START treaty is extended.

He added that the “sensible verification procedures” that were negotiated for New START should be relied on to monitor nuclear limits instead of the more-stringent measures Mr. Billingslea has demanded for a future accord.

While the U.S. has insisted that a new agreement limit Russia’s substantial force of short-range nuclear weapons, which aren’t covered by the New START treaty, Mr. Ryabkov argued the U.S. should remove its own “nonstrategic capabilities from Europe,” [including B-61 bombs](#). Such a move has long been deemed to be out of the question for Washington.

As negotiators on both sides dig in their heels, progress before the U.S. election is unlikely unless Russian President Vladimir Putin and President Trump talk in coming weeks, former American officials say.

Joe Biden, the Democratic presidential nominee, has said that [he would extend the New START treaty](#) and use it as a foundation for working out other arms-control arrangements.

“Russia has very little incentive to negotiate on U.S. terms this close to an election,” said Pranay Vaddi, a former State Department official and an arms-control expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “The only way for this current dynamic to change is for the heads of state to engage directly because their top negotiators are at an impasse.”

Seeking to increase his negotiating leverage with Moscow in the coming weeks, Mr. Billingslea has signaled that if Mr. Trump is re-elected and the talks remain

stalemated, the U.S. would allow the New START treaty to expire and then move to expand its nuclear forces.

To stay within the limits of the New START treaty, [the U.S. sealed four launch tubes](#) on each of its Trident II submarines and converted some B-52H bombers to a nonnuclear role.

But Mr. Billingslea told Kommersant that the U.S. would carry out a “reverse conversion of our weapons immediately after expiration of the treaty in February.”

Such steps also could include installing two additional warheads on many of the Air Force’s 400 Minuteman III missiles, which currently carry a single warhead.

Such an expansion could increase the U.S. long-range nuclear force by more than 1,000 warheads, [almost doubling its current deployed arsenal](#). The U.S. is limited to 1,550 warheads under the New START treaty.

It would also mark a significant shift in U.S. targeting policy. In 2019, Gen. John Hyten, who at the time was leading the U.S. Strategic Command, which oversees nuclear weapons, and is now vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Congress that if the New START treaty were to expire it was “unlikely to drive significant changes in U.S. force structure.”

Mr. Ryabkov said that how Moscow might respond to such a development was still an open question. “There are different ways, both symmetrical and asymmetrical, how to counter it,” he said.

Write to Michael R. Gordon at michael.gordon@wsj.com

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

U.S. diplomats are trying to play hardball with Russia in negotiations over whether to extend New START.

U.S. arms control envoy Marshall Billingslea speaks at a press conference. | Thomas Kronsteiner/Getty Images

By [DANIEL LIPPMAN](#), [BRYAN BENDER](#) and [LARA SELIGMAN](#)

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.

[Russia in December offered to extend the treaty](#) without preconditions. The position of the Trump administration, which withdrew from both the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces and the Open Skies treaties, has been that New START is too narrow and a replacement is needed that covers more classes of weapons, such as “tactical” or battlefield nuclear weapons.

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.

[Billingslea 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. [this was corrected by Politico later after the EAR pointed out that SLBMs carry multiple warheads].

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

New Weekly Nuclear BLOG

WARRIOR COLUMN:

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE & PEACE IS OUR PROFESSION

Warrior Maven
Oct 8, 2020

By Peter R. Huessy - Senior Warrior Maven Columnist

(Washington D.C.) This column begins for the first time a weekly nuclear “blog” here at Warrior Maven and will be solely dedicated to America’s nuclear business and a careful explaining of some of the nuclear challenges the United States now faces.

***** **PEACE is Our Profession** *****

(Washington D.C.) Each weekly essay will begin with correcting some recent examples of nuclear deterrence misinformation. To be required regularly to do so is both worrisome and depressing. Worrisome in that the public and their elected officials are getting bad information. And depressing in that our top adversaries—China and Russia—are collectively adding to their nuclear capability at a pace and magnitude unmatched since the height of the Cold War while the US is being misdirected.

Two examples come to mind. First, in the absence of New START there has been some speculation that the US will have to devote extra billions to matching a Russian nuclear breakout and thus not have the necessary capability to deter a rising China.

Well, matching the Russians should Moscow breakout of the New Start treaty can be partially done by adding warheads to the MM III and Ohio class D-5 missiles at a cost of tens of millions, not hundreds of billions.

However, as Mark Schneider of NIPP and James Howe have both written, the Russian breakout capability from New START does exceed that of the US by a considerable number of strategic warheads—to say nothing of the estimated four to one or higher advantage the Russians have in what are described as theater or short-range nuclear forces.

That is precisely why the administration seeks to redo the New START treaty because it does not constrain the Russian surge, upload, or breakout capability. Recent news reports that the US and Russia might agree on a preliminary freeze on warhead deployments as part of a New START extension is welcome news, although verifying such a deal remains the tough part of any nuclear agreement. Cementing the Russian breakout advantage which extending new START would do without any compensatory conditions, doesn't help US deterrent requirements.

As for deterring China in the nuclear arena, the US will deter China with the same nuclear force with which we deter Russia.

The second news story that continues to get a lot of play is whether the US silos-based ICBMs are so vulnerable to a Russian first strike that they should be dismantled. My colleague Rebecca Heinrichs **addressed this** in an especially good new column.

How realistic is it that a Russian leader is going to wake up one morning and decide to initiate a civilization ending nuclear war by launching a massive 1000 warhead strike on our nearly 500 ICBM silos and the associated ICBM launch facilities? The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review concluded the likelihood of such an attack is near zero. A FAS essay by Mat Korda concluded the NPR was right.

Heinrichs explains it this way:

“The beauty in our ICBMs’ alert status is that they offer the United States a powerful prompt response option that can hit any target on the other side of the planet. But one should not conclude that an on-alert status means that we are a hair’s breadth away from launching ICBMs at an unsuspecting country accidentally or due to the wrong belief that we are under nuclear attack.”

Unfortunately, this scare story keeps hanging around, and is a huge and unnecessary distraction. pushed by those who want to kill some element of the US nuclear force to demonstrate their commitment to what is known as “global zero.”. But as some disarmament advocates have admitted, there is a near zero chance that the Russians in a crisis will go after our ICBM assets and try and strike the 400 ICBM silos and their associated warheads now deployed. Such a strike would leave intact both the US bomber fleet at three bases and submarines at sea and at our two ports. And any kind of crisis conditions prior to such a strike could very well give the US ample time to put more of our forces on alert.

After all, both the surviving ICBMs and non-ICBM force collectively have the potential in a retaliatory strike to hit Russia with upwards of 1700 warheads. On the other hand, if Russia is contemplating trying to disarm the United States by striking **all** US nuclear assets in an all-out massive Armageddon-type first strike, what’s the point of eliminating 98% of the targets by getting rid of our

ICBMs? Why make it simpler for Russia to try and disarm the United States? In short, put in language anyone can understand, if you are worried about your house being vandalized, is it a good idea to open the windows and leave the door unlocked?

The bulk of this week's essay addresses the often-heard charge that the US by modernizing its nuclear forces is creating an arms race with Russia, and that unilateral restraint on our part would be an effective remedy.

Below is posted a preliminary graphic on the USSR and Russian strategic nuclear missile, submarine and bomber IOCs, or initial operating capability, from 1955-2035. A companion graphic was printed in the DOD Nuclear Handbook this summer on comparable United States nuclear deployments over the same period.

When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, there was great hope within the Western democracies that the economic and human costs of the Cold War would be a thing of the past, including high defense budgets required to deter Soviet aggression. The Bush administration's signing of two major strategic nuclear arms control agreements—START I in 1991 and START II in 1993—promised Russia and US deployed strategic nuclear warheads were destined to fall 75% from near 12,000 to 6000 and then subsequently to 3,500.

Even more hopeful was the Russian leader Yeltsin's proposal at the United Nations for a US-Russia global missile defense regime, coupled with nuclear weapons reductions, designed to stop accidental, rogue, or pre-emptive missile strikes. The Bush administration sought out the Russians to discuss this joint effort, understanding, or at least recognizing, future nuclear and missile threats might be serious enough to still require the US and Russia to "keep their powder dry."

One popular historian, Francis Fukuyama, went much further, concluding "it was the end of history" and that liberal democracy no longer had competition from terrorism or communism and their totalitarian ideologies. And with the election of William Clinton to the Presidency in 1993, apparently a lot of people decided "it was the economy stupid." Under Clinton, the peace dividend was cashed in, defense budgets across the West initially slid downward, and Clinton's new Secretary of Defense—"took the [missile defense] stars out of Star Wars" to cheers from the nuclear disarmament community.

Later in the decade, the National Academy of Sciences and the new Secretary of Defense William Perry declared Cold War nuclear threats from China and Russia were no longer so serious. Some top US generals concluded nuclear weapons were simply not credible military tools, and consequently the US delayed any thought of refurbishing an aging nuclear deterrent. Indeed, it was assumed it was the end of history.

But things were not as rosy as many US national leaders assumed.

Storm clouds were gathering in Russia, China, the Korean peninsula, and the Middle East. Terrorist attacks at Khobar Towers, the World Trade Center '93, our embassies in Africa and in Yemen against the USS Cole, were harbingers of more terrorism to come, including 9-11.

In 1999, the Russian Duma unexpectedly killed the START II treaty, by again resurrecting the old Soviet ploy of trying to include in the arms deal a requirement to end US missile defense work which would be have to be kept solely in the laboratory. The US Senate would never accept such terms and thus not only did the START II warhead reductions not occur, the treaty provision to ban all multiple warheads on land-based missiles was deep sixed, even though there has been hope the treaty would go into force after having secured near unanimous support in the US Senate.

On the Korean peninsula, North Korea in 1998 surprisingly launched an ICBM test rocket, revealing an emerging capability to possibly range the continental United States with a ballistic missile. A most troubling development given the DPRK previously discovered and not adequately fettered nuclear weapons program.

As for China, the communist leaders were beginning a long-term major modernization of their conventional and nuclear forces, including building military fortresses on strategic southwest Pacific islands, reminiscent of Imperial Japan.

Most worrisome was the Russia push to modernize its nuclear forces.

During the Cold War, the Soviets deployed on average 1.8 new types of strategic nuclear bombers, submarines, or ballistic missiles every year.

In the immediate post-Soviet era, Russian nuclear modernization did slow significantly to 1.0 type each year, due in part to Russia being nearly bankrupt—a factor the US took advantage of with the process of dramatically cutting Russian deployed strategic weapons first to 6000 under START I and then to 3500 under START II.

But with the accession of Vladimir Putin to the presidency in Russia, that changed dramatically. Putin announced in 2000 that nuclear weapons were indeed a diplomatic and military tool to be used, particularly early in a crisis or conflict. At the same time, with the Russian Duma having rejected START II, further expected Russian strategic nuclear reductions—especially the elimination of land based multiwarhead missiles-- did not materialize.

However, Russia did agree to further nuclear reductions in the 2002 Moscow treaty to 2200 warheads, although the treaty requirements to do so were largely notional. At the same time, Putin surprisingly acquiesced in the Bush administration push in 2003 to end the ABM treaty, long thought by disarmament advocates to be what they described as the “cornerstone of strategic stability” without which any arms control would not be possible.

Despite these positive developments, Putin was planning a very extensive nuclear modernization effort.

The 2002 Moscow or SORT treaty may have bought Russia time to get back on its nuclear feet.

In 2004 Putin outlined a planned massive modernization of Russia’s nuclear arsenal.

In 2011, Putin announced the nuclear modernization efforts would be completed by 2020.

In 2019 Putin announced the modernization campaign would reach just short of that goal --90% of its target by 2020.

In 2020, Russia’s defense minister said the target was 87% achieved, confirming Putin’s earlier promise.

While Russian nuclear weapons deployments were accelerating, the US was by contrast, amid a prolonged “nuclear nap” says the head of the US Strategic Command, Admiral Charles Richard.

In a new study, preliminary results indicate in the post-Soviet era, projected to 2027, the Russians will deploy 27 new types of strategic nuclear armed strategic nuclear bombers, land based and sea-based missiles, cruise missiles, and submarines, reaching the exact annual IOC pace of the 1972-1987 Cold War.

Our study also has examined Cold War nuclear arms control deals—the 1972 SALT I and INF treaties of 1972 and 1987 respectively—and concluded they had no appreciable impact on Moscow’s push to build strategic nuclear platforms. Apparently, the START I, Moscow Treaty, and New START agreements of 1991, 2002, and 2010 while dramatically reducing strategically deployed Russian warheads, did not presage a new more benign era in the US-Russian nuclear competition.

Although the Russians **slowed** new nuclear production for a short period after the end of the Cold War, that was soon reversed. Between the Moscow treaty of 2002, through the New START implementation to early 2021, and projected through 2027, Russia will deploy four new types of bombers and four associated cruise missiles; six new classes or types of land based missiles; five new or upgraded types of submarines and three accompanying new types of sea-launched ballistic missiles.

And with these new platforms, Russia will be able to easily deploy over time some 4500+ warheads, and may have nearly 2200-3200 deployed today, despite the “official” New Start warhead ceilings of 1550.

Why is this? Russia has multiple platforms on which to add ballistic missiles, in addition to mobile land-based missiles which are extremely difficult to verify under current New Start rules. On top of which, most Russian missiles each have large numbers of warheads, while two-thirds of US missiles have single warheads.

By contrast, as it comes to modernization, new US strategic nuclear deployments during 1996-2028 will be zero. The US won’t deploy a new nuclear armed strategic bomber or new land-based strategic missile until 2029, and in 2032 the first Columbia class submarine goes in the water. To be fair, during this period the US will have extended the service life of the aging MMIII ICBM and sustained both submarine and bomber legacy systems as well.

Most worrisome however is that the US upload or “hedge” capability might not be able to reach much beyond 3000 strategic range missile warheads, compared to a significantly greater Russian capability. On top of which, a US upload effort could take 3-4 years to implement and not be able to balance in a timely manner a Russian treaty breakout, (an example of one of the key flaws in the New Start treaty that the US administration is seeking to rectify). A purported freeze on such deployments in return for a treaty extension could temporarily resolve such a threat.

Thus, assertions by disarmament groups, echoed credulously by major media outlets, that US deployment of modernized nuclear capabilities, beginning in 2029, are now igniting an arms race are without foundation. The facts we have put together illustrate quite clearly that Russia will have already deployed by 2027 nearly thirty new types or classes of nuclear bombers, submarines, and missiles, before the US deploys a single upgraded nuclear delivery platform.

A simple extension of the New Start treaty as many analysts support would simply perpetuate these Russian advantages while also leaving unchecked Russian and Chinese nuclear systems not restricted by the treaty.

Unilateral US restraint has been suggested as an anecdote to aggressive Russian nuclear expansion. But as former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown wisely explained years ago, when it

comes to nuclear arms, when the US builds, so do the Russians. And when the US stops building, as we did at the end of the Cold War, Russia continues to build.

I must thank Kris Osborn, the founder of Warrior Maven and the defense editor at The National Interest, who has made this column possible.

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He is and has been a Guest Lecturer at the School of Advanced International Affairs at Johns Hopkins University, at the Institute of World Politics, at the University of Maryland, at the Joint Military Intelligence School, at the Naval Academy and at the National War College.

House CV-19 Pandemic Relief Bill: What's in Its \$2.2 Trillion?

- **State/local governments: ~\$437B.**
 - Small business grants: \$50B.
 - US Postal Service: \$15B.
 - **HHS: \$249B.**
 - CDC: \$13.7B.
 - NIH: \$4.7B.
- Asst. Sec. Preparedness & Response: \$21B. (Primarily BARDA).
 - **Hospitals: \$50B.**
 - **Testing & contact-tracing: \$75B.**
 - **Childcare grants: ~\$57B.**
 - **Schools: \$175B.**
 - **Universities: \$27B.**
 - Airports: \$13.5B.
 - Transit Emergency Relief: \$32B. (~\$29B grants).
 - **Emergency rental assistance: \$50B.**
- **SBA PPP: ~\$35B.** (At least 10% to businesses with fewer than 10 employees; and 30% to non-profits).
 - **Direct-deposit checks: ~\$3.4K/Family.**
- **Unemployment: \$600/week Federal benefit.** (September 6, 2020-January 31, 2021).
 - **Vaccines & therapeutics: \$27B.**
 - **Airlines: \$25B.**