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Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. Stephen W. Wilson visits Malmstrom

KHQ Right Now, 12 June 20 Meridith Depping

GREAT FALLS- Malmstrom Air Force Base was visited by Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. Stephen W. Wilson this week.

A release from Malmstrom says Wilson visited the base to learn more about their success in maintaining mission readiness and caring for Airmen and families during its COVID-19 crisis response.

Wilson prioritized an open discussion with Airmen regarding racial inequality in the Air Force, which included 21 Airmen ranging in rank from Airman 1st Class to Lt Col.

The Airmen shared their experiences with racism in the Airforce as well as their recommendations on what leaders can do to overcome the issues the release says.

Wilson also received a tour of the new Wing Operations Center, an update on the construction in support of the incoming MH-139 helicopters and a tour of a Missile Alert Facility.

Trump moves ahead with plan to cut troops

Military presence in Germany to drop

BY DAVID RISING ASSOCIATED PRESS BERLIN |

After more than a year of thinly veiled threats to start pulling U.S. troops out of Germany unless Berlin increases its defense spending, President Trump appears to be proceeding with a hardball approach, planning to cut the U.S. military contingent by more than 25%.

About 34,500 American troops are stationed in Germany — 50,000 including civilian Department of Defense employees — and the plan Mr. Trump reportedly signed off on last week envisions reducing active-duty personnel to 25,000 by September, with further cuts possible. But as details of the still-unannounced plan trickle out, there's growing concerns it will do more to harm the U.S.'s own global military readiness and the NATO alliance than punish Germany.

The decision was not discussed with Germany or other NATO members, and Congress was not officially informed — prompting a letter from 22 Republican members of the House Armed Services Committee urging a rethink. “The threats posed by Russia have not lessened, and we believe that signs of a weakened U.S. commitment to NATO will encourage further Russian aggression and opportunism,” Rep. Mac Thornberry of Texas wrote in a letter to Mr. Trump with his colleagues.

Sen. Jack Reed, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, slammed Mr. Trump's move as "another favor" to Russian President Vladimir Putin. But Richard Grenell, who resigned as U.S. ambassador to Germany two weeks ago, told Germany's Bild newspaper that "nobody should be surprised that Donald Trump is withdrawing troops." Mr. Grenell, who declined to comment for this article, said he and others had been pushing for Germany to increase its defense spending and had talked about troop withdrawals since last summer.

"Donald Trump was very clear we want to bring troops home," he said, adding: "there's still going to be 25,000 American troops in Germany." The suggestion that removing troops will punish Germany, however, overlooks the fact that American troops are no longer primarily there for the country's defense, said retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, who commanded U.S. Army Europe from 2014 until 2017.

Gone are the days when hundreds of thousands of American troops were ready to fight in the streets of Berlin or rush into the strategic Fulda Gap, through which Soviet armor was poised to push into West Germany during the Cold War. "The troops and capabilities that the U.S. has deployed in Europe are not there to specifically defend Germany, they are part of our contribution to overall collective stability and security in Europe," said Mr. Hodges, now a strategic expert with the Center for European Policy Analysis, a Washington-based institute.

American facilities include Ramstein Air Base, a critical hub for operations in the Mideast and Africa and headquarters to the U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Africa; the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, which has saved the lives of countless Americans wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan; and the Stuttgart headquarters of both the U.S. European Command and the U.S. Africa Command.

There's also the Wiesbaden headquarters of U.S. Army Europe, the Spangdahlem F-16 fighter base and the Grafenwoehr Training Area, NATO's largest training facility in Europe. Mr. Hodges said the facilities are a critical part of America's global military footprint. "What's lost in all this is the benefit to the United States of having forward deployed capabilities that we can use not only for deterrence ... but for employment elsewhere," he said. "The base in Ramstein is not there for the U.S. to defend Europe. It's there as a forward base for us to be able to fly into Africa, the Middle East."

319th Missile Squadron welcomes new commander

90th Missile Wing Public Affairs, June 15 | Glenn S. Robertson

F. E. WARREN AIR FORCE BASE, Wyo. -- Lieutenant Colonel Robert Mack took command of the 319th Missile Squadron during a change of command ceremony June 15, 2020 on F. E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming.

Prior to his current position, Mack was the Operations Officer for the 321st Missile Squadron here at F. E. Warren.

Lieutenant Colonel James Schlabach, outgoing 319 MS commander, will step into the role of 90th Operations Group Deputy Commander.

A change of command ceremony is a tradition that represents a formal transfer of authority and responsibility from the outgoing commander to the incoming commander.

Mack expressed his excitement to take the reins of the squadron and lead the Airmen Screamin' Eagles of the 319th.

“Our Airmen are our most cherished asset,” said Mack. “Without you, we cannot get the job done.”

Bunch reflects on first year in command, outlines AFMC future

By Marisa Alia-Novobilski, Air Force Materiel Command / Published June 12, 2020

When Gen. Arnold W. Bunch, Jr. [took command of the Air Force Materiel Command](#) on May 31, 2019, his first goal was to get “regrounded” in the diverse missions and responsibilities spread across the six center, 87,000 Airmen organization.

“When I came here, I thought I understood the command since I was part of it when it was started in 1992, and I spent most of my career in it. What I learned is that there is so much more that goes on that I needed to understand more deeply,” said Bunch.

During a year that has included an Air Force-wide focus on modernization, lethality and readiness through faster, more agile business processes, the ability of AFMC to successfully meet the needs of the National Defense Strategy was a major focus of Bunch’s first year as commander.

“Our Airmen play key role in every facet and aspect of what the Air Force is doing. Watching them execute missions this year has only reinforced how important AFMC is to the successful execution of the NDS and driving to the Air Force we need,” said Bunch.

Making “listening” an early priority, his first big action was to [launch the AFMC We Need initiative](#), an enterprise-wide effort that solicited feedback and recommendations from Airmen, both uniformed and non-uniformed, across the command to better posture the command for success in achieving the goals of the NDS now and in the decades to come. The effort, which yielded more than 88,000 inputs, continues to drive changes in processes, business practices, personnel management, training and more, leveraging innovative ideas and solutions from the ground up.

“Initially we had Airmen who weren’t really sure we were going to take actions with the AFMC We Need, and to many of them, my message was to ‘find out where no lives and squash it.’ As we’ve moved forward, we’re seeing some initial results of the effort begin to play out and have others in work,” said Bunch.

Some of these results include the implementation of the [AFMC Acculturation program](#) for new hires, standardization of newcomer on-boarding processes, a new supervisor development course and a command-wide [IdeaScale Campaign](#) to source innovative ideas for continued improvement to processes and practices across the mission set. A Commander’s Accelerated Initiatives Office was established under the AFMC deputy commander to continually source, track and implement changes.

“We continue to make sure we’re making the right investments and are implementing the right strategies to make sure we can get our mission done. We continue to mine for additional good ideas,” said Bunch.

These investments include efforts to improve information technology infrastructure as well as the modernization of facilities across the command footprint.

Among other big successes this year, Bunch mentioned is the progress on the rebuild of Tyndall Air Force Base in the wake of Hurricane Michael in 2018, mission testing of the [HH-60W Jolly Green II helicopter](#), advances in hypersonics, updates to female defender gear, the banner year for foreign military sales, and the reduction in cost per flying hour of the F-35.

He also lauded the command-wide effort to support requirements born out of the recent [coronavirus pandemic](#). In addition to the innovative work of research, program, test and sustainment teams to find ways to keep missions on track, Bunch specifically praised the work of the command teams on the [transport isolation system](#) for travel of COVID-19 positive patients and the efforts of the [Air Force Research Laboratory Epidemiology to test global COVID-19](#) samples in support of Department of Defense medical teams.

“We went from a statement of need to transport COVID-19 positive patients from in-theater on the back of a C-17 to capability cleared for use in just 3 weeks,” Bunch said.

Bunch also lauded the effort of the Air Force Sustainment Center [BEAR teams at Holloman Air Force Base](#) in establishing a second base for basic training needs, ensuring the Air Force would continue to have a supply of talent. Basic Expeditionary Airfield Resources (BEAR) Airmen can supply, train and build a fully operational airfield or base able to support up to 3,500 personnel and 75 aircraft within 22 days.

“Our teams received a request from AETC (Air Education and Training Command) for a BEAR base to train new recruits, and our Airmen had it set up and ready to go within 7 to 10 days. This was awesome work! Both of these initiatives brought together the collaborative efforts of our teams from across AFMC and the Air Force and demonstrates the power we bring to the fight,” said Bunch.

While Bunch’s first year was fruitful with mission success, he acknowledged the fact that there was still a lot to be done across the command.

“As we continue to work initiatives to push to the AFMC We Need, all of us need to help [create workplaces where diverse ideas](#) and individuals are treated with dignity, respect and fairness,” said Bunch. “It’s an issue I take very seriously, and we have to move out with tenacity and perseverance.” Additionally, he discussed the continued drive to implement the Air Force Vanguard under the [Science and Technology 2030 strategy](#). The strategy, finalized in April 2019, lays out a path forward for the Air Force Science and Technology ecosystem to deliver warfighting capabilities at the speed of relevance and necessity.

“We need to keep pushing forward on the implementation of the strategy and to stay focused on what the Air Force and Space Force need so we can be sure we’re meeting the priorities of our leaders across the services,” he said.

Bunch also discussed the recent launch of the [AFMC Digital Campaign](#), a coordinated effort to create an integrated digital ecosystem to support the rapid development, testing, fielding and maintenance of complex weapon systems. The effort aims to achieve a digital ecosystem that supports agility, flexibility and speed in delivery of Air Force current and future needs.

“This will have far reaching effects for our Air Force when we can get this implemented the right way,” said Bunch.

Though continued growth, change and innovation in AFMC mission execution will be a big part of Bunch’s second year in command, he reiterated that his number one priority was to continue the focus on what AFMC Airmen need to successfully execute the command’s diverse mission. Foremost, said Bunch, is ensuring Airmen have the correct foundation, training and development to be successful. This requires not only formal education and training, but it mandates that Airmen have the right tools, technology and modern facilities and IT infrastructure to execute mission. “Our facilities, restoration, sustainment and modernization accounts have been historically underfunded. We need to make sure the right investments are made to ensure we can support a modern, digital Air Force as we move forward,” said Bunch.

He also discussed manpower shortfalls and efforts to identify and prioritize manning needs across the command to ensure the AFMC has the breadth and depth of skilled talent to execute the command’s critical missions.

“Our Airmen are key to our mission, and they need to understand the importance of what they do for our nation,” he said.

Upon final reflection on his first year as AFMC commander, Bunch mentioned that the Airmen of AFMC are the foundation that the success of the command is built on, and the strong relationships the command maintains with community leaders across the U.S. play a vital role as well.

“I always knew community relations were important. What I learned this year is that without the great partnerships with our civic leaders, we cannot be successful. They help us to look at things from perspectives that we don’t always see as people in uniform,” he said.

As he enters the next phase of AFMC leadership, Bunch looks forward to the opportunities ahead. He embraces the privilege to lead the command as it provides the power behind the execution of the NDS for the Air Force and the nation.

“It’s my honor and privilege to get to work for all of the great Airmen across our command. Thank you for all that you do each day. I look forward to continuing to work with and for all of you,” he said.

Pompeo meets with Chinese counterpart as rancor rises

Washington Post, June 18, Pg. A15 | Carol Morello and John Hudson

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with China's foreign policy chief, Yang Jiechi, in Hawaii on Wednesday as the bitterly contentious relationship between their two countries plummets to its lowest point in almost half a century.

Beijing and Washington were tight-lipped about the meeting at Hickam Air Force Base, which is wedged between Pearl Harbor and Honolulu.

The two governments have sparred over several issues in recent months, including the origin of the novel coronavirus, mass protests promoting democracy in Hong Kong and denouncing racism in the United States, mutual accusations of lying, and the expulsion of journalists in both countries.

As if to underscore the gulf between them, U.S. and Chinese officials both told foreign diplomats that the other side requested the meeting in Hawaii.

The meeting of delegations led by Pompeo and Yang, a Politburo member considered the architect of China's foreign policy, reflects mounting concern about the tensions between the two economic and nuclear-armed superpowers. With Republicans and Democrats intensifying their criticism of China, the tensions are unlikely to lift no matter who wins the U.S. presidential election.

"The decline, the deterioration and the speed is faster than anyone's imagination," said Cheng Li, director of the China Center at the Brookings Institution. "There's no trust whatsoever, on both sides."

In a brief summary after the meeting that lasted almost seven hours, the State Department said Pompeo and Yang had an "exchange of views."

"The Secretary stressed important American interests and the need for fully-reciprocal dealings between the two nations across commercial, security, and diplomatic interactions," the statement said. "He also stressed the need for full transparency and information sharing to combat the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and prevent future outbreaks."

Pompeo has excoriated China repeatedly for its repression of human rights, journalists and Uighur Muslims. He has called the Chinese Communist Party "the central threat of our times" and a "fraud" that has purveyed "obscene propaganda" about anti-racism protests in the United States.

Chinese state-run media have in turn labeled Pompeo "evil," "insane" and "the enemy of humankind." After a prickly phone call with Pompeo, Yang told CGTN, China's state-run overseas broadcaster, that he objected to U.S. attempts to "slander and smear China's efforts" to contain the coronavirus.

Pompeo entered the meeting, his first with his Chinese counterpart since September, with the hope of resolving issues he has cited many times before. He wanted to extract more information from Beijing about the viral outbreak and to remind the government about its commitments to Hong Kong amid concerns it is trampling on the island's autonomy, a senior State Department official said before the session.

"We still do not have access to live virus samples, to facilities, to scientists" from Wuhan, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive bilateral relations.

In addition, Pompeo has wanted to persuade China to raise issues related to nuclear arms negotiations between the United States and Russia. Next week, Marshall Billingslea, the special presidential envoy for arms control, will meet with his Russian counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, to discuss regulating the world's two largest nuclear arsenals. The Trump administration is seeking a trilateral agreement, but China declined a U.S. invitation to the meeting.

"They are expected to double their nuclear arsenal completely unconstrained, with no transparency at all, over the next decade," the official said about China, explaining the administration's wish to include Beijing in a deal.

"Their behavior - cracking down on Hong Kong's freedoms, illegally seizing new territory in the South China Sea, igniting a border dispute with India, etcetera - all of this behavior makes it really concerning to us," the official said.

Another person familiar with the preparations said Pompeo also planned to raise issues related to Taiwan and Phase 1 of the U.S.-China trade agreement.

Fewer details are known about China's agenda, but Beijing is clearly alarmed at the bipartisan, belligerent attitude in Washington. Even President Trump, who used to call Chinese President Xi Jinping a "very, very good friend of mine," has taken to castigating China and its ruling Communist Party.

"The Chinese are worried about an accelerating downward spiral in the U.S.-China relationship, particularly in the run-up to the next election," said Bonnie Glaser, a China analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Trump and his Democratic rival, Joe Biden, "treat China as a punching bag. They want to put a floor under this deteriorating situation so they don't end up in such a negative place in November, which might make it difficult to have any kind of amicable relationship."

As one of the most vociferous hard-liners on China in the Trump administration, Pompeo would seem an unlikely candidate to mend fences between the two countries. Li, of Brookings, said the Chinese viewed the meeting as a "Nixon coming to China" moment, meaning the point where a leader suddenly reverses his previous views and acts as a bridge-builder.

The Chinese seem to reserve their greatest scorn for Pompeo but recognize he is secretary of state and Trump's closest adviser. But it is unclear whether Pompeo can put aside his harsh language and policies to avert a new Cold War.

"We're at a moment now where we can avoid that," said Benjamin H. Friedman, the policy director for Defense Priorities, a foreign policy think tank. "Some of the things we're doing ought to be avoided - needlessly taunting them or sanctioning them in ways that are not helpful is a mistake. At the same time, it's a good use of rhetoric to say things about the way they treat protesters in Hong Kong and the Uighurs.

"We'd like to strive for a limited, controlled rivalry with China and a businesslike relationship that acknowledges their sins. But the fact is, we're bound to deal with them in part because nuclear weapons block war."

US vows to curb China and Russia in space

Agence France-Presse, June 17 | Not Attributed

The United States wants to prevent China and Russia from taking control of space and will look to allies for help, according to a new "Defense Space Strategy" unveiled by the Pentagon on Wednesday.

The strategy document was the first since President Donald Trump announced the creation of the new Space Force military arm in December.

"China and Russia present the greatest strategic threat due to their development, testing and deployment of counterspace capabilities," it said.

"China and Russia each have weaponized space as a means to reduce US and allied military effectiveness and challenge our freedom of operation in space."

The strategy stressed that the US would strive to maintain superiority in space, in particular protecting GPS satellites on which the military as well as the emergency services, transport and even financial services depend.

But China and Russia are developing tools for jamming and cyberattacks that directly threaten US satellites, such as electromagnetic weapons and anti-satellite missiles, Stephen Kitay, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for space policy, told reporters.

China is investing billions of dollars in space and puts many satellites in orbit. In 2007, Beijing also successfully tested a surface-to-air missile strike against a satellite, according to the Pentagon.

In 2017, Russia launched into orbit what it described as an inspection satellite capable of diagnosing problems with a Russian satellite, Kitay said. But the satellite has not moved since its launch and is a worryingly short distance from an American satellite, he added.

Russia has also planned a test launch of its Angara heavy carrier rocket later this year and is pressing ahead with the development of its new intercontinental ballistic missile, the Sarmat.

In 2018, President Vladimir Putin boasted that the Sarmat was one of the new Russian weapons that could render NATO defenses obsolete.

"We are still ahead of them, but we are absolutely at risk with the pace that they are developing these capabilities," Kitay said. "And these are very serious threats."

The Pentagon's strategy document stressed that both China and Russia viewed access to outer space as essential to national and military strategy.

Both countries, according to the document, consider space important for modern warfare and the use of weapons in space as a significant means of reducing the military effectiveness of the US and its allies in future wars.

The document also put forth the possibility of a nuclear attack in space. Although the absence of atmosphere would prevent combustion, the detonation of a nuclear weapon would cause a powerful electromagnetic charge that would destroy the electric circuits of all satellites around it, Kitay said.

"That is a threat that we have to potentially be prepared for," he added.

The US, which is reviving its space exploration program, recently celebrated its first crewed spacecraft flight in nearly a decade, sending two astronauts to the International Space Station in a privately-built capsule.

The strategy document emphasized that the US would "promote burden-sharing with our allies and partners."

The United States' closest intelligence allies, the "Five Eyes" group (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Britain and the US), have been cooperating since 2014 within the Combined Space Operations initiative. France and Germany joined them in February.

Trump Administration Takes on the Chinese Communists

By: Rebecca Heinrichs , Senior fellow, Hudson Institute for Newsweek // On 6/17/20 at 8:30 AM EDT

Over the last few months, President Trump has unleashed the most intense round of U.S. actions against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in decades.

Throughout his first term, the president and his administration have been ramping up U.S. competition with China across multiple areas of the federal government. President Trump's personal rhetoric about China's leaders has been a mix of positive and negative, and the president himself has seemed primarily focused on achieving a new trade deal with China. But then, on May 19, when asked about the trade deal, [President Trump said](#), "I feel very differently now about that deal than I did three months ago...We'll see what happens."

China's negligence, lies and cover-ups regarding the COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in a new era of U.S.-China relations. Take U.S. reactions to the CCP's abuse of Hong Kong. On May 27, the State Department decertified that the CCP was granting Hong Kong sufficient autonomy to warrant Hong Kong special treatment and privileges. Two days later, President Trump revealed more consequences. The United States will review disclosures of Chinese companies listed in United States securities markets, eliminate policy exemptions that have been granted to Hong Kong, revise the travel advisory for Hong Kong and sanction officials involved in eroding Hong Kong's autonomy.

The United States [will also move](#) to protect American intellectual property by restricting researchers connected to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) from entering the United States. Appreciating China's emboldened posture, the Trump administration has been actively working to alter the dynamic with Taiwan and its global standing in an effort to prevent China from acting aggressively there.

In July 2019, President Trump authorized a military sale to Taiwan worth more than \$2 billion that included 108 M1A2T Abrams tanks and portable Stinger anti-aircraft missiles. Then the following month, President Trump authorized another military sales package to Taiwan worth more than \$8 billion, including 66 new F-16C/D fighter jets. Taiwan has wanted those fighter jets for years, but previous administrations demurred in the face of strong Chinese opposition.

Ads by scrollerads.comBut the Trump administration thinks the sales, meant to help deter what could result in a large-scale war, are worth the cost of irritating Beijing. On May 20, the State Department notified Congress of its [intent to sell](#) 18 MK-48 Torpedoes to Taiwan. And just a couple weeks ago, the U.S. Navy conducted yet another "Taiwan Strait Transit," its seventh of 2020. In April, when asked about two freedom of navigation operations in the Taiwan Strait, Lieutenant Anthony Junco, a spokesman for the U.S. Seventh Fleet, confirmed that the guided missile destroyer USS Barry transited the Strait. [He said](#),

"The ship's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. The U.S. Navy will continue to fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows." One of the best ways to prevent confrontation with China is to convince the CCP that the cost of acting more aggressively will be too high. Essential to this is preventing international isolation of Taiwan and strengthening Taiwan's reputation as a responsible, fair and reliable global actor.

On May 20, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Matthew Pottinger gave a video address, in Chinese, for Taiwan President Tsai's inauguration. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also praised her inauguration. Senior U.S. officials praising her and celebrating her inauguration has significant diplomatic impact. Recent months also brought about a flurry of activity to crack down on CCP telecommunications. President Trump signed an executive order on April 4,

"Establishing the Committee for the Assessment of Foreign Participation in the U.S. Telecom Services Sector," and then five days later, the new committee recommended the FCC revoke China Telecom's U.S. operating license. A few weeks later, on April 22, citing national security risks, the [FCC issued](#) "show cause" orders to state-operated China Telecom, China Unicom, Pacific Networks and ComNet, giving each 30 days to justify why the FCC should not revoke their U.S. licenses to operate.

On May 15, the Commerce and State Departments revealed that Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company [announced](#) a \$12 billion investment in an advanced semiconductor fabrication facility in Arizona. The same day, the Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security moved to revise its foreign-produced direct product rule, as well as cracking down on telecom giant [Huawei](#).

And there is reason to believe more is coming. Last month, the White House released its "Strategic Approach to China." It is a [remarkable document](#) worth reading in its entirety. It outlines the ideology that motivates the CCP, connecting its domestic behavior with its behavior towards and against other nations. It says, in part: The CCP's campaign to compel ideological conformity does not stop at China's borders.

In recent years, Beijing has intervened in sovereign nations' internal affairs to engineer consent for its policies. [Chinese] authorities have attempted to extend CCP influence over discourse and behavior around the world, with recent examples including companies and sports teams in the United States and the United Kingdom, and politicians in Australia and Europe. Highlighting the regime's abuses of its people to force ideological conformity is key to understanding the nature of the CCP.

Congress recently sent the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 to President Trump's desk. The bill condemns the CCP for the prison camps and gross abuses against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities. It passed with an overwhelming bipartisan House vote of 413-1. Taken alongside the Trump administration's right and public [memorializing](#) of the Tiananmen Square protest, President Trump's signing of the Uyghur bill will send a clear message that the United States is not intimidated, and will not look the other way in the face of CCP abuses of the people inside and outside its borders. There will be consequences for overstepping.

Rebecca Heinrichs is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

1980s: Hill AFB's role as the Logistics System Program Manager for all Air Force ICBMs

Editor's note: This feature is part of a Hill Air Force Base 80th anniversary series. These articles will feature the base's historical innovations and achievements, and will highlight mission platforms that have been operated and supported throughout the decades.

HILL AIR FORCE BASE, Utah -- As Hill AFB entered its fifth decade in 1980, the Ogden Air Logistics Center remained the Logistics System Program Manager for the Air Force's entire Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) deterrent force. The ICBM weapon systems then managed by the Ogden ALC included the LGM-25 Titan II, LGM-30 Minuteman II and III, LGM-118A Peacekeeper, and XMGX-134A Small ICBM.

During the early 1980s, the Ogden ALC's organizational structure consisted of multiple directorates. The Directorate of Materiel Management fulfilled the Ogden ALC's system and item management responsibilities. This directorate was divided into eight divisions, including the Missiles Systems Management Division. While the five branches in this division (Minuteman and Emergency Rocket Communications System Management, Production Management, Engineering and Reliability, Titan System Management, and Materiel Support) played key roles in managing the ICBM systems, a number of other Ogden ALC organizations also contributed to the effort. The Directorate of Maintenance provided essential depot maintenance and modifications, the Directorate of Contracting and Manufacturing accomplished contracts for material and repair support of the systems, and the Directorate of Distribution fulfilled the essential transportation and storage responsibilities for the ICBMs and their supporting equipment and supplies.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan asked Congress to give "prompt action" to modernizing the nation's ICBM Force. Following three incidents that occurred in Titan II ICBM silos between August 1978 and September 1980, which resulted in the death of one Airman and injury of several others, modernization of the ICBM fleet became a top priority. One result was the deactivation of the Titan II system as its replacement, the LGM-118A (first called the MX and then Peacekeeper), came online.

Rising costs were only one of the considerations in the decision to retire the Titan. Another problem impacting the decision was storage of the volatile liquid propellants used in the two-stage missile. The Titan II used aerzine 50 (fuel) and nitrogen tetroxide (oxidizer), which were stored in the missile itself. They were hypergolic propellants, (spontaneous ignition on contact), therefore, highly explosive and extremely toxic and corrosive. Obviously, safety was a major concern in keeping the missiles operational. The Ogden ALC's Missiles Systems Management Division played a key role in managing the deactivation of the Titan II system and activation of the Peacekeeper system during the 1980s.

The ICBM Modernization Program of the 1980s also ensured that the Minuteman missile force would remain operational well beyond its initial design life goal of ten years. Already in the 1980s that time had been substantially exceeded by Minuteman II, which became operational in 1965, and Minuteman III, which began deployment in 1970. Ogden ALC played an instrumental role in developing a long-range plan that assessed and recommended actions to be taken in a systematic, timely, and cost-effective manner that would meet modernization program needs.

The many modernization efforts led by the Ogden ALC included such projects, amongst many others, as the remanufacture of Minuteman II and III motors (which involved removing and replacing the old propellant, liners, and insulation of the motors), an accuracy reliability investigation on both Minuteman II and III, development of a Diagnostic Data Package Hardware for use in providing reentry data for Minuteman II flights, completion of

a Missile Guidance Electronics Investigation, and an Accuracy, Reliability, Supportability Improvement Program for Minuteman III. These few examples demonstrate the breadth of responsibility for ICBM systems the Ogden ALC managed.

One facility that enabled much of the missile diagnostic work to take place on Hill AFB was the Hill Engineering Test Facility (now called the Strategic Missile Integration Complex, or SMIC). Originally build in 1965 to support the LGM-30B Minuteman I system, the \$12.5 million facility was the first and only complete system engineering test facility for an operational missile in the USAF inventory. A couple of years after its initial construction, the facility added a \$16.5 million Minuteman II upgrade to increase the reliability and operational effectiveness of the Minuteman II missile. At that time the facility consisted of an operational launch silo, above-ground launch control facility, instrumentation complex, and guidance test stations. The facility received several upgrades and additions during the 1970s.

During the 1980s, the Hill Engineering Test Facility made possible many modernization projects, which included Minuteman III "B" System Upgrade Brine Chiller modification tests (1983), installation and checkout of a Minuteman Hardened Intersite Cable upgrade (1984), testing of the Improved Minuteman Physical Security System (1985), and operational test and evaluation of the Strategic Air Command Digital Information Network (1986). During the late 1980s, the Hill Engineering and Test Facility again received an important addition. In 1989, the Peacekeeper ICBM test facility became operational.

Hill AFB has played a central role in managing and supporting the nation's ICBM systems for the past 60 years. Throughout these decades, and especially during the 1980s, Hill AFB provided crucial support to the nation's strategic deterrence capabilities - just as it continues to do at the present time.

News & Opinion

Revelations About Russia's Nuclear Deterrence Policy

WarOnTheRocks.com, June 19 | Cynthia Roberts

On June 2, the Kremlin published an unprecedented six-page document entitled Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Sphere of Nuclear Deterrence. Although this statement of Russia's official position on nuclear deterrence policy does not overturn current military doctrine, it is notable for identifying the range of threats that Russia seeks to deter with its nuclear forces, clarifying Russia's approach to nuclear deterrence, and articulating the conditions under which Moscow might escalate to the use of nuclear weapons. Given Russia's nuclear stockpile of approximately 4,310 warheads and the deteriorating relations between Moscow and the West, such issues are vital to global peace and security.

The set of public statements, or declaratory policy, on nuclear deterrence matters — especially for American analysts — because it gives insight into how the role of Russian nuclear weapons has evolved over time in response to technological innovation, international challenges to the security of Russia's nuclear deterrent policy, and internal debates in Moscow over the details of military policy and how best to ensure a credible nuclear deterrent posture. Despite sharing some similarities with the deterrence policies of the United States — such as maintaining a nuclear triad to address threats to the survivability of land-based forces and considering limited nuclear options to deter further escalation or de-escalate a conflict — important elements of Russia's approach to nuclear deterrence are unique.

Analysts should read Principles of State Policy extremely carefully and with a Russian lens. Importantly, Russia experts should appreciate that Moscow is animated by a persistent fear that Washington seeks to neutralize Russia's strategic deterrent. As a result, the military is fixated on preemption to prevent a disabling first strike, even as the political leadership has traditionally resisted pre-delegating nuclear authority. The document also shows that Russian nuclear doctrine has focused more on ensuring deterrence and less on nuclear coercion for aggressive aims.

American Views on Russian Nuclear Policy

American strategists need to understand how the contents of Principles of State Policy fit into the larger body of evidence about Russia's nuclear decision calculus. As a start, the new document indirectly addresses Western concerns that Russian strategy embraces limited nuclear employment in future regional conflicts to signal its resolve and “compel an end to a conventional conflict” that Russia starts. In other words, Moscow would seek to “escalate to de-escalate” “a conflict on terms favorable to Russia.”

U.S. policymakers mistakenly consider this de-escalation concept in primarily coercive terms by which Russia lowers the nuclear threshold to consolidate battlefield success. Then, they elevate this interpretation into an ominous component of Russian military doctrine that must be countered, as reflected in the 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review and other official statements. In fact, “escalate to de-escalate” and other concepts for controlling escalation have been discussed for decades in Russian military journals. However, the phrase appears nowhere in official Russian doctrine. Though Principles is consistent with the Russian preference to leverage the risk and uncertainty of potential nuclear escalation to enhance its deterrence of adversaries, it avoids language that would reinforce U.S. misconceptions.

Experts have speculated about a classified document with almost the exact same title, “Principles of State Policy in the Sphere of Nuclear Deterrence Until 2020,” that was approved by then President Dmitry Medvedev in Feb. 2010 on the same day the military doctrine was issued. That document, unlike either the 2020 Principles or official Russian government doctrine from both 2010 and 2014, reportedly contained references to nuclear preemption. The latest version of official Russian military doctrine, which was released in 2014, states that

The Russian Federation reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction against it and/or its allies, as well as in the event of aggression against the Russian Federation with the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is threatened.

One reason for speculation that the secret doctrine was different from the published text was the 2010 debate on the subject within the Russian leadership. Preemption advocates like Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of the Russian security council, and Gen. Yuri Baluevsky, a former chief of the general staff, saw preemption as a way to counter the threat of America’s conventional prompt global strike capabilities. Detractors, including Col. Gen. Viktor Esin, a former chief of staff of the Strategic Rocket Forces, didn’t see preemption as credible in that role. A decade ago, Russian opponents of preemption apparently won the battle over the 2010 official doctrine. Nevertheless, it remains unclear what was in the secret variant and whether there is a secret version of the new Principles document.

Troublesome incremental changes in Russian nuclear declaratory policy continued to appear, notably in the 2017 naval doctrine, which contends that “demonstrating the willingness and determination to employ force, including non-strategic nuclear weapons” strengthens deterrence in conditions of an escalating military conflict. In 2014 during the Ukraine conflict, President Vladimir Putin and other officials reinvigorated the public discussion on nuclear operational policy and simultaneously launched a nuclear saber rattling campaign to signal Russian national interests while preserving ambiguity about how far their actions would go. Putin again underlined the threat posed by a disarming strike that uses non-nuclear, high-precision weapons against key sites of Russia’s military infrastructure, telling a meeting of the Valdai Club in 2015 that such weapons are “comparable in their effect to nuclear weapons.”

Principles enumerates similar dangers that drive Russia’s need for a nuclear deterrent — none of which are surprising or new. Besides global strike capabilities, the document lists the possession and proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, the deployment of missile defenses, cruise missiles, hypersonic weapons, directed energy weapons, combat drones, and other nuclear-capable systems near Russia, including U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe that are part of NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements.

In Clause 10, Principles also essentially reiterates the language of the 2014 military doctrine, stating that nuclear deterrence is ensured when Russian nuclear weapons, support forces and facilities, as well as command and control systems are maintained at a level of readiness that “guarantees the infliction of unacceptable damage on an aggressor in whatever situation.” Thus, there is no downshifting to a less demanding requirement, such as assured retaliation, for strategic nuclear forces.

What’s New in Russian Nuclear Strategy?

What is new and most striking in Russian nuclear strategy is how Principles handles the possible employment of nuclear weapons if deterrence fails. Section III on “Conditions under which the Russian Federation Transitions to the Use of Nuclear Weapons,” especially Clause 19, specifies four conditions that could lead to nuclear use. The first such condition is the possession of reliable information about the launch of ballistic missiles to attack Russian territory and/or its allies. This situation opens the possibility for Moscow to launch Russian nuclear weapons on warning of a nuclear attack instead of delaying retaliatory action until confirmation that targets are destroyed or alternatively launching while an attack is underway. Developed during the Cold War, the “launch on warning” option was considered by both sides as a means to strengthen nuclear deterrence by helping to guarantee retaliation. But, if adopted, launch on warning is also associated with the significant risk of false warning alerts and an accidental launch. The second condition is the use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction by an adversary against Russian territory and/or its allies. Next, the third condition has to do with actions taken against Russian critical government or military installations by an adversary that would have the effect of disrupting Russia’s capacity for nuclear retaliation. Finally, the fourth condition in which Russia could employ nuclear weapons is in the event of aggression against Russia using conventional weapons that threaten the very existence of the state.

Putin and other officials have hinted at launch on warning, but such statements have not previously appeared in official documents. Even then, it is unclear whether the leadership really means launch on warning or the current posture of launch while under attack, supported by the semi-automatic Perimeter system. This system reportedly involves a degree of pre-delegation of authority to ensure that decapitation does not prevent retaliation. The third subclause of Principles’ Clause 19 is also noteworthy as it raises concerns about threats to the nuclear enterprise that are not specified but likely include cyber attacks against command and control infrastructure and/or attempted leadership decapitation.

It’s possible that the debate over a launch on warning and preemptive strikes is not resolved by the new document. It’s also possible that Moscow is concerned about potential U.S. missile deployments in Europe. With the termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, Col. Gen. Esin predicted that the United States would return ground-based nuclear missiles to Europe and, because of such missiles’ short flight time to Russian targets of about six minutes, Moscow would “abandon the doctrine of retaliatory strike by ‘launch under attack’ [otvetno-vstrechnyy udar] and move to the ‘doctrine of preemptive strike’ [uprezhdayushchiy udar].” It is curious that Principles only specifies launch on warning for ballistic missile attacks. Is this phrasing intended to fuel Western opposition against the return of Pershing II or similar intermediate-range ballistic missiles to Europe, or is it related to Russia’s geography problem that constrains warning time when U.S. submarine-launched ballistic missiles are launched from the Atlantic Ocean or closer to Russia?

In 2019, the United States tested both a ground-launched, intermediate-range cruise missile and ballistic missile, and dismissed Putin’s proposed freeze on missile deployments (preserving about 100 of Russia’s non-INF Treaty compliant SSC-8/Novator 9M729 ground-launched cruise missiles). However, the United States disavows intentions to return nuclear intermediate-range missiles to Europe. Both sides are also developing conventional and nuclear prompt global attack capabilities, including hypersonic weapons that similarly raise concerns about crisis stability given their greater maneuverability to change direction and avoid defenses. Some experts worry that such weapons may lead states fearing a nuclear attack in a crisis to respond promptly on warning — or even preemptively.

Principles also mentions the role of “uncertainty” in deterrence, which — at one level — is evidently a factor underlying Putin’s nuclear threats. With respect to uncertainty in ensuring a survivable second-strike capability and nuclear command, control, and communications, both Soviet history and U.S. experience are again instructive. Although it invested in a more survivable triad, Washington has faced the vulnerability of its land-based forces

and, like Moscow, seeks to maintain a resilient nuclear command, control, and communications system despite myriad challenges, including some from new Russian and Chinese anti-satellite weapons. American policymakers historically debated a launch on warning posture — especially for U.S. ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles — yet resolved, according to a Reagan administration nuclear employment policy directive, not to irrevocably rely on a launch on warning posture but to “leave Soviet planners with strong uncertainty as to how we might actually respond to such warning.”

From the standpoint of national policy, Principles, which was issued by presidential decree (ukaz), is a reminder that Putin is the most actively engaged Russian leader on nuclear weapons since Nikita Khrushchev. Putin is far more successful than Khrushchev in rebuilding Russian military and nuclear capabilities without breaking the economy or losing power while also perhaps the most nuclear attentive current leader of any contemporary nuclear weapons state. Principles reminds us that, like the American president, the Russian president has the responsibility to decide the use of nuclear weapons. Putin is unusually blunt in signaling Russia’s willingness to exploit its nuclear strength and declares the active deterrent relevance of nuclear weapons such as in the event that the United States or NATO attempt to use force to reverse Russia’s annexation of Crimea. This coercive form of nuclear signaling reflects the Russian emphasis on deterring major powers by means of intimidation and the punishing use of Russian nuclear forces.

Russian Nuclear Forces

Putin has presided over Russia’s most extensive and costly nuclear modernization program since the Cold War, which has led to the development of six new nuclear systems designed to ensure a robust deterrent and capabilities for multiple contingencies. Russia’s exotic new systems — especially the Avangard nuclear-armed hypersonic glide vehicle that will sit atop an intercontinental ballistic missile and the multi-megaton Poseidon, a nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed torpedo with transoceanic range — while not necessarily designed to achieve greater destruction than the current arsenal, are not counted under New START Treaty limits but vividly challenge assertions of U.S. nuclear primacy. They give credence not only to deterrence but also to Putin’s demands to “listen to us now” and take Russian interests seriously. For reassurance, which reflects the other side of the coin that nuclear war is best avoided, Putin embraces the reality of mutual assured destruction, and disavows that Russia would attempt all-out preventive nuclear strikes — but hasn’t ruled out more limited preemptive strikes.

What about a potential Russian fait accompli operation against a U.S. ally or partner that Moscow could terminate with the limited use of low-yield nuclear weapons in accordance with the so-called “escalate to de-escalate” concept? Current and former Western officials infer aggressive intentions from increased Russian deployments of tactical and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, including the SSC-8, from Russia’s aggression towards Ukraine, and from their own confirmation bias in reading Russian military statements about nuclear use for de-escalation. Indeed, the 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review asserts that “Russia has demonstrated its willingness to use force to alter the map of Europe and impose its will on its neighbors, backed by implicit and explicit nuclear first-use threats.” American conflict scenarios start with Russian aggression and shift to the Russian first use of nuclear weapons in either demonstration or small strikes to coerce NATO to abandon allies.

Given Russia’s large and growing stockpile of non-strategic nuclear weapons, providing credible response options to deter limited nuclear attacks is a prudent measure. One such response option involves modifying some W76 Trident II warheads to include survivable low-yield W76-2 warheads on U.S. nuclear ballistic missile submarines. These modifications, which do not increase the total U.S. nuclear stockpile, strengthen the package of

available limited nuclear options to demonstrate U.S. credibility and will to respond to even limited Russian nuclear first use, helping ensure that attempted Russian aggression will fail.

On the other hand, U.S. statements and analyses about Russian writings on escalation are frequently problematic or incorrect, relying on quotations out of context or Russian military debates about proposed changes to doctrine. Of course, Russians do not write about how they will seize the Baltic states and lob a few nuclear missiles at NATO allies to convince them to abandon the fight; at the same time, there is no expectation embedded in Russia's strategy that they can escalate their way out of failed conventional aggression, as U.S. officials frequently allege. Rather, a willingness to escalate is deemed essential for deterrence by providing a means to impose costs, increasing the risk of what comes next, or denying the opponent his objective. The deterrent logic of resorting to escalation with the limited use of nuclear weapons could be to compel the United States and its allies to back down when Russian critical assets are under aerospace attack, as noted in Clause 19. Other than demonstrating a readiness and resolve for deterrence, official Russian doctrine does not specify how Moscow might employ its non-strategic nuclear weapons.

With this detail in mind, Western readers should resist misinterpreting Clause 4 in Section I about "General Principles," which states that, besides deterring aggression against Russia, the objective "in the event of a military conflict" is to "prevent the escalation of military actions and end them under conditions acceptable" to Russia and/or its allies. In previous official statements, the standard formulation was to end conflict on "favorable" terms; now, it expects only "acceptable" conditions. Perhaps this change is another signal that Russian doctrine should not be erroneously characterized as "escalate to win." Principles goes on to underscore the defensive nature of nuclear deterrence, the aim for sufficiency in force requirements, and that Russia considers nuclear weapons solely as a deterrent — the use of which would constitute an extreme and necessary measure.

This interpretation is not to deny that Russian planners probably have secret nuclear weapons employment guidance that specifies a range of possible options for integrating conventional and nuclear forces in support of global or regional objectives. However, Principles is not that document. Instead, it outlines Russian ideas about deterrence and only hints at deterrence/employment trade-offs.

Consider the Audience and the Context

Principles of State Policy Nuclear Deterrence is clearly aimed at multiple audiences. The Kremlin seeks to signal its updated declaratory policy to domestic stakeholders — like the Russian military and defense community, as well as diplomats dealing with security and arms control. Moreover, the document is meant to shape opinion among international opponents and potential partners.

Nevertheless, it will not resolve all the debates about Russian nuclear policy. The document's timing follows Washington's termination of the INF Treaty after Moscow refused to come back into compliance. It is probably no accident that Principles emerged while the U.S. is engaged in its own nuclear modernization program. Russians perceive further U.S. improvements to strategic forces, both conventional and nuclear, as part of a continuous effort to stalk Russia's nuclear deterrent and deny Moscow a viable second-strike option.

Another reason that Principles should be read through a Russian lens involves Russia's long preoccupation with forestalling the risk of potentially fatal first blows — from preempting its adversaries in 1914, which led to disaster and defeat in World War I, to the opposite decision in 1941, when Stalin rebuffed the General Staff for advocating a preemptive attack against the German army massing on the border. The German invasion led to catastrophe

and near defeat for Russia before its arduous and costly victory in World War II. From this experience, the Russian military learned not to cede the initiative or wait to act until the enemy lands its devastating first blows but, instead, to anticipate and when feasible preempt the enemy. This lesson is arguably not the right one for either the circumstances in 1941 or the nuclear age. Even if it's only a coincidence that Principles emerged at the beginning of June, in between the 75th anniversary of Russia's victory in the Great Patriotic War, which was rescheduled because of the novel coronavirus pandemic, and the remembrance of the German attack on June 22, it should be remembered that Russia's attention to preemption — both as an opportunity and a threat as from a surprise nuclear strike — has strong historical roots.

Looking Ahead

Debate over Russian nuclear intentions will not end with the publication of Russia's new statement about its deterrence policy — nor should it since both the United States and Russia consider the nuclear deterrence mission as the bedrock of their national security. Nevertheless, U.S. policymakers and analysts should read Russian statements and publications more carefully to avoid succumbing to confirmation bias. A better understanding of Russian intentions and perspectives would help advance critical analyses of the nuclear policy challenges facing the United States and its allies.

It's doubtful that Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Sphere of Nuclear Deterrence will impact the current stalemate in nuclear arms control, although that may be one of its motivations. The document mentions that Russia's principles for nuclear deterrence are in compliance with arms control obligations and universally recognized norms of international law. However, there is little in Principles that will likely energize the Trump administration to negotiate an extension of the New START Treaty or settle on a concrete plan to build on it.

What this new document could do is structure future strategic stability talks, which Moscow and Washington agreed to resume in May. Given misconceptions about doctrines, policy directives, and intentions, there is an advantage in seeking improved explanations and airing disagreements, especially in the nuclear realm where miscalculations can have catastrophic consequences.

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Russia's new strategy for nuclear war

The Strategist (The Australian Strategic Policy Institute), June 19 | Paul Dibb

Russia has published an official executive order (ukaz) titled 'Basic principles of state policy of the Russian Federation on nuclear deterrence'.

It entered into force on 2 June when it was signed by President Vladimir Putin. This is the first time in the almost 30-year history of the Russian Federation that an explanation of Russia's nuclear warfighting policy has been made public.

The relatively short, six-page document sets out a series of blunt messages designed to impress on its potential enemies just where Russia stands. While it considers nuclear weapons 'exclusively as a means of deterrence' and characterises their use as 'an extreme and compelled measure', this official declaration sets out in some detail the conditions that could trigger nuclear conflict.

The clear messages are ‘the inevitability of retaliation’ in the event of nuclear attack on Russia and that Russia intends to maintain forces capable of inflicting ‘guaranteed unacceptable damage’ on a potential adversary. Precisely what such unacceptable damage might involve is not spelled out, but in the Cold War it implied that the enemy would cease to exist as a modern functioning society.

The main military risks that might evolve into direct military threats to Russia are identified as:

- build-up by a potential adversary of conventional forces that possess nuclear weapons in the territories of states contiguous with Russia and its allies, as well as in adjacent waters
- deployment, by states that consider Russia as a potential adversary, of missile defence systems, medium- and short-range cruise and ballistic missiles, non-nuclear high-precision and hypersonic weapons, strike unmanned aerial vehicles, and directed-energy weapons
- development and deployment of missile defence assets and strike systems in outer space
- possession by states of nuclear weapons or other types of weapons of mass destruction that can be used against Russia and its allies, as well as means of delivery of such weapons
- uncontrolled proliferation of nuclear weapons, their delivery means, and technology and equipment for their manufacture
- deployment of nuclear weapons and their delivery means in the territories of non-nuclear-weapon states.

Most importantly, this document sets out publicly for the first time the situations in which Russia would contemplate using nuclear weapons as follows:

- arrival of reliable data on a launch of ballistic missiles attacking the territory of Russia and/or its allies (i.e. a launch on warning)
- use of nuclear weapons or other types of weapons of mass destruction by an adversary against Russia and/or its allies
- attack by an adversary against critical government or military sites of Russia, disruption of which would undermine nuclear force response actions (i.e. a so-called decapitation strike against the political and military leadership)
- aggression against Russia with the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is in jeopardy.

The executive order also notes that the decision to use nuclear weapons is taken by the president of Russia, who might, if necessary, inform the leadership of other states and international organisations about Russia’s readiness to use nuclear weapons or about the decision taken to use nuclear weapons, as well as about the fact that nuclear weapons have been used.

This Russian statement presents welcome areas of clarification. But some of them are distinctly worrying: especially the clause that confirms Russia's declaratory nuclear doctrine is one of launch on warning. This has always been recognised as a very risky concept because it is crucially dependent upon early warning systems not malfunctioning, which might not be a dependable basis on which to go to nuclear war.

Nuclear attack indicators are likely to face even shorter warning times in the future with the deployment of hypersonic manoeuvrable glide vehicles, as well as such devices as directed-energy weapons. Strategic warning is already being complicated by the deployment by the US of prompt global strike ballistic missiles with conventional warheads, which makes the task of differentiating between conventional and nuclear armed intercontinental ballistic missiles in a crisis practically impossible.

The other issue of concern surrounds Russia's declaratory policy that it will consider using nuclear weapons against a conventional attack 'when the very existence of the state is in jeopardy'. This is the so-called escalate to de-escalate element of Russian nuclear strategy involving the threatened use of tactical nuclear weapons against an overwhelming NATO conventional attack. This, of course, is the mirror image of NATO's own Cold War nuclear policy of deterring an overwhelming Russian conventional attack on Europe. An interesting question here is what constitutes Russian territory, given Putin's attitudes to what he terms 'the near abroad'—the territories of former Soviet republics, such as the Baltic countries, where there are large numbers of Russian citizens.

It is probably not a coincidence that the release by Moscow of this unprecedented public document about Russia's nuclear deterrence policy and its war-fighting implications comes at a time of the complete breakdown in talks between the US and Russia about nuclear arms control and verification. Both sides have stopped talking to each other about this central issue to global nuclear security. By comparison, in the Cold War, crucial nuclear arms control treaties were signed and resulted in agreed verification and inspection measures that were quite intrusive.

Now, such important arms control treaties as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, and the Treaty on Open Skies have all been terminated by the US, in 2002, 2002 and 2002, respectively. In addition, New START, the treaty between the US and Russia that limits each side to 1,500 deployed nuclear warheads (although both have total deployed and non-deployed nuclear warheads in excess of 6,000 each), is due for extension early next year.

Washington is insisting that China be included in any such strategic nuclear treaty, but China has resolutely refused. The bets are that New START also will be terminated, especially if President Donald Trump is re-elected. That would herald the way to a full-blown strategic nuclear arms race.

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Strengthening Arms Control Through Multilateralism, and Multilateralism Through Arms Control

Royal United Services Institute (UK), June 18 | Tomáš Petříček

The forthcoming Monday meeting in Vienna between US Special Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov should herald the start of a new arms control process, and every small step counts.

Even in these trying times, it is imperative not to lose sight of the many other global challenges we face. The coronavirus pandemic put to the test not only our bodies' immunity and the effectiveness of our health care systems, but also the ways in which international relations have been, by and large, conducted for decades. The health crisis exacerbates inward political tendencies rather than openness, and ruthless geopolitical competition over cooperation and peace.

Such trends must be kept in check not only by the better angels of our nature, but also by strong common institutions of international society that together with rules and practices embody what we call 'multilateralism'.

THE DISTRESS SIGNALS

Arms control is one such challenge that needs to be addressed multilaterally. To devise effective multilateral arms control in order to check a deterioration in global security now seems to matter even more than before the coronavirus outbreak.

The arms control architecture – the legacy of realist cooperative practices during the Cold War – is crumbling while nuclear powers modernise their arsenals, exacerbating security dilemmas and increasing the risks of crises spiralling out of control. Deterrence strategies alone cannot deliver much needed strategic stability in the world, where security concerns are increasingly intertwined, new disruptive technologies emerge and multilateralism is challenged.

Our quintessential arms control treaties have been terminated, and those remaining have been reduced to the status of endangered species. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), abandoned last summer following years of Russia's non-compliance, is one victim of this process. Like many other arms control agreements, it was negotiated under strenuous political conditions and served since then to stabilise superpower relations to the benefit of European security, through the prohibition of an entire class of escalatory weapon systems. It is now gone.

The Open Skies Treaty has been another pillar of European security and a useful means for monitoring military activities to avoid miscalculation and overreaction. It was also important for people-to-people contacts through cooperative overflights – more than 1,500 to date – at the time of rising geopolitical tensions. It too, sadly, is now a thing of the past.

The prospects for the survival of New START continue to be dire, and the likelihood that a better, more inclusive agreement is negotiated before it expires is close to nil. And all this is taking place as the spectre of proliferation looms ever-larger over the Middle East, arms races loom elsewhere, and longstanding divisions over the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – the backbone of our non-proliferation regime – are no closer to being bridged as we marked the 50th anniversary of the treaty's conclusion earlier this year.

THE RESCUE: SLOWLY, BUT GLOBALLY

What is the way out? With the demise of the INF in particular, a nuclear war in Europe suddenly becomes a more realistic prospect. The dictum that a nuclear war cannot be won once retaliatory forces are in place, formulated by Bernard Brodie on the eve of the atomic age, seems to be losing

currency by the day. NATO, its cohesion already tested, may witness an increased threat of strategic decoupling and be condemned to live through difficult debates on how to credibly respond to Russia's military pressure in the absence of an effective arms control regime.

Yet the crisis of arms control is a global one, and any solution must be global in scope. New ideas about effective arms control instruments must be explored given contemporary trends such as: continuing great power competition; the horizontal proliferation (and actual expanded use) of missile systems; and the emergence of new and potentially disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence.

But first, all efforts – now to be relaunched through an upcoming meeting in Vienna on 22 June – should be made by the US and Russia to agree on extending the most conventional yet effective arms control arrangement. That is, the New START, the only remaining agreement that limits the two superpowers' nuclear arsenal. If breathing space is gained, it should then be used for devising creative – albeit informal at first – arms control architectures or environments that would incorporate new actors. Non-nuclear states should be involved, since they share responsibility for disarmament, as should global civil society that can provide increasingly important means of societal verification. China's participation is ultimately a must; its arsenal being an important reason why the INF Treaty had become obsolete (in addition to Moscow's noncompliance), and Beijing's hitherto notorious reticence to engage in transparency measures must also be dispelled.

The building blocks of this new framework should be as follows. First, start with political declarations, including on doctrine or moratoria – although not necessarily of the kind recently submitted by Moscow to NATO, which cavalierly ignored earlier deployments. Discussions in forums such as the P5 permanent members of the UN Security Council working group on doctrine are certainly a useful starting point as they can provide some clarity regarding the overall strategic balance, leading to a reduction of undesirable ambiguity and therefore risk.

Second, the framework should include enhanced confidence-building measures (CBMs) that can have binding power even if not formalised or enshrined in operational treaties – to wit, the informal but strong international norm against nuclear testing – as this should clearly include 'soft' norms propagated in frameworks, such as the Hague Code of Conduct, an international mechanism established in 2002 to control the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The latter is a good example of a previously multilateralised CBM that could further benefit from the inclusion of China or key Middle Eastern regional stakeholders, as much as from an extension to cover cruise missiles capable of carrying WMDs.

Third, the CBMs could be followed by reduction-cum-freeze arrangements, coordinated arms control talks in parallel bilateral 'chess games', or discussions over innovative and robust tracing and verification measures that would incorporate the technology production chains and include cooperative mechanisms, contributing on their own to the much needed confidence building.

Such verification procedures, together with an international regime with broad participation including non-nuclear states and NGOs, may overcome the effective reciprocity issues (including cheating at margins) by mitigating sanctioning problems. Developing a sound pay-off structure, to follow the now classic scholarship on international cooperation by Robert Keohane and Robert Axelrod, is another sine qua non condition, which will require both political and economic issue linkages and delinking the process from other outstanding controversies, as exemplified by Mikhail Gorbachev during the INF negotiations.

An initial limited bargain, paving the ground for a slow restoration of trust through repeated interactions thus seems a realistic way forward. Transparency, which particularly the lesser nuclear states including China have been reticent to grant should be reframed as a strategic good rather than vulnerability. This would contribute to generating trust, while stabilising mutual deterrence and allowing the owners of nuclear warheads and fissile materials (albeit perhaps reported on a voluntary basis only) to project an image as responsible members of the international society, thus providing much needed relief to the ailing patient that is the NPT. Fortunately, more time is now available to settle at least some of the differences among parties to the NPT due to the postponement of the Review Conference to next year.

INSTRUMENTS OF ENGAGEMENT

The process can hardly be divorced from geopolitical realities. Trust, a rare commodity in international relations, may not come about as long as some parties pursue openly confrontational policies and make defence investments which appear to embed the early use of nuclear weapons in their military doctrines. But dialogue, entailing – crucially – the disposition to listen and understand the other side, must continue, including between NATO and Russia.

Hard security concerns aside, the opportunity costs of unbridled arms races must be measured also against the ever more existential need to invest to counter the adverse effects of climate change. This is hardly a revolutionary thought. After all, it was stipulated at the birth of the UN as a duty of the UN Security Council to promote and maintain international peace and security ‘with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources’.

Deft diplomacy and committed statecraft, together with sound expertise to underpin and sustain creative policy solutions, will be absolutely indispensable. A smaller country committed to effective multilateralism, the Czech Republic is ready to do its share. Our capacity to steer a major arms control agreement may be limited. This, however, should not be a reason for resignation. Prague is the city where the Warsaw Pact was dissolved and the New START treaty concluded. We stand committed to provide the good services that may be necessary for writing the next chapter of history of arms control, alongside our EU partners, and remain attentive inter alia to French President Emmanuel Macron’s recent call on Europeans to engage in international arms control, as well as to the sustained effort of Germany, as my colleague Heiko Maas has put it, to close a ‘blind spot’ in the international rules-based order through the Missile Dialogue Initiative.

The coronavirus pandemic must be defeated, but it is our duty to think of the world of tomorrow. A better world in which multilateralism saves arms control; and arms control saves multilateralism.

--Tomáš Petříček is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

China's surprise, years in the planning: An EMP attack

The Hill Online, June 18 | Peter Pry

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed dangerous weaknesses in U.S. planning and preparation for civil defense protection and recovery, and those weaknesses surely have been noticed by our potential enemies: China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and international terrorists.

The U.S. spent decades, and billions of dollars, supposedly preparing for biological warfare. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and the departments of Defense and Homeland Security are supposed to have contingency plans to protect the American people from lethal biological weapons such as anthrax and genetically engineered smallpox, which could have mortality rates of over 90 percent.

But our defenders have not even been able to competently cope with COVID-19, which has a mortality rate under 1 percent. The White House took over management of the pandemic, apparently to compensate for the failure of the U.S. government to have adequately stockpiled such basics as ventilators, masks and pharmaceuticals.

Hostile foreign powers surely have noticed the panicked, incompetent U.S. response to the virus that shut down a prosperous U.S. economy, self-inflicting the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. The nationwide lockdowns brought shortages of all kinds, exposing societal and critical infrastructure fragility — and causing widespread fear.

Adversaries also have noticed the ongoing U.S. “cold civil war.” According to federal authorities, radicalized young people on both sides of the political divide and criminals have been infiltrating recent protests — rioting, toppling statues and setting fires. The swelling counter-culture anarchy and self-condemnation is reminiscent of 1968, a year of riots and anti-war protests in America that is recognized by most historians as the psychological turning point toward U.S. defeat in the Vietnam War.

North Korea applauds America’s domestic chaos as proof that democracy does not work and the future belongs to totalitarian states such as China. America looks fragile to dictators who would replace the U.S.-led world order with a new one dominated by themselves. China, for example, has been planning to defeat the U.S. with an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) and cyber “Pearl Harbor” attack for a quarter-century. As I warned the Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security in 2005, Chinese military writings — such as the following excerpt — make reference to U.S. vulnerability to EMP attacks:

“Some people might think that things similar to the ‘Pearl Harbor incident’ are unlikely to take place during the information age. Yet it could be regarded as the ‘Pearl Harbor incident’ of the 21st century if a surprise attack is conducted against the enemy’s crucial information systems of command, control and communications by such means as electronic warfare, electromagnetic pulse weapons, telecommunications interference and suppression, computer viruses, and if the enemy is deprived of the information it needs as a result. Even a super military power like the United States, which possesses nuclear missiles and powerful armed forces, cannot guarantee its immunity. ... In their own words, a highly computerized open society like the United States is extremely vulnerable to electronic attacks from all sides. This is because the U.S. economy, from banks to telephone systems and from power plants to iron and steel works, relies entirely on computer networks.”

As noted in a May 14, 1996, People’s Liberation Army newspaper about a surprise attack on U.S. critical information systems: “When a country grows increasingly powerful economically and technologically ... it will become increasingly dependent on modern information systems. ... The United States is more vulnerable to attacks than any other country in the world.”

So it is very bad news, more than a year after President Trump issued an Executive Order on Coordinating Resilience Against Electromagnetic Pulses, that the Department of Energy (DOE) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have done nothing to protect the national electric grid or other critical infrastructures that sustain the lives of 330 million Americans.

Instead, non-expert bureaucrats conduct endless studies and conferences to wrangle over technical issues — in effect, reinventing the wheel regarding EMP — that were resolved long ago by real EMP experts. The “coordination process” for national EMP preparedness is the same kind of bureaucratic fumbling that Washington regards as “action,” which gave us the biological warfare unpreparedness and inability to properly respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

Hopefully, the U.S. Navy is better prepared to cope with an EMP attack than are DOE and DHS. A nuclear EMP attack against U.S. aircraft carriers is the key to victory in China’s military doctrine, as noted in a Feb. 12, 2000, article in the official newspaper of the Shanghai Communist Party Central Committee:

“The weak points of a modern aircraft carrier are: 1) As a big target, the fleet is easy for a satellite to reconnoiter and locate. ... 2) A high degree of electronization is like an Achilles’ heel for an aircraft carrier fleet, which relies heavily on electronic equipment as its central nervous system. These two characteristics determine one tactic.” Therefore, military strategist Ye Jian said in the article in Jiefang Ribao: “The possession of electromagnetic pulse bombs (missiles) will provide the conditions to completely destroy an aircraft carrier fleet, and the way to complete victory in dealing with aircraft carrier fleets.”

In March 2020, a panel of China’s military experts threatened to punish U.S. Navy ships for challenging China’s illegal annexation of the South China Sea by making an EMP attack — one of the options they considered least provocative because the crew would be unharmed, but most effective because the ship would be disabled. Now three U.S. aircraft carriers are in the Pacific to challenge China’s aggression in the South China Sea.

Dan Gallington, a former senior Defense Department official, asks in his recent Washington Times article, “Is America on the path to another Pearl Harbor, but with China?”

China may offer the answer soon.

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The Nuclear-Testing Showdown

The virtues of a Senate provision to fund nuclear-test preparedness may go overlooked amid the controversy it has sparked

National Review Online, June 18 | Carine Hajjar

Last Thursday, the Senate Armed Services Committee approved an amendment to the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act that would set aside at least \$10 million to “carry out projects related to reducing the time required to execute a nuclear test if necessary.” The amendment was proposed

by Senator Cotton (R., Ark.) and was approved along party lines. It comes after revelations that the Trump administration is considering the possibility of restarting nuclear tests as leverage for a trilateral nuclear agreement with China and Russia, which, according to the State Department, may be carrying out low-yield nuclear tests. The amendment has generated some political fireworks, with Democrats sending a letter to Defense Secretary Mark Esper on May 25 demanding an explanation.

As fears of nuclear testing mount, officials should take care to distinguish two different strategies: using testing as an impetus for negotiations with rival powers versus funding testing readiness. Indeed, the administration's proposals and Cotton's amendment could have wildly different implications, and if the Trump administration's desire to use testing as a political tool is risky, then Cotton's amendment is a better way to address gaps in military preparedness.

The Trump administration's suggestions of using a nuclear test to catalyze negotiations with Russia and China sparked concerns about proportionality, utility, and safety. In their letter to Defense Secretary Mark Esper, House Democrats called nuclear testing "short-sighted and dangerous," arguing that it would violate the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, which states that the U.S. will not conduct nuclear explosive testing unless the "safety and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear arsenal" is in question. The letter's authors argue further that the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has certified the reliability of the nuclear arsenal for twenty-four years, that the U.S. has maintained its nuclear deterrent while upholding a testing moratorium since 1992, and that the notion of using nuclear testing to compel Russia and China to sign an arms-control deal is "baseless and uninformed."

These letters and statements raise important questions. For one, how would a nuclear test bring China and Russia to the table? What would be the consequences of doing so? Is a test even necessary?

Criticisms of the administration's proposed strategy are well-founded. Stephen Rademaker, former assistant secretary of the State Department, tells *National Review*: "The notion that [China or Russia would] respond by becoming more likely to negotiate an arms control treaty, to me, is completely implausible." What's more likely, according to Rademaker, is that "we'd open the door to Chinese and Russian testing."

The U.S. has conducted more nuclear tests and has far more data on its weapons than any other nuclear power. Russia and China would certainly like to have more data on their arsenals, but agreements such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT) have precluded them from conducting full-fledged nuclear tests. Should the U.S. begin testing, shifting internal politics in Russia and China could make tests more likely, Rademaker says: "In every country with nuclear weapons there's an ongoing debate between scientists and engineers who would like to conduct tests to collect data, and other government officials who have reasons not to test." So far, the government officials have won out, but that may not hold in the wake of an American escalation.

All in all, Rademaker says, testing is not a useful political tool. So why would the Trump administration consider such a move? The answer lies in the CTBT.

While the treaty was adopted by the U.N. in 1996, eight key countries — including the U.S. and China — never ratified it. All nuclear powers, save for North Korea, have abided by its principles; indeed, aside from North Korea, no nuclear power has tested a nuclear weapon in this century. Why?

One of the main issues in dispute is the treaty's definition of "nuclear testing." According to the Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States (2009), while the U.S. sees nuclear testing as an event that releases nuclear energy, China and Russia believe that low-yield tests are still in compliance with the CTBT. The study notes: "Apparently Russia and possibly China are conducting low yield tests," yet they remain in compliance with the CTBT owing to the ambiguity of its provisions on testing.

Were the U.S. to sign onto such a treaty, it would risk constraining itself while permitting rival countries to test their own weapons. Perhaps the Trump administration hopes that a nuclear test will pressure China and Russia into a trilateral agreement that accounts for the CTBT's ambiguities and holds them accountable for low-yield testing. Yet Rademaker warns that using a nuclear test to hold China and Russia accountable would likely backfire. This could undermine the administration's rationale.

On the other hand, some concerns over nuclear testing are unfounded. The letter to Esper argues that testing is unnecessary to collect data given the capabilities of the NNSA. But the Cotton amendment does not mandate a test; it merely allocates funding to "projects related to reducing the time required to execute a nuclear test if necessary."

There is real upside to this move. An aging arsenal has many unknowns, even with models and simulations. "It's great to have these supercomputers that can use models, but models are based on data input," says Rademaker, who points out that the U.S. lacks data on "the effects of aging of explosive materials, and other components of our nuclear weapons." The nuclear infrastructure is also in dire need of repair: In 2017, there was \$3.7 billion worth of overdue, essential repairs. What's more, few of the technicians that manage the U.S. arsenal were actually around when these weapons were last assembled and tested three decades ago. All of these unknowns can lead to a tricky situation should the need for a nuclear test ever arise.

"There are good reasons why we need to be able to conduct nuclear tests," says Rademaker. However, without the proper funding and preparedness, the U.S. would face major obstacles in achieving a test. Depending on the nuclear weapon, it could take between six and 60 months to restore the weapon to operational status. "Today, should the need for a nuclear test arise, with our atrophied infrastructure and the persistent lack of funding to maintain the capability, it would take us a long time to be able to test a nuclear weapon," Rademaker says. Clearly, confidence in the NNSA and simulated testing in general is overstated.

The Cotton amendment thus presents a unique opportunity to invest in military readiness without being overtly escalatory. However, as the NDAA amendment moves on to the Democratic-controlled House for approval, the Trump and Cotton plans may be conflated. Outrage over the prospect of the Trump testing plan will be on the minds of House Armed Services Committee members. This is unfortunate: As Rademaker puts it, "It is foolish to contemplate nuclear testing purely to send political signals, but it's critically important to preserve the ability to test should the need arise for technical reasons, such as ensuring the safety and reliability of our weapons." The demerits of Trump's approach should not overshadow the merits of Cotton's.

--Carine Hajjar is an editorial intern at National Review and a student at Harvard University studying government, data science, and economics

When Old Age Catches Up, Even Nuclear Weapons Go into Retirement

UNITED NATIONS, Jun 16 2020 (IPS) - The world's stockpile of nuclear weapons—estimated at over 13,400 at the beginning of 2020 – have a least one thing in common with humans: they are “retired” when they reach old age.

The 2020 Yearbook, released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), says there was a decrease in the number of nuclear weapons worldwide in 2019. And this was largely due to the dismantlement of “retired nuclear weapons” by Russia and the US—which together possess over 90 per cent of global nuclear weapons. The world's nine nuclear-armed states—the US, Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)—together possessed an estimated 13,400 nuclear weapons at the beginning of 2020. This is a decrease of about 465 nuclear weapons—mostly dismantled— from the stockpile of 13,865 the nine states possessed at the beginning of 2019, according to the SIPRI Yearbook released June 15.

But what happens to these “retired” weapons?

Dr M. V. Ramana, Professor and Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security and Director, Liu Institute for Global Issues at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at University of British Columbia, told IPS: “We do know a fair amount about how the US deals with retired nuclear weapons, namely those weapons that are no longer part of the active operational arsenal, or the hedge (extra weapons, just in case), the strategic reserve, and so on.”

They are sent to the Pantex plant in Texas where the fissile pits are removed from weapons, said Dr Ramana, author of *The Power of Promise: Examining Nuclear Energy in India*. Robert Kelley, a Distinguished Associate Fellow at SIPRI and a veteran of over 35 years in the US Department of Energy nuclear weapons complex, told IPS “You might try to make a distinction between “retirement” and “dismantlement.”

Weapons are really retired when there is no longer a military mission for them. That will happen when the delivery systems become obsolete, and is longer available. Or the mission disappears, he said. An easy one, he said, is nuclear artillery shells. The US gave up on those in about the 1980s. So, there are no more “nuclear cannons.” But since the nuclear shell was fired from a conventional cannon that could fire either a conventional shell or a nuclear shell, it was the mission going away that led to retirement, he added.

“Saner people started to realize that having a bunch of tactical nuclear shells that could be launched by low level military units was pretty stupid.” “Many tactical weapons like that were retired but could conceivably come back. Once retired they would go into bunkers at the Pantex Plant in Amarillo Texas and await being dismantled — taken apart and pieces recycled,” said Kelley, who managed the centrifuge and plutonium metallurgy programs at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

In some cases, he pointed out, this is technically hard to do and the rate of dismantlement may only be a few weapons per year. The total backlog of all kinds is probably thousands in the US. “The Brits had only two systems left in the 1980s — one bomb and submarine launched nuclear warheads. They gave up the mission for the bombs so they were retired and it was a years-long process to take them apart at Burghfield near Reading, UK”.

Dangerous work done very carefully, declared Kelley, a former Director of the Department of Energy Remote Sensing Laboratory, the premier US nuclear emergency response organization. Meanwhile, SIPRI points out that around 3,720 of the nuclear weapons are currently deployed with operational forces and nearly 1,800 of these are kept in a state of high operational alert. A key finding is that despite an overall decrease in the number of nuclear warheads in 2019, all nuclear weapon-possessing states continue to modernize their nuclear arsenals.

And the outlook for arms control is “bleak.” Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director at the Washington-based Arms Control Association (ACA), told IPS it is no surprise that SIPRI is reporting that the nuclear arms control outlook is bleak. “We have been warning of the dangers of an unconstrained global nuclear arms race for quite some time. As global leaders appropriately focus on the steps necessary to deal with the deadly effects of the coronavirus pandemic, they cannot afford to lose sight of the actions necessary to address the ongoing threat of nuclear proliferation and catastrophic nuclear war—the ultimate pandemic”

He argued that tensions among the world’s nuclear-armed states are rising; the risk of nuclear use is growing; hundreds of billions of dollars are being spent to replace and upgrade the already bloated arsenals of the world’s nine possessors of nuclear weapons; and key agreements that have kept nuclear competition in check are in serious jeopardy. “We are on the verge of an unprecedented global nuclear arms race.

The resurgence of the nuclear weapons threat is due, in large part, to the failure of national leaders to seize earlier opportunities to significantly reduce the nuclear threat and to pursue a more intensive dialogue on measures to move toward the common goal of a world without nuclear weapons”. Kimball said the failure of the United States just to agree to extend the only remaining treaty regulating the world’s two largest arsenals — the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty — before its 2021 expiration date is but one example.

“This dire situation requires new and bolder leadership from responsible states. They must work together to build majority support for a plan of action that calls for specific, concrete steps that would fulfill their legal and political commitments on to end the arms race and pursue nuclear disarmament, beginning now,” declared Kimball. Kelley said modern strategic nuclear packages are highly integrated with the delivery system. The size, weight, shape, mounting bolts are designed at the same time as the military delivery system.

If an old ICBM, for example, is retired, the nuclear explosive becomes obsolete. So, it is retired, and there is very little one can do with it while it awaits dismantlement. The older systems are generally not interchangeable with something new so they really are obsolete. “In terms of recycling, are you aware that the major weapons states have a huge glut of highly enriched uranium and plutonium?,” he asked

Under the Megatons to Megawatts program, the Russians retired hundreds of nuclear warheads and sold the diluted HEU to the US to burn in power reactors. Something like 10% of the electricity in the US is produced by burning uranium that came from Russian thermonuclear warheads, Kelley said. There is a similar story for plutonium but it is longer and gets complicated. “Are you aware that thousands of warheads designed for US service missions are awaiting retirement because there is no mission?”, asked Kelley.

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The narrowing of the defense-industrial base has reached critical levels

Defense News Online, June 19 | Steven P. Bucci

The Senate Armed Services Committee has finally given the green light to purchase two new missile subs. This is great news. One can only hope that now the defense-industrial base can actually get it done. There is reason for concern.

Much has been written about how few major defense contractors are left on the playing field. Where once robust competition occurred, now there is little to drive excellence. Consolidations, mergers and changes of business focus has this critical business sector at the breaking point. A pending call by the Department of the Navy to adjust the procurement process for the vital Columbia-class submarines to make it a block buy puts this issue even more into the spotlight. This alone warrants a deeper look into this problematic area.

While the strain can be seen throughout the vital defense-industrial base, the prime example is the looming crisis that is raising concerns for the Navy's Virginia- and Columbia-class submarine programs. The present sub fleet is the envy of the world. Our boats are a marvel and can easily over match five to 10 of the subs of any one of our adversaries. This sounds great, doesn't it? Except that on any given day, enemies like Russia and China can put nearly 10 boats in the water for every one of ours.

Think about that. That is, at best, a dead heat; or put a different way, a "fair fight." That is the last thing we ever want to have. Therefore, improving our fleet and getting more top-line boats at sea is vitally important.

Today, that is at risk. The importance of a credible deterrent is not an academic concept. The nuclear triad depends on these subs, and the way we choose to build ships is critical to ensuring we have an effective and trustworthy deterrent.

In the face of this situation, we cannot tolerate any glitches or slowdowns in the very tight production schedules in the two submarine programs. Unfortunately, that is exactly what we are facing because of the previously mentioned lack of diversity and restricted options in the defense-industrial base. The complex schedule and the challenges that already exist to keep these programs on time are daunting. The Virginia and Columbia classes will have to be constructed at the same time, and complex carrier builds are also ongoing.

A specific recent example of the defense-industrial base problems is the critical missile tubes that are the main armament of both of these world-class vessel types. They are the critical path for production, with the rest of the boat literally being built around them. If the tubes are "late," the entire production cycle is held up. That is exactly what is happening, and it is putting our national security at risk. This is not an inconvenience, folks — people's lives are at stake.

A recent Government Accountability Office report states "the Navy recognizes that its supplier base remains high risk and is committed to increased oversight on manufacturing issues and readiness assessments." The firm BWX Technologies is the main missile tube subcontractor for both programs, and it has the lion's share of the tube production, with almost no one else in the competition.

Unfortunately, BWX Technologies has twice delivered tubes that have not met the exacting acceptable standards of the program. Its tubes were rejected. The company is claiming it cannot make any profit, and wants to walk away from the project.

The Navy is left between a rock and a hard place. What is it to do?

We need more diversity, and we need it now. Business as usual is a no-go, and the Navy needs to start using imagination and creativity. It cannot simply reach out to the normal (tiny) number of producers and hope that this will be sufficient. Tactical-level fault does lay with BWX Technologies, but the larger problem is with the Navy and the defense-industrial base writ large.

The focus must be quality over cost. The quality of engineering and manufacturing is supremely important for this program, and those attributes should override any quibbling over cost. Congress appropriated somewhere around \$570 million to the sub community to specifically provide financial support in order to incentivize new suppliers. It appears that only about \$10 million has been used for that purpose, the remainder seemingly going to the afore-mentioned narrow field of existing suppliers.

That poor use of most of the money has only further exacerbated this challenge and defies Congress' intent when establishing the fund.

The nation should not and cannot take risks here, which could otherwise be mitigated. They must go with known competence. The Navy should look to known suppliers who have developed complex, new technologies. It must diversify the industrial base because growing the size of the industrial base is essential for the long-term stability of this program and others.

The bottom line is simple, but clearly not easy. The leadership of the Navy, at the highest levels, must step into this issue. Anyone too mired in "the usual" ways of doing things should not be trusted to solve it. The aperture of options needs to be opened widely, to seek solutions from sources that are not on the tip of the tongue, and priorities (and money) needs to be shifted to fix this now.

We have allowed the shipbuilding capacity of the nation to atrophy; it must be rebuilt. That will take time. This problem must be addressed in the present. Pay the price: The nation's security requires it.

--Steven P. Bucci is a visiting fellow at The Heritage Foundation. He previously served as a U.S. Army Special Forces officer and is a former deputy assistant secretary of defense for homeland defense

Yes, we can win the cold war with China — here's how

The Hill Online, 13 June 20 Brig. Gen. Robert S. Spalding (Ret.)

The United States is in the midst of a 21st century cold war with China. A shockwave that started in Wuhan last December, when the novel coronavirus emerged, has since reverberated across the world, raising geopolitical stakes and touching off new world tensions.

Calls from elected officials around the country, including President Trump and Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), to punish China for its complicity in spreading the virus by having China pay reparations have been met with increasing bluster and intimidating actions from the communist country. It is difficult to see recent nuclear tests held in violation of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty as little more than attempts to intimidate the United States against these actions. A columnist in the South China Morning Post meanwhile, an outlet based in the increasingly mainland-influenced Hong Kong, has

openly warned that attempts by America to seek coronavirus pandemic damages from China “might well trigger war.”

Make no mistake, the United States must stand firm in the face of this bullying to ensure the Chinese are adequately punished for their complicity in spreading COVID-19. And as the temperature of this conflict likely heats up in the coming months and years, Washington must be sure that we are prepared to meet this challenge on all fronts.

The very system of globalization has been used by the Chinese Communist Party to advance its agenda. By slowly taking over the world’s trading system and monopolizing manufacturing, they have turned global supply chains into a national security liability. Repatriating American manufacturing and reshoring critical manufacturing capabilities such as pharmaceuticals, semiconductors and microelectronics would help to better secure industrial capabilities, and leave us better prepared to fight this new cold war.

We should make changes to our visa programs as well to stymie the efforts of the Chinese intelligence services. Student visas and employment verification scams have been used by Chinese nationals to recruit assets and pass sensitive defense and technological information back to Beijing. Revisions to the H1B and EB5 visa programs — two of the most frequently abused — to limit Chinese espionage and offer more opportunities to guest workers and investors from friendlier countries would be another positive policy change.

Also worth considering are investments in a secure, nationwide 5G network free of Huawei technology that would help catapult the United States into the next era of the information technology age. It would also protect American data from Chinese espionage and reduce the \$300 billion to \$600 billion in intellectual property losses suffered each year by Chinese theft.

Homeland missile defenses, meanwhile, a key component of what helped America win the Cold War with Russia, also must be bolstered to deter Chinese aggression. Yet, at this important time in geopolitical history, America’s missile defenses are at a critical crossroads.

For years the United States has been working on a new warhead for the Ground-Based Interceptor (GBI), the front line of our homeland missile defenses. The project, known as the Redesigned Kill Vehicle (RKV), was projected to reach initial capability in 2020 but budget cuts unfortunately caused the program to be cancelled last August. This has left a critical capability gap.

While the Trump administration has committed to investing in the Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) to advance our nation’s missile defense architecture, the system will not be active until at least 2026 and development could easily stretch into the 2030s. Given increasing tensions with China, we must find other ways to bolster our missile defenses in the meantime.

Funding for existing missile defense technology that is proven and highly tested could allow us to meet current challenges while investing in technologies to counter future threats. Systems such as Aegis ships and Aegis Ashore, as well as interceptors such as the Navy’s SM-3 and SM-6 missiles, are examples of existing technologies that can fill much-needed gaps in missile defense while the NGI is being fielded. Given recent Chinese missile advances, the alternative response — a decade of silence in response to these increasing threats — is unimaginable.

While those in power have been distracted by the COVID-19 crisis and other events around the world, China has been waging a multi-front war on

America. Our economy, military, diplomacy and technology are all under attack, and the communist country is winning. If we don't act soon, it may be too late to undo the shocking, though nearly invisible, victories the Chinese already have won. Taking steps now to ensure that America is able to stand up in the face of Chinese intimidation, and to reverse some of their ill-gotten gains, is the only way America can win this new cold war.

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Russia's nuclear deterrence principles: what they imply, and what they do not

European Council on Foreign Relations, 12 June 20 Gustav Gressel

The Kremlin took the unprecedented step last week of publishing a presidential decree setting out Russia's policy principles on nuclear deterrence. The six-page decree sets out brief remarks on Russia's nuclear deterrence posture, such as objectives, threshold (the point in a conflict at which nuclear weapons would be used), and command authority (which includes who decides on launching a nuclear attack). It has come as a surprise to see the paper published on the record. In the past, the relevant decree on the principles of nuclear deterrence was kept classified. The only public statement on nuclear deterrence was a standard sentence repeated in Russia's military doctrine and other documents stating that Russia would only resort to nuclear weapons if it was attacked by weapons of mass destruction, or if an attack threatened the very existence of the state.

Such general wording, of course, left ample room for speculation. Some observers interpreted Russia's reluctant communication on nuclear matters in the most careful, conservative, and defensive way, disbelieving that Russia would ever consider a launch-on-warning posture. Now, thanks specifically to article 19a of the newly released document, we know it does have this posture.

Other observers in the past argued that Russian military thinking's focus on offence and pre-emption would likely leave a mark on nuclear matters as well and concluded that Russia had adopted an 'escalate to de-escalate' doctrine. According to this view, Russia would resort to the pre-emptive first use of a non-strategic nuclear weapon once the Russian army had achieved its operative goals to end the war on Moscow's terms. While the existence of such an 'escalate to de-escalate' doctrine and other details on Russia's potential use of nuclear weapons was contested in the past, the final sentence of Article 4 of the doctrine comes closest to answering this question. It states that, once a war has started, nuclear deterrence policy is to seek to prevent it from escalating further, or from being terminated on terms unfavorable to Moscow. This is a short version of what in Russian military literature is termed 'escalation control'. Escalation control implies that threats, demonstrations of strike capabilities, and inflicting "calibrated damage" on the enemy (which may, but does not have to, include nuclear weapons) should contain, localize, and if possible terminate a war on Moscow's terms. This is more flexible and adaptable than most previous assumptions on Russian 'escalate to de-escalate' or 'escalate to win' concepts. However, flexible escalation control is no less challenging for NATO, as the final result may still be a pre-emptive, limited nuclear strike. One needs to stress that Russia and the West have fundamentally different traditions and perceptions on what 'defensive' military operations are and where 'pre-emption' on a 'legitimate' security threat transitions into 'aggression'. For this reason, nothing in the decree precludes Russia embarking on 'escalate to de-escalate'.

The practical backdrop to Russian deliberations on escalation control of course was, and remains, to dissuade a large nuclear power – the US – from intervening in a war Russia has started with an immediate non-aligned neighbor, particularly Ukraine. A head-on confrontation with NATO is not Russia's primary concern, but could develop out of another crisis. In such a confrontation, nuclear weapons and their dissuasive potential would play

a major role. But as such scenarios would hardly develop according to a script or pre-planned decision, Article 18 will be the most relevant: it sets Putin as the sole decision-maker about the use of nuclear weapons. The decision of whether or not to use them would depend on how he perceives the circumstances and whether, if, and in what contexts, threats are made or weapons used. This said, the decree does not differentiate between strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons and does not at any point imply or hint that the Russian armed forces would rely on the employment of nuclear weapons to fulfil tactical or operative tasks assigned. In this regard, all nuclear weapons – regardless of range and yield – are ‘strategic’ in terms of being a political tool to influence political decision-making processes.

Article 19 deliberates on the conditions under which nuclear weapons could be released. It explicitly mentions a ‘launch on warning’ posture. This is a signal to the US that conventional or low-yield re-entry vehicles (the latter are in development) of intercontinental missiles would be treated as a full-scale attack and that Washington should therefore not think of employing them in a tactical or limited attack close to Russia’s borders. Paragraph 19c states that Russia would retaliate using nuclear weapons against a conventional attack that impedes Russian nuclear forces or their command structure; this provision emulates the 2018 US nuclear posture review. But, deliberate or not, the paragraph is very imprecise, as it also does not distinguish between strategic and non-strategic nuclear forces. The proliferation of dual-use platforms that has taken place in recent times across the Russian armed forces would allow nuclear ‘retaliation’ for any sort of conventional strike into Russia’s territory. In order to conventionally defend NATO territory in case of a Russian attack, such deep strikes would still be necessary.

The Russian decree does not contain any detailed provisions on force structure, weapons systems (future or present), force modernization, or references to other nuclear powers. Much detail is lacking from what one might normally expect to see in a nuclear doctrine. Article 15 states merely that nuclear deterrence needs to be adaptable, and should leave the enemy guessing about the time, scale, and manner of the use of nuclear weapons. It also says that Russia intends to maintain the minimal force required to achieve its tasks. Article 10 states that the Russian nuclear forces intend to inflict unacceptable damage on an enemy under any condition. While previous documents – like the military doctrine of 2000 – talked of calibrated damage, the phrases in this paper are less ambitious. If one assumes counter-value targeting (attacking cities) as an underlying assumption, Russia may be able to inflict ‘unacceptable’ damage more easily than trying to calibrate strikes according to the threat situation and American defenses.

Taken together, all these provisions seem surprisingly minimalist. It may well be that Russia intends to signal to the United States that, if the American-Chinese arms race takes off, Moscow does not intend to follow suit and “spend itself into oblivion”, as US assistant secretary for terrorist financing in the Treasury, Marshall Billingslea, put it. Russia is hardly likely to publicly admit that in the 21st century it will most probably be a secondary nuclear power. But, in fact, it does seem to be adapting to this role.

Finally, Article 3 notes that Russia’s nuclear deterrence is flanked by other state measures to achieve its goals, including diplomatic and “information policies” (propaganda). The publication of the doctrine and the content of Article 3 effectively represent the firing of the starting pistol on a new ‘information campaign’ in the West: expect to soon see an information operation that aims to inflate the purported capabilities of Russia’s nuclear forces and induce fear (such as the new “Wunderwaffen”, presented in March 2018), and new diplomatic overtures in the fields of arms control, in particular designed to split the alliance. At least on the latter, Putin may get assistance from the White House: Trump’s clumsy and undiplomatic handling of the INF and Open Skies issues provide more opportunities to exploit than any Russian diplomat would have ever dreamed of creating.

With Trump also unilaterally reducing America’s military presence in Europe (in Germany in particular), transatlantic relations have reached a new

low. However, the new Russian policy principles on nuclear deterrence also underpin the existential role the US plays to counterbalance the Russian military in Europe, and in particular nuclear capabilities. For the foreseeable future, France will be neither able or willing to replace the United States' nuclear balancing role, contrary to occasional wishful thinking about this in Germany. For now, Europeans hope that the November 2020 election will relieve them of their troubles with Trump. But there is no plan B if that election does not deliver their much hoped-for anticipated result.

-- Gustav Gressel is a senior policy fellow with the Wider Europe Programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations' Berlin office. His topics of focus include Russia, Eastern Europe, and defense policy. Before joining ECFR, Gressel worked as a desk officer for international security policy and strategy in the Bureau for Security Policy of the Austrian Ministry of Defence from 2006 to 2014, and as a research fellow of the Commissioner for Strategic Studies with the Austrian MoD from 2003 to 2006. He was also a research fellow with the International Institute for Liberal Politics in Vienna. Before his academic career he served five years in the Austrian Armed Forces. Gressel holds a PhD in Strategic Studies at the Faculty of Military Sciences at the National University of Public Service, Budapest and a Masters Degree in political science from Salzburg University. He is the author of numerous publications regarding security policy and strategic affairs and a frequent commentator on international affairs. His opinions have appeared in media such as the New York Times, the Guardian, Die Welt, NZZ, Bild, the Diplomat, New Eastern Europe, Foreign Policy, Gazeta Prawna, Rzeczpospolita, Kyiv Post, the Moscow Times, Capital, the Telegraph, the Economist, Newsweek, Deutsche Welle, RTL, al Jazeera, TVP, TRT, Polskie Radio, RFI, FM4, Ukraine Today, and Radio Free Europe.

Nuclear Powers Modernize Arsenals As Warheads Decrease, Report Finds

By [RFE/RL](#) // June 14, 2020 22:38 GMT

A Sweden-based, nonproliferation think tank says nuclear powers have continued to modernize their arsenals despite a decrease in the number of nuclear warheads.

[The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#) said in a report released on June 15 that nine nuclear-weapon powers -- the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea -- together possessed an estimated 13,400 nuclear weapons at the start of 2020. The number is down by 465 nuclear weapons in "a marked decrease" from the previous year, when the nine states possessed a combined estimated total of 13,865 nuclear weapons, according to SIPRI.

The decrease "was largely due to the dismantlement of retired nuclear weapons by Russia and the U.S. -- which together still possess over 90 percent of global nuclear weapons." U.S. nuclear warheads dropped by 385 and Russia's declined by 125. Those large reductions were offset by slight increases in the nuclear forces of China, Britain, India, and North Korea. The reductions in U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces were required by the 2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) and completed in 2018. In 2019 the forces of both countries remained below the limits specified by the treaty.

Extending the New START treaty is the subject of arms negotiations that the top U.S. envoy for arms control said would begin with Russia later this month. The United States has also invited China to take part in the talks. "The deadlock over New START and the collapse of the 1987 Soviet-U.S. Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty) in 2019 suggest that the era of bilateral nuclear arms-control agreements between Russia and the USA might be coming to an end," said Shannon Kile, director of SIPRI's Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control, and Nonproliferation Program.

The INF Treaty was abandoned last year after the United States officially withdrew from it over accusations of Russian violations. Russia denied the accusations and in turn suspended its participation in the pact. "The loss of key channels of communication between Russia and the USA that were

intended to promote transparency and prevent misperceptions about their respective nuclear force postures and capabilities could potentially lead to a new nuclear arms race," Kile added.

New START, the last major arms-control treaty between the United States and Russia, is scheduled to expire in February 2021. The accord caps the number of nuclear warheads and so-called delivery systems held by the two countries. While Moscow has pushed for a five-year extension, Washington has balked, saying it wants the deal to be broadened to include China. China, whose nuclear arsenal is a fraction of the size of Moscow's and Washington's, has said it was not interested in participating in such talks.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said on June 10 that Beijing hadn't changed its previous stance that it was not going to join the talks, which according to Bloomberg will take place on June 22 in Vienna. SIPRI said in its report that China was in the middle of a significant modernization of its nuclear arsenal. "It is developing a so-called nuclear triad for the first time, made up of new land- and sea-based missiles and nuclear-capable aircraft."

SIPRI also said that India and Pakistan were slowly increasing the size and diversity of their nuclear forces, while North Korea continues to prioritize its military nuclear program as a central element of its national security strategy. It noted that North Korea provided no information about its nuclear weapon capabilities, while Israel has a long-standing policy of not commenting on its nuclear arsenal.

Nuclear modernization speeding up as arms control on the brink

By: [Aaron Mehta](#) for Defense News

WASHINGTON — Overall nuclear warheads in the world decreased in 2019, but broad modernization efforts by the [biggest nuclear countries](#) — along with a degradation of arms control agreements around the world — could mean a dangerous mix for the future, according to an [annual report](#) from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI.

The organization estimated that at the end of 2019, nine countries possessed a total of 13,400 nuclear warheads, down from the 13,865 estimated in SIPRI's previous report, which in turn was a drop from 14,465 the year before. The reductions were primarily due to numbers dropping under the New START nuclear agreement between Russia and the U.S., which experts [largely expect](#) not to be renewed at the start of the new year.

Russia is the largest holder of nuclear warheads, according to SIPRI's numbers, with 6,735 total, of which 1,570 are deployed. The U.S. follows at 5,800, with 1,750 deployed. The two countries account for over 90 percent of the world's [nuclear arsenal](#). The [United Kingdom](#) (250 total, 120 deployed) and [France](#) (290 total, 280 deployed) are the other two nations believed to have deployed nuclear warheads. China (320 total), India (150 total), Pakistan (160 total), Israel (90 total) and North Korea, (30-40 total) round out SIPRI's list.

Both the U.S. and Russia are engaged [in expensive](#), widespread modernization efforts of its nuclear arsenal. America is upgrading both its legacy nuclear warheads with new designs, as well as updating its fleet of nuclear-capable bombers, submarines and ICBMs. Earlier this year, the Pentagon [deployed for the first time](#) the W76-2, a [low-yield variant](#) of the nuclear warhead traditionally used on the Trident submarine launched missile, and early design work is being done on another new [submarine launched warhead design](#), known as the W93.

Russia, meanwhile, has spoken openly about developing hypersonic weapons that could be nuclear equipped and has invested in novel weapons such as the Status-6, [an underwater drone](#) that could be equipped with a nuclear warhead. Moscow has also vocalized [new deployment plans](#) for its weapons and on June 2 made official a policy that [it may use nuclear weapons](#) in response to a conventional attack.

Those investments by the world's two nuclear superpowers come against a backdrop of the collapse of numerous arms control agreements. 2019 saw the formal end of the [Intermediate Range and Shorter Range Missiles](#) (INF) treaty, and in May the U.S. announced its intention to withdraw from [the Open Skies arms control verification](#) agreement. The last major arms control agreement between Russia and the U.S. is New START, which is set to expire in February of 2021. In [recent weeks](#) the U.S. has announced its intention to start negotiations on a new arms control agreement that would include China.

However, Chinese officials have [repeatedly and categorically denied](#) that it would be willing to join such an agreement, and experts largely view any efforts to create a [trilateral nuclear arms control](#) pact as a New START replacement are non-starters, leading to widespread agreement among analysts that New START is likely doomed under the Trump administration. “The deadlock over New START and the collapse of the 1987 Soviet–US Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate Range and Shorter Range Missiles (INF) Treaty in 2019.

This suggests the era of bilateral nuclear arms control agreements between Russia and the USA might be coming to an end,” said Shannon Kile, Director of SIPRI’s nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation program. “The loss of key channels of communication between Russia and the USA that were intended to promote transparency and prevent misperceptions about their respective nuclear force postures and capabilities could potentially lead to a new nuclear arms race.”

Nuclear weapon modernization continues

The outlook for arms control is bleak

New SIPRI Yearbook out now // 15 June 2020

Nuclear warhead reductions continue despite growing tensions

The nine nuclear-armed states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea)—together possessed an estimated 13 400 nuclear weapons at the start of 2020. This marked a decrease from the 13 865 nuclear weapons that SIPRI estimated these states possessed at the beginning of 2019 (see table below). Around 3720 of the nuclear weapons are currently deployed with operational forces and nearly 1800 of these are kept in a state of high operational alert.

The decrease in the overall number of nuclear weapons in the world in 2019 was largely due to the dismantlement of retired nuclear weapons by Russia and the USA—which together still possess over 90 per cent of global nuclear weapons. The reductions in US and Russian strategic nuclear forces required by the 2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) were completed in 2018, and in 2019 the forces of both countries remained below the limits specified by the treaty.

New START will lapse in February 2021 unless both parties agree to prolong it. However, discussions to extend New START or to negotiate a new treaty made no progress in 2019. This was due in part to the US administration's insistence that China must join any future nuclear arms reduction talks—something that China has categorically ruled out. 'The deadlock over New START and the collapse of the 1987 Soviet–US Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty) in 2019 suggest that the era of bilateral nuclear arms control agreements between Russia and the USA might be coming to an end.'

Shannon Kile, Director of SIPRI's Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation Programme says; 'The loss of key channels of communication between Russia and the USA that were intended to promote transparency and prevent misperceptions about their respective nuclear force postures and capabilities could potentially lead to a new nuclear arms race.'

Next-generation nuclear weapon systems are in development

Russia and the USA have extensive and expensive programmes under way to replace and modernize their nuclear warheads, missile and aircraft delivery systems, and nuclear weapon production facilities. Both countries have also given new or expanded roles to nuclear weapons in their military plans and doctrines, which marks a significant reversal of the post-cold war trend towards the gradual marginalization of nuclear weapons.

The nuclear arsenals of the other nuclear-armed states are considerably smaller but all these states are either developing or deploying new weapon systems or have announced their intention to do so. China is in the middle of a significant modernization of its nuclear arsenal. It is developing a so-called nuclear triad for the first time, made up of new land- and sea-based missiles and nuclear-capable aircraft. India and Pakistan are slowly increasing the size and diversity of their nuclear forces.

While North Korea continues to prioritize its military nuclear programme as a central element of its national security strategy. Although North Korea adhered to its self-declared moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles in 2019, during the year it conducted multiple flight tests of shorter-range ballistic missiles, including several new types of system.

Low levels of transparency in reporting on nuclear weapon capabilities

The availability of reliable information on the status of the nuclear arsenals and capabilities of the nuclear-armed states varies considerably. 'The USA has disclosed important information about its stockpile and nuclear capabilities but in 2019 the US administration ended the practice of publicly disclosing the size of the US stockpile,' says Hans M. Kristensen, Associate Senior Fellow with SIPRI's Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation Programme and Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

The UK and France have also declared some information. Russia does not make publicly available a detailed breakdown of its forces counted under New START, even though it shares this information with the USA. The governments of India and Pakistan make statements about some of their missile tests but provide little information about the status or size of their arsenals. North Korea has acknowledged conducting nuclear weapon and missile tests but provides no information about its nuclear weapon capabilities. Israel has a long-standing policy of not commenting on its nuclear arsenal.

World nuclear forces, January 2020

Country	Deployed warheads*	Other warheads**	Total 2020	Total 2019
USA	1 750	4 050	5 800	6 185
Russia	1 570	4 805	6 375	6 500
UK***	120	95	215	200
France	280	10	290	300
China		320	320	290
India		150	150	130–140
Pakistan		160	160	150–160
Israel		90	90	80–90
North Korea ..		(30–40)	(30–40)	(20–30)
Total	3 720	9 680	13 400	13 865

Deployed warheads’ refers to warheads placed on missiles or located on bases with operational forces. ** ‘Other warheads’ refers to stored or reserve warheads and retired warheads awaiting dismantlement. *** The British Government has stated that the process to reduce the stockpile to 180 warheads is under way. Although some sources suggest that the stockpile remains at 215 warheads, it is possible that, under this process, the stockpile may have already been reduced.

Notes: SIPRI revises its world nuclear forces data each year based on new information and updates to earlier assessments. Total figures include the highest estimate when a range is given. Figures for North Korea are highly uncertain and are not included in total figures. All estimates are approximate.

A year of rising international instability

The 51st edition of the SIPRI Yearbook reveals a continuing deterioration in the conditions for international stability. This trend is reflected in, among other things, an unfolding crisis of nuclear arms control that suffered further setbacks in 2019. ‘In these times of ever-increasing geopolitical tensions, the absence of adequate measures to monitor nuclear arsenals and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials is a particularly worrying development,’ says Kile.

In addition to its detailed coverage of nuclear arms control and non-proliferation issues, the latest edition of the SIPRI Yearbook also includes insight on developments in conventional arms control in 2019; regional overviews of armed conflicts and conflict management; in-depth data and discussion on military expenditure, international arms transfers and arms production; and comprehensive coverage of efforts to counter chemical and biological security threats.

For editors

The SIPRI Yearbook is a compendium of cutting-edge information and analysis on developments in armaments, disarmament and international security. Four major SIPRI Yearbook 2020 data sets were pre-launched in 2019–20: [the top 100 arms-producing companies](#) (December 2019), [international arms transfers](#) (March 2020), [world military expenditure](#) (April 2020) and [trends in multilateral peace operations](#) (May 2020). The

earlier releases are available at www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases. The SIPRI Yearbook is published by Oxford University Press. Learn more at www.sipriyearbook.org. Browse the [SIPRI Yearbook 2020](#) and download the [SIPRI Yearbook 2020 Summary](#) (PDF).

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Nuclear Warhead Reductions Continue Despite Heightened Global Tensions

By: [Niall McCarthy](#), Contributor to FORBES // Jun 15, 2020,06:44am EDT

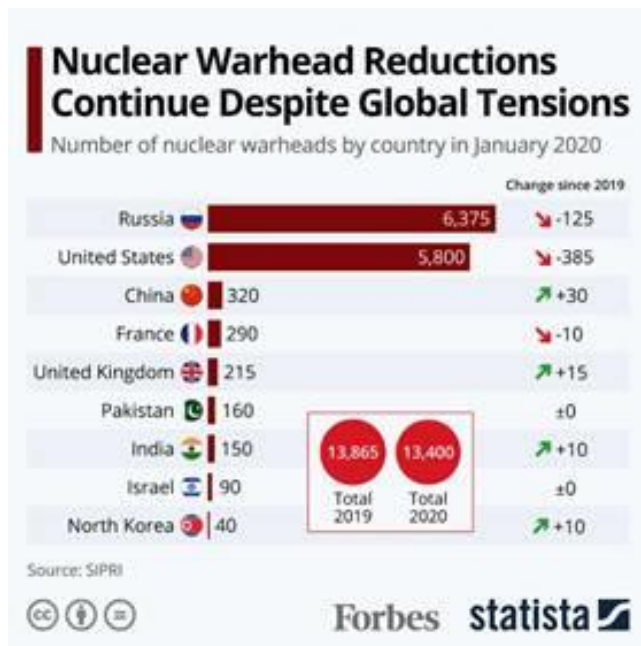
The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has released [its latest data](#) highlighting the number of nuclear warheads possessed by different countries.

In January 2020, it is estimated that nine states possessed a collective 13,400 nuclear warheads, a decrease on the 13,865 weapons they had at the beginning of 2019. The decrease has occurred at a time of heightened global tension while all nine countries are actively modernizing their capabilities and stockpiles. For example, Russia is pursuing hypersonic weapon technology, China is developing a nuclear triad involving land, sea and aerial delivery systems while both India and Pakistan are slowly increasing the size and diversity of their nuclear forces.

Russia and the United States still possess over 90% of the world's nuclear warheads and SIPRI has attributed the fall in the global inventory to the retirement and dismantlement of weapons in both countries. This has occurred under the 2010 New START Treaty which is set to expire in February 2021 unless both parties agree to prolong it. Negotiations to that effect made no progress in 2019, largely due to the U.S. government's insistence that China must join any future nuclear arms reduction talks, a move Beijing has categorically ruled out.

At the beginning of the year, Russia had an estimated 6,375 nuclear weapons with 1,570 deployed operationally, with the total figure falling by 125 compared with early 2019. The United States saw its total fall by 385 since last year and it currently possesses around 5,800 warheads with 1,750 operationally deployed. China comes third with 320 and SIPRI believes its arsenal increased by 30 warheads over the past year. France and the United Kingdom round off the top five with 290 and 215 warheads, respectively.

SIPRI states that there is a low level of transparency regarding nuclear weapons in several countries. Israel has a long-standing policy of not commenting on its nuclear capabilities (or whether it possesses them) while North Korea has publicly acknowledged testing but avoided providing details on the size and scope of its inventory.



Number of nuclear weapons by country in January 2020
Statista

Another Pearl Harbor?

By Daniel Gallington to the Washington Times 15 June, 2020

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, primarily as a strategic warning to us.

They probably did not expect it would mean a total war with them, let alone a total defeat and destruction of their pervasive Asia-Pacific empire. What Japan wanted was to get us out of the Asia-Pacific region, which they believed was their exclusive domain. Also, there were several ongoing and serious trade disputes between the United States and Japan. Nevertheless, the attack on Pearl Harbor — even with the hindsight of a rather obvious historical context — was a surprise to us and most of the rest of the world. And it remains a painful, but classic example of the fundamental communication disconnects between Asia and the West.

In short, Pearl Harbor was a classic “strategic miscalculation” by the Japanese and the proximate cause of their total military and political destruction as the pre-eminent power in Asia, where they had ruled for many years. At the same time, it was a classic “strategic miscalculation” by us in that we didn’t see it coming. The result of the Japanese defeat was the complete realignment of political boundaries in Asia, which caused or contributed to subsequent wars in the region.

An example is post-World War II Korea, the place of yet another surprise for us — when hordes of Chinese soldiers swept across the border in 1950 in what we know as the “Korean War.” Almost a million Chinese soldiers were killed or wounded in the Korean War — with total casualties of more than 5 million — demonstrating the willingness of China to sacrifice virtually unlimited human capital to protect its regional autonomy and influence. For some additional perspective — and in its various conflicts with Japan in the ’30s and ’40s — China lost 20 million-30 million people, depending on which statistical source one selects.

Some basic questions:

- Are we on the way to a similar confrontation with China like we had with Japan? Would we know it if we were? How would we know?”

While it’s scary to contemplate, we probably haven’t thought enough about whether our current tensions with China could result in a military attack of some kind against us, how and where it could happen and our reactions thereto. -- In this context, and in the early days of NATO Europe, we had a “trip-wire” policy that assured the Soviet Union that we would use nuclear weapons against them if they invaded/attacked a NATO country. It was a serious deterrent that proved very effective for many years in Europe, and to the frustration of the Soviet Union. Do we need a similar/analogous policy toward China in Asia/Pacific? If we don’t have such a policy does it give China a reason to doubt our resolve?

- Do we understand China is entirely capable of making the same basic kind of miscalculation that the Japanese did, if they carry out military actions against us in the “Asia-Pacific” region?

Unfortunately, we probably don’t see the current conflict/tension with China as including this dynamic; however, it most surely does for China and we should have a plan that addresses this distinct possibility. In other words, a very basic planning assumption should be that any military conflict with China in — or involving the Asia-Pacific region — would likely begin with a surprise attack against us of some kind.

- Are we any better at understanding Asian cultures, motivations and intentions today than we were in 1941? -- Probably not.

- Are Asian cultures any better at understanding our culture, motivations and intentions? -- Probably not.

Where should we go from here?

China understands the United States much more than the United States understands China, but not nearly as much as it thinks it does. And China is entirely capable of making the same kind of mistake the Japanese did in 1941 — and for an analogous set of reasons. And, what has been described in summary here are events and dynamics that could take place in the near future, and we can be assured that China has planned for them.

Some possible scenarios could arise out of recent events in Hong Kong, Taiwan, the South China Sea, Korea, the China–India border dispute, the financial and political dynamics of COVID-19, currency manipulation, the persecution of minorities in China, immigration, access to key technologies, and the prosecution of Chinese nationals for various crimes, just to name a few. And above all, and with regard to China and Asia in general, the best lesson here is from “Cool Hand Luke,” in that “what we have here is a failure to communicate.” With China, we should always start from the position that it’s exactly that.

Daniel Gallington served in senior national security positions.

*Post Note: The result of the Japanese defeat was **the complete realignment of political boundaries in Asia**, which caused or contributed to subsequent wars in the region.*

If The U.S. Resumes Nuclear Weapons Testing, India Will Follow

By: Hasan Ehtisham for [The National Interest](#) // June 13, 2020

On May 15, according to [media reports](#), the Trump administration conducted serious discussions on whether or not to break the informal ban to carry out a nuclear test explosion.

Washington's intent to resume nuclear testing threatens to elevate already grown strategic tensions with China, Russia, and others. Some analysts comprehended that this is a [proper course to influence](#) Russia and China to support Washington's plan for trilateral talks related to nuclear arms controls and disarmament issues. Throughout the Cold War, hundreds of nuclear tests were carried out by the United States and the Soviet Union.

But when the Soviet Union in 1991 announced a unilateral moratorium, the United States under H.W. Bush administration reciprocated with a [moratorium on nuclear weapons testing](#). The suspension of nuclear tests provided the diplomatic room for the world to begin negotiations regarding the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to impose a blanket ban on test explosions of nuclear weapons. Russia and all NATO members except the United States have already ratified the CTBT. This latest move by the U.S. to resume nuclear testing can also contribute to the wider attempt to [sabotage the agenda](#) of CTBT.

The head of the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation](#) (CTBTO), Lassina Zerbo, has presaged that any attempt by the United States to recommence nuclear testing would have serious ramifications for global peace and security. While mentioning CTBTO's close relationship with the U.S. National Laboratories, Zerbo categorically precluded the notion of any requirement for nuclear testing. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian has also shown “grave concerns about the report.”

He urged the Trump administration to meet its “[due obligations and honour its commitment](#) by upholding the purpose and objective of the CTBT.” During the contemporary strategic competition of major powers, an uncertain situation has emerged about any sort of political gains for Washington against Moscow or Shanghai with a nuclear test. The most plausible consequence of a nuclear explosion by the United States at this point will facilitate other countries to resume nuclear testing. Washington will be criticized by other nuclear weapons states for violating the nuclear test moratorium practiced since 1998 by all countries, except North Korea.

[Robert Rosner](#), a professor of physics at the University of Chicago, has evaluated that after the United States others will also resume nuclear testing and “the crucial question is: Who are the others?” In the South Asian strategic scenario, India will be that other country. India, one of the world's fastest developing nuclear weapons states, has long been waiting for such a mistake, particularly from the United States, so that it could revoke the pledge of nuclear non-testing. It has been unable to do so just because it aspires to become part of the [Nuclear Suppliers Group](#) (NSG) and other global regimes. Once the United States resumes nuclear testing, India will find it easier to further demonstrate its nuclear weapon capability.

This latest paradigm shift by the United States allows India to conduct more nuclear testing to assess the design of its thermonuclear weapon which it claimed to have detonated on May 11, 1998, in the Operation Shakti-1. Numerous [international experts believe](#) that the results of the thermonuclear test were highly inflated and doubt that the device successfully ignited the second fusion stage of the explosion. The [scientist community](#) who

coordinated the Operation Shakti-1 in 1998 has concluded that the test was a failure, as the yield of the fusion device never produced the desired results.

Nuclear pundits in India have already materialized a comprehensive and robust nuclear facility to meet any kind of eventuality that could provide India with an opportunity to carry out further nuclear tests. For instance, in 2012, India's [secret nuclear city](#) at Challakere, Karnataka was revealed by independent researchers. Experts have shown apprehensions that the facility will be a major complex of nuclear centrifuges under military control, along with atomic research laboratories, weapons and aircraft testing sites.

Once it starts functioning, the facility would enable India to modernize its existing nuclear warheads and the nuclear fuel from domestic reserves will be used for a thermonuclear weapon. India is also working on a [uranium enrichment plant](#) from which it will be able to produce about twice as much weapons-grade uranium as New Delhi will need for its operational nuclear weapon programme. That significant excess of the enriched uranium would be used for the development of thermonuclear weapons.

India has already done the necessary homework to manipulate any step the United States may take in the near future. The [Defence Research and Development Organisation](#) (DRDO) has signaled the capacity to conduct more nuke tests at short notice. If India alters the status of its moratorium on nuclear testing, then it would not only upset the deterrence balance but most significantly it would start a fresh nuclear arms race in South Asia.

Under the pretext of growing [Indo-US strategic relations](#) in the region, the U.S. is offering a free ride to India to enhance the nuclear capability by resuming nuclear testing. It is strategically prudent for the U.S. national interest to uphold its commitments regarding the unilateral pledge of nuclear non-testing while ratifying the CTBT. The United States should also press India to continue its moratorium on nuclear weapons testing which was [the primary prerequisite](#) for the U.S.-India nuclear deal of 2008. It will reinforce the global standards against nuclear testing and encourage regional stability.

Hasan Ehtisham is the M. Phil Scholar of Defence and Strategic Studies at Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad, Pakistan.

China, Pak possess more nuclear weapons than India: Defence think-tank SIPRI

The nine nuclear-armed countries—the US, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea—together account for an estimated 13,400 nuclear weapons as of January 2020.

By: Rahul Singh | Edited by Meenakshi Ray for the Hindustan Times, New Delhi // Updated: Jun 15, 2020 08:04 IST

China and Pakistan possess more nuclear weapons than India, according to a new yearbook released by a leading conflict and armaments think-tank on Monday.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)'s Yearbook 2020 pegs the number of nuclear warheads in the Chinese arsenal at 320, while the nuclear forces of Pakistan and India are estimated to have 160 and 150 weapons, respectively. The figures have been updated till January 2020. India and its neighbours were ranked in the same order by SIPRI last year too when China possessed 290 nuclear warheads, Pakistan 150-160 and India had 130-140 warheads at the start of 2019.

The findings come at a time when India and China are caught in a border confrontation along the contested line of actual control in eastern Ladakh. Also, there is a noticeable military buildup on both sides of the border—stretching from Ladakh to Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. China is carrying out “significant modernisation” of its nuclear arsenal and developing a “so-called nuclear triad for the first time” made up of new land and sea-based missiles and nuclear-capable fighter jets, the SIPRI said in a statement announcing the launch of the yearbook.

“India and Pakistan are slowly increasing the size and diversity of their nuclear forces,” it said. The yearbook, which “assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security”, found while there has been an overall decrease in the number of nuclear warheads in 2019, all nuclear weapon-possessing countries continue to modernise their nuclear arsenals. With 6,375 and 5,800 warheads, Russia and the United States together possess more than 90% of global nuclear weapons.

The nine nuclear-armed countries—the US, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea—together account for an estimated 13,400 nuclear weapons as of January 2020. “This marked a decrease from the 13,865 nuclear weapons that SIPRI estimated these states possessed at the beginning of 2019. Around 3,720 of the nuclear weapons are currently deployed with operational forces and nearly 1,800 of these are kept in a state of high operational alert,” SIPRI’s statement said.

It also highlighted low levels of transparency in reporting on nuclear weapon capabilities. “China now publicly displays its nuclear forces more frequently than in the past but releases little information about force numbers or future development plans,” the statement said. “The governments of India and Pakistan make statements about some of their missile tests but provide no information about the status or size of their arsenals,” it added.

India was the third-biggest military spender in the world last year after the US and China, according to a SIPRI report released in April. It was the first time that two Asian countries featured among the top three military spenders. New Delhi’s defence spending grew by 6.8% to reach \$71.1 billion in 2019, said the report on Trends in World in World Military Expenditure.

Finally, a Good New Snap-Back Plan on Iran

by [Peter Huessy](#) for The Gatestone Institute // June 13, 2020

- The RSC plan also advocates that Congress impose further new sanctions on "Iran's petrochemical, shipping, financial, construction and automotive sectors." Legislation would also target "Iran's human rights violations and regional aggression, including in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. And it suggests sanctioning the **Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges** (INSTEX), a European mechanism that the United States has criticized as a way to evade US sanctions on Iran."
- In an unprecedented but welcome manner, the RSC bill would for the first time place "new sanctions on the arms industries of countries like Russia and China that return to selling weapons to Iran, the banks facilitating any sale of weapons to Iran, and the companies shipping weapons."
- Diplomacy will not stop Iran. Real pressure will.

- With the new RSC strategy, the US and its allies have a real shot at taking down the regime in Iran. That would indeed signal the success of economic "maximum pressure."

The Republican Study Committee (RSC) in the House of Representatives, [proposed](#) on June 10, 2020, an unprecedentedly strong new Iran policy. The package of proposed legislation would end all Iranian waivers, snap-back economic sanctions in place prior to the Iran nuclear deal, and set severe economic penalties on those seeking to sell advanced weaponry to Iran.

The new GOP plan [also advocates that Congress](#) impose further new sanctions on "Iran's petrochemical, shipping, financial, construction and automotive sectors." Legislation would also target "Iran's human rights violations and regional aggression, including in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. [And it suggests](#) sanctioning the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), a European mechanism that the United States has criticized as a way to evade US sanctions on Iran."

It is true since [the United States in 2018 ended](#) its support for the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, (known as the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action (JCPOA)), it adopted a policy of "maximum economic pressure." The hope was that such a policy would stop Iran from:

- (1) building nuclear weapons,
- (2) arming terrorists,
- (3) fielding ballistic missiles, and
- (4) expanding illicit business with Europe, Russia, China, Iraq and Venezuela.

Illicit business would include both the purchase of advanced military weapons and the export of crude oil and electricity. While the policy had some important aspects, there were, regrettably, extensive loopholes. The diplomats at the State Department wanted [training funds for Lebanon's](#) military, so a waiver was granted, despite the circumstance that Iran's proxy, Hezbollah, now effectively [controls](#) much of the country.

The US Treasury Department, apparently hoping to secure European favor, waived sanctions [to allow European](#) nuclear reactor technology cooperative work with Iran. The US Administration economists, evidently wishing to help Iraq, waived restrictions and [gave the green light](#) to Iran to sell \$800 million in electricity to Iraq. Unfortunately, even under existing sanctions, Iran was already expanding its nuclear weapons fuel project -- producing 400% of the allowable material -- supporting Hezbollah with new smuggling technologies, such as [miniature submarines](#) that can carry even more drugs more quickly in America's own South American backyard, selling crude oil to Venezuela, and arming and financing proxy terror groups.

Giving Iran waivers would hardly make things better. If the UN arms embargo on Iran expires in October, the threat from Iran could worsen exponentially as Russia and China could sell Iran some most deadly new military weaponry. What then are the prospects for the new strategy being adopted by Congress? [As Adam Kredo](#) of the Washington Free Beacon has explained, the Congress may indeed adopt the new strategy through passage of a series of bills. Even some senior [Democrats may support](#) the plan.

These include Sen. Robert Menendez (D., N.J.), Rep. Ted Deutch (D., Fla.), and Rep. Eliot Engel (D., N.Y.), all of whom had expressed concerns about the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and Tehran's regional ambitions. Key to their thinking seems to be that Iran without question regularly [cheats](#) on the nuclear deal. The real problem may not be in Congress but with the waiver enthusiasts within the administration: they may try to derail the new push to universally crackdown on Iran as outlined here, and however inadvertently, again let Iran off the hook for its illegal nuclear work and support for terrorism.

One can understand the brief for diplomacy and a negotiated deal with Iran, but as Israel has shown the world, one does not negotiate deals with Iran and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps ([IRGC](#)). They -- along with a number of other countries with which the US seems to wish it could negotiate -- simply do not keep up their end of any bargain. Israel has battled the IRGC in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, while having to bomb secretive Iraqi and Syrian nuclear reactors.

There are lessons here.

Iran is dedicated not only to the destruction of Israel but also to the [elimination](#) of US influence and presence in the greater Middle East. **Diplomacy will not stop Iran. Real pressure will.** The RSC policy proposal has learned such lessons and "includes more [than 140 new initiatives](#)." According to the RSC Chairman, Rep. Mike Johnson (R-LA), and the Task Force Chairman Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC), the [Iran proposals include](#) "the toughest sanctions that have ever been proposed by Congress on Iran."

Given that Iran remains in wholesale violation of the 2015 nuclear agreement, continues to support terror groups in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan and is building the largest inventory of ballistic missiles in the entirety of the Middle East, one expert who welcomed the House effort told this author that Iran for too long has wriggled free of sanctions. The new strategy closes all the loopholes and augments the administration's maximum pressure campaign, giving the free world a real shot at ending Iran's threats to its interests.

In an unprecedented but welcome manner, the RSC bill [would for the first time](#) place "new sanctions on the arms industries of countries like Russia and China that return to selling weapons to Iran, the banks facilitating any sale of weapons to Iran, and the companies shipping weapons." Finally, under the GOP's new plan, a key provision bars any administration from lifting sanctions [without getting approval](#) from Congress, which would help cement this sanctions law remaining in place as long as necessary. With the new RSC strategy, the US and its allies have a real shot at taking down the regime in Iran. That would indeed signal the success of economic "maximum pressure."

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.

NATO Looks to Counter Russia's Growing Nuclear Capabilities

Air Force Magazine Online, June 17 | Amy McCullough

NATO defense ministers on June 17 agreed on three measures aimed at countering Russia's "extensive and growing arsenal of nuclear-capable missiles" during the first of a two-day meeting held via secure teleconference due to the new coronavirus pandemic, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said.

The “balanced package of political and military elements” includes efforts to strengthen the Alliance’s integrated air and missile defense as well as its advanced capabilities, and adapts NATO’s intelligence and exercises, Stoltenberg said.

“A number of allies have announced they are acquiring new air and missile defense systems, including Patriot and [Surface to Air Missile Platform/Terrain] batteries,” and allies also are investing in new platforms such as fifth-generation fighter aircraft, he said.

The announcement follows Russia’s decision last year to deploy SSC-8 missiles. Stoltenberg said the dual-capable, mobile missiles are “hard to detect” and “can reach European cities with little warning time.” They also “lower the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons,” he added, noting the deployment led to the end of the INF Treaty.

In addition, Russia’s hypersonic glide vehicle is now operational, and the country is modernizing its intercontinental ballistic missiles, has tested its air-launched ballistic missile system, and is developing a nuclear-powered cruise missile, he said.

“We have also seen a pattern over many years of irresponsible Russian nuclear rhetoric, aimed at intimidating and threatening NATO allies,” Stoltenberg said. “Russia’s behavior is destabilizing and dangerous.”

The comments come one day after two USAF F-22s, supported by KC-135 tankers and an E-3 AWACS aircraft, intercepted two formations of nuclear-capable Russian bombers off the coast of Alaska. Less than a week earlier, USAF Raptors intercepted two more Russian bomber formations flying off the Alaskan coast, and Russian fighters intercepted USAF B-52Hs operating in international airspace over the Baltic Sea on June 15.

NATO’s Nuclear Planning Group also met and determined it will not deploy new land-based nuclear missiles in Europe, though it will maintain the Alliance’s deterrence and defense posture.

“NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements have served us well for decades. Allowing us to forge common ground on nuclear issues,” Stoltenberg said. “The NATO nuclear deterrent in Europe remains vital for peace and freedom in Europe.”

The defense ministers also called on China, as a rising power, to participate in global arms control, reiterated their commitment to step up efforts in Iraq to ensure the Islamic State group does not return, and said it will adjust its presence in Afghanistan to support the peace process, though the defense leaders also emphasized the need for the Taliban to “live up to their commitments,” Stoltenberg said.

U.S. ‘not going to allow Russia and China to continue’ increasing nuclear weapons stockpile, top negotiator says

CBSNews.com, June 19 | Pamela Falk

U.S. arms control talks with Russia, and perhaps China, are slated for Monday, June 22 in Vienna, just days after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo flew to Honolulu to meet with China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi at Hickam Air Force Base. The talks are aimed at bringing China into broader negotiations with Russia to limit all three countries' nuclear weapons stockpiles.

Concerns are mounting about Russian and Chinese interest in developing their nuclear arsenals. The talks come two months after a State Department report raised questions about their compliance with arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements and commitments.

"China's overall nuclear stockpile is going to double over the next 10 years. That of course is a great concern," U.S. arms control negotiator Ambassador Robert A. Wood told CBS News.

Wood is the U.S. Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, and serves as U.S. Commissioner for the New START Treaty's Bilateral Consultative Commission. He has been a U.S. Foreign Service officer and worked with other agencies of the government for 32 years, serving both Republican and Democratic administrations. Along with Marshall Billingslea, who took up his post last month as President Trump's senior envoy on arms control, Wood said the arms control team is "laser focused" on bringing both Russia and China into a new framework agreement.

Wood spoke with CBS News' Pamela Falk from his State Department office in Geneva.

"We're not going to allow Russia and China to continue to move forward on their modernizations and increasing the stockpiles of nuclear weapons," Wood said in the interview. "This is something that the president said cannot continue. And so, right now, we are modernizing our stockpile. But we are not increasing the number in any substantial way. And we are having to deal with and respond to these growing challenges from Russia and China. And we cannot turn a blind eye to this."

Read more excerpts of the interview below:

CBS News' Pamela Falk: You have been calling on China to come to the table for a new agreement, a trilateral arms control negotiation, at a time when relations are, to say the least, strained. What is it about China's nuclear capacity that worries you and are they expanding stockpiles?

Ambassador Robert Wood: With regard to China, let me just put in a little bit of historical context. In the last 10 years, the U.S. has been trying to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in its overall national security strategy. China and Russia have gone in the opposite direction. China has been modernizing its strategic nuclear forces. It's also modernizing its non-strategic nuclear weapons that pose a very serious security concern to U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region as well as some of our allies, and China is the least transparent of all the P5 countries [the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council: U.S., U.K., France, Russia, China]. So there's some real concerns here about China's buildup and we don't really have a great sense of what that exact buildup looks like, except that we do know that China has been developing mobile ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles]. They're assumed to have a nuclear triad [nuclear weapons delivery capacity from land, submarine and aircraft].

As I said, I think the biggest problem we have is lack of transparency coming from China, and we have discussed with China on numerous occasions, the need for all nuclear weapon states to meet their NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty] commitments to make a good faith effort to negotiate on nuclear disarmament. So that is why we have been calling for China to come to the table with the United States and Russia, so that we can start to address some of these issues that we have great concern about. ...

We think it's imperative that China comes to the table, and there will be a seat there in Vienna for them. We hope they will show up.

When we spoke earlier you talked about a doubling by China of some of this capacity. Could you explain that?

It's expected that, at a minimum, China's overall nuclear stockpile is going to increase over the next 10 — double over the next 10 years. That of course is of great concern to not just the United States but another, a lot of other countries and it, as I said earlier, they are, in essence, growing their ballistic missile submarine fleet. They are developing road-mobile ICBMs. They are engaged in developing hypersonic weapons.

And as I said, China has been free from any kind of constraints on them with regard to arms control, because the treaties the U.S. and Russia have agreed on in the past [do] not include China. So we think it is long overdue for China to come to the table, and that's an imperative, that is a priority for this administration and we're going to continue to push until China does take the responsible position and come to the table, so that we can have negotiations on these weapons of concern.

Is there an implication that the U.S. will also engage in modernization of its nuclear weapons, if Russia and China don't fall into line?

We're not going to allow Russia and China to continue to move forward on their modernizations and increasing the stockpiles of nuclear weapons, and this is something that the president said cannot continue. And so, right now, we are modernizing our stockpile. But we are not increasing the number in any substantial way, and we are having to deal with and respond to these growing challenges from Russia and China. And we cannot turn a blind eye to this. ...

We have to deal with the world as it is, and not as we would like it to be. And so, with Russia and China moving in this different trajectory than we have been moving, we have to do what's in our national interest and not only in our interest but in the interest of our allies and partners.

Nuclear modernization speeding up as arms control on the brink

By: Aaron Mehta for Defense News // 1 day ago

WASHINGTON — Overall nuclear warheads in the world decreased in 2019, but broad modernization efforts by the biggest nuclear countries — along with a degradation of arms control agreements around the world — could mean a dangerous mix for the future, according to an annual report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI.

The organization estimated that at the end of 2019, nine countries possessed a total of 13,400 nuclear warheads, down from the 13,865 estimated in SIPRI's previous report, which in turn was a drop from 14,465 the year before. The reductions were primarily due to numbers dropping under the New START nuclear agreement between Russia and the U.S., which experts largely expect not to be renewed at the start of the new year.

Russia is the largest holder of nuclear warheads, according to SIPRI's numbers, with 6,735 total, of which 1,570 are deployed. The U.S. follows at 5,800, with 1,750 deployed. The two countries account for over 90 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal. The United Kingdom (250 total, 120 deployed) and France (290 total, 280 deployed) are the other two nations believed to have deployed nuclear warheads. China (320 total), India (150 total), Pakistan (160 total), Israel (90 total) and North Korea, (30-40 total) round out SIPRI's list.

Both the U.S. and Russia are engaged in expensive, widespread modernization efforts of its nuclear arsenal. America is upgrading both its legacy nuclear warheads with new designs, as well as updating its fleet of nuclear-capable bombers, submarines and ICBMs. Earlier this year, the Pentagon deployed for the first time the W76-2, a low-yield variant of the nuclear warhead traditionally used on the Trident submarine launched missile, and early design work is being done on another new submarine launched warhead design, known as the W93.

Russia, meanwhile, has spoken openly about developing hypersonic weapons that could be nuclear equipped and has invested in novel weapons such as the Status-6, an underwater drone that could be equipped with a nuclear warhead. Moscow has also vocalized new deployment plans for its weapons and on June 2 made official a policy that it may use nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack.

Those investments by the world's two nuclear superpowers come against a backdrop of the collapse of numerous arms control agreements. 2019 saw the formal end of the Intermediate Range and Shorter Range Missiles (INF) treaty, and in May the U.S. announced its intention to withdraw from the Open Skies arms control verification agreement. The last major arms control agreement between Russia and the U.S. is New START, which is set to expire in February of 2021. In recent weeks the U.S. has announced its intention to start negotiations on a new arms control agreement that would include China.

However, Chinese officials have repeatedly and categorically denied that it would be willing to join such an agreement, and experts largely view any efforts to create a trilateral nuclear arms control pact as a New START replacement are non-starters, leading to widespread agreement among analyst that New START is likely doomed under the Trump administration. "The deadlock over New START and the collapse of the 1987 Soviet-US Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate Range and Shorter Range Missiles (INF) Treaty in 2019.

This suggests the era of bilateral nuclear arms control agreements between Russia and the USA might be coming to an end," said Shannon Kile, Director of SIPRI's nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation program. "The loss of key channels of communication between Russia and the USA that were intended to promote transparency and prevent misperceptions about their respective nuclear force postures and capabilities could potentially lead to a new nuclear arms race."

New Space Strategy Is Heavy on 'Winning,' Light on Details

By Patrick Tucker Technology Editor for Defense One // June 17, 2020

The first major update in nine years set out more forceful goals, but leaves gaps.

The U.S. military must be capable of "winning wars that extend into space," according to a summary of the Pentagon's new Space Strategy. That's a rhetorical escalation from the 2011 version, which merely called space a "contested" domain. But to judge from a [summary](#) released Wednesday, the new strategy is heavy on goals and light on details. "I think it's in some way a step backward [from the 2011](#) strategy," said Brian Weeden, technical advisor for the Secure World Foundation.

Weeden described the new strategy as big on goals, vague on “the how,” and mute on “the means.” He noted that some of the 2011 strategy’s big to-do items are well underway, such as working with commercial satellite providers and private space companies to “improve the resilience of space architectures upon which we rely.” DARPA has launched research programs, including [Blackjack](#), to show that it might be possible to use commercial satellites for some military applications. The Army has [signed a deal](#) to try out SpaceX’s Starlink satellites.

Weeden said that while the new document did use more forceful language, such as the reference to “war” above, in describing space as an area where the U.S. military would operate, the details are largely lacking. For instance, the new strategy says that the “DoD will deter aggression and attacks in space and, if deterrence fails, be capable of winning wars that extend into space.” But the summary does not say whether that means the Pentagon will continue to rely on ground-based missiles and jammers to protect America’s satellites — or, perhaps, will introduce defensive weapons to space.

Weeden noted that [at least some](#) in the national security space community are calling for the latter. For one thing, tit-for-tat deterrence is unlikely to succeed because the U.S. military relies far more on satellites, notably the Space-Based Infrared System, than does China. He pointed out that the Chinese are currently deploying lots of satellites in Low Earth Orbit to better track U.S. ships, a much more practical and immediate concern for the Chinese. “You might even call it a resilient architecture” he said dryly.

Of course, the Pentagon may have classified efforts to protect U.S. and allied satellites. But open-source literature, at least, does not indicate that the Pentagon has any weapons in space. “Part of deterrence is convincing the enemy. If they can’t see it either, then they aren’t deterred,” he said.

Let Space Development Agency Flourish as 'Constructive Disrupter'

By [Henry F. Cooper](#) for NewsMax // Thursday, 18 June 2020 09:34 AM

The June 15, 2020 Space News carried the most hopeful article that I've read in years, that we may develop and deploy truly effective space defenses!

Derek Tournear, Mike Griffin, and Lisa Porter aptly titled their very important article "[The Space Development Agency must be a constructive disrupter!](#)" They persuasively explained why the Space Development Agency (SDA) must be allowed to operate outside of the Pentagon’s legacy acquisition systems until it has had time to innovate, flourish, and deliver — particularly in providing the nation’s future civil and military space systems.

To be truly effective, a Space Force requires more than a new military service that just rearranges the longstanding players on the field — it requires new innovative players to compete with other nations committed to achieving a dominant role in space — and, [as I have argued previously](#), with whom we are playing "catch-up" as these authors also well understand. The Pentagon spends billions and takes well over a decade to develop and deploy its major satellite systems.

For example, the Air Force is still trying to build a space-based sensor system conceived over 30 years ago, before my watch as Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) Director. Make no mistake, our ability to provide needed warfare capabilities depends on acquiring and maintaining superior space systems to identify and defeat threats that modern technology will surely enable.

And their threatening capabilities are growing.

As Defense Secretary Mark Esper recently stated, "dominance in space will require a whole-of-government approach to maintain U.S. technological superiority and leadership. This means we must out-compete, out-innovate, and out-hustle everyone else." I believe Secretary Esper's well justified objective requires space-based interceptors, not only to serve as a sensor adjunct to ground-, sea-, and air-based interceptors, as is currently planned to counter the hypersonics threat.

Our budding Space Force needs an [enterprising and innovative](#) spirit to build affordable, effective space systems to defeat already evident threats to all we hold dear. That would meet the SDA "disruptive" challenge described by Tournear, Griffin and Porter! They describe this approach as "disruptive" because the SDA is intended not to employ the Pentagon's usual stagnating acquisition process.

On my SDI watch, I bitterly complained in writing to the Pentagon's top Acquisition Executive as we overcame the gauntlet of administrative hurdles (involving numerous reviews by a myriad of Pentagon officials and a room full of their review reports) — to initiate the demonstration and validation (DemVal) phase of the formal acquisition process for the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system.

I was not surprised when Israel deployed its Arrow system a decade before THAAD even though they both began at the same time, on my SDI watch. I was pleased to attend a celebration of Patriot's operational deployment at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, while THAAD was being chastised by Congress and given another development chance after numerous delays and test failures. Its operational capability was eventually achieved —after the Pentagon's usual fits and starts.

Hopefully, the SDA can adopt a process more like the Israelis — since we are playing technological catch-up, especially with China, in "militarizing space." The SDA should adopt the approach of President Reagan's SDI, which I was privileged to lead, after defending it to the Soviet negotiators in Geneva — where we gained enormous negotiating leverage from its widely publicized technological advances against which the Soviets could not compete.

As Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said when we hosted her to review our SDI progress in Colorado Springs in 1990, "SDI ended the Cold War without firing a shot." The Soviets knew that our technology was real during the SDI era (1983-93). So, they sought to end the competition. They got their wish when the Clinton administration "took the stars out of Star Wars" as Defense Secretary Les Aspin boasted in early 1993.

Neither Democrat nor Republican administrations have yet revived the SDI pace. Russia and China well understand that fact, and their technological advances now threaten us. SDA can reverse this history. Russia and China no doubt will oppose SDA's "disruptive approach," just as the Soviet Union opposed Ronald Reagan's SDI during the Cold War — and no doubt the "arms control" community will oppose our advances in space just like during the SDI era.

[As previously argued](#), the "powers that be" must resist this arms control siren call and help the SDA rapidly make up this inherited deficiency and advance President Trump's Space Force. Meeting this challenge is urgent as our envoy Marshal Billingslea [begins arms control talks](#) with Russian and Chinese counterparts. Meanwhile, we should exploit advancing technology in the private sector, as SpaceX demonstrated in placing American

astronauts in orbit to join others on the International Space Station — as a stepping stone to return to the Moon, on the way to the first mission to Mars.

Since the Shuttle was retired in 2011 — until the recent SpaceX launch, we relied on Russian technology to carry our astronauts into orbit. This was the first new U.S. launch since Shuttle's 1981 mission. Marc Thiessen applauded this SpaceX's achievement in his June 1, 2020 article in The Washington Post, "[SpaceX's success is one small step for man, one giant leap for civilization](#)," a paraphrase of Neil Armstrong's famous comment to the World as he took his first step on the Moon.

Thiessen's reference to the "giant leap for civilization" pointed to the benefits of our private sector as compared to the government's lethargy. This SpaceX mission exploited another important technological achievement, one that began with President Reagan's SDI and is now common practice for SpaceX. About nine minutes into its mission, after launching the astronauts toward orbit, the Falcon 9 booster returned to Earth, landing upright on a "drone ship" in the Atlantic Ocean, in what has become routine to "stick" a landing.

That rocket now can be refurbished and reused, significantly lowering the cost of getting to orbit. Simply stated, it is cheaper to reuse an old rocket than to build a new one. This idea was first demonstrated by the Single Stage to Orbit (SSTO) SDI effort, and now is proving it is cheaper to reuse rockets than to buy new ones. As Thiessen argued, such innovation is making America a leader again. And [as I wrote a year ago](#), SpaceX is now clearly demonstrating it has an opportunity to revive the best of the SDI era!

Last week, SpaceX [launched another 60 Starlink internet satellites](#) into low earth orbit, increasing the total number of internet satellites to nearly 500. Elon Musk, SpaceX's founder and CEO, this week announced his plans for [additional launches every couple of weeks for the rest of the year](#), intended ultimately to provide worldwide coverage. The first stage landed upright at sea to "top off" the mission by "sticking" that rocket for its fifth consecutive landing — to be prepared to support more future launches.

This is the kind of technology and innovation that the SDA should pursue to build key Space Force systems. In particular, the Space Force should include a modern Brilliant Pebbles space-based interceptor system — the most cost-effective ballistic missile defense (BMD) system considered by the SDI efforts, based on technology available in the 1980s-90s. That effort exploited technology then existing in the private sector. With today's technology, SDA can build a modern Brilliant Pebbles for even less expense—[as I have long argued](#).

During the SDI era, the top Pentagon acquisition authorities estimated that about \$20 billion in today's dollars could develop, deploy and operate 1000 Brilliant Pebbles for 20 years. Should be less today! That's a worthy challenge for SDA to beat as a Constructive Disrupter! You think?

Ambassador Henry F. (Hank) Cooper, Chairman of High Frontier and an acknowledged expert on strategic and space national security issues, was President Ronald Reagan's Chief Negotiator at the Geneva Defense and Space Talks with the Soviet Union and Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) Director during the George H.W. Bush administration. Previously, he served as the Assistant Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Deputy Assistant USAF Secretary, Science Adviser to the Air Force Weapons Laboratory and a USAF Reserve Captain. In the private sector he was Chairman of Applied Research Associates, a high technology company; member of the technical staff of Jaycor, R&D Associates and Bell Telephone Laboratories; a Senior Associate of the National Institute for Public Policy; and Visiting Fellow at the Heritage Foundation. He received B.S. and M.S. degrees from Clemson and a PhD from New York University, all in Mechanical Engineering. Read Ambassador Cooper's Reports — [More Here](#).

CONGRESSIONAL

By Susan Cornwell

SASC

June 11: SASC completed markup of FY21 NDAA Bill. As soon as report is available ICBM funding chart will be updated. Likely next week

- **Total of \$740.5 Billion.**
- Includes a base defense budget of \$636.4 billion for the Department of Defense and \$25.9 billion for national security programs within the Department of Energy.
- It also authorizes \$69 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations and \$8.15 billion for military construction

Specifics on Nuclear Modernization (taken from Executive Summary)

Recognizing that a strong and secure nuclear deterrent will serve to counter threats from strategic competitors, the FY21 **bill supports our nuclear triad**, command and control, and infrastructure, and better aligns the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and DOD budget processes

- Improves DOD coordination, insight, and participation in the NNSA budget development process and improves transparency of the NNSA budget for Congress and the public,
- **Prohibits the use of FY21 funding to reduce the quantity or alert status of intercontinental ballistic missiles below 400,**
- Improves cybersecurity requirements for NNSA contractors and subcontractors,
- Clarifies the role of the Nuclear Weapons Council in validating nuclear weapons requirements,
- Authorizes certain military construction projects to convert Minuteman III launch facilities to Ground Based Strategic Deterrent configurations under certain conditions.

SASC Complete Markup of Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act

Thursday, June 11, 2020

U.S. Senators Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Jack Reed (D-R.I.), chairman and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, announced that the Committee had advanced the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 25-2. During the subcommittee and full committee markups of the legislation, the Committee considered 391 amendments and adopted 229 bipartisan amendments. The bill now heads to the Senate floor for consideration.

“This year marks the 60th year in a row that the Committee has fulfilled our Constitutional duty to provide for the common defense by advancing the National Defense Authorization Act — once again with overwhelming support. There’s a reason for this: It’s because this bill is, to its core,

bipartisan, reflecting equal input from Republicans and Democrats alike. There isn't too much Congress does anymore on a bipartisan basis and for so many consecutive years — but we all agree that supporting our troops and defending our nation are two of our most important priorities,” Senator Inhofe said.

“Building on the last two years, this year’s NDAA charts a decisive course of action to implement the National Defense Strategy, regain a credible military deterrent, and, ultimately, achieve a lasting peace, not only for us, but for our children and grandchildren,” Senator Inhofe said. “It does so by prioritizing strategic competition with China and Russia, particularly in the Indo-Pacific theater, investing in a modern, lethal joint force, spurring innovation at every level of the Pentagon, and, of course, ensuring our troops have the training, equipment, and resources they need to succeed in their missions. I thank Senator Reed for his partnership and the entire Committee for their input and work. Next up — I look forward to another overwhelming show of support when it receives swift consideration on the floor.”

“This bipartisan NDAA is a needed step toward strengthening national security and prioritizing national defense resources. It provides our troops with a well-deserved pay raise and tools to protect the health and well-being of our forces and their families. I commend Chairman Inhofe for his bipartisan leadership, collaboration, and commitment to ensuring our troops have a budget and policies to match their extraordinary courage and sacrifice,” said Senator Reed.

Highlights:

Authorized Funding

The NDAA supports a total of \$740.5 billion in fiscal year 2021 funding for national defense, in line with the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019. Within this total, the legislation authorizes a base defense budget of \$636.4 billion for the Department of Defense and \$25.9 billion for national security programs within the Department of Energy. The NDAA also authorizes \$69 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations and \$8.15 billion for military construction. The bill prudently aligns this funding to enhance national security, advance our national interests and achieve irreversible momentum in implementation of the National Defense Strategy.

Caring for Our All-Volunteer Force and Their Families

The committee takes its obligation to our men and women in uniform and their families seriously. The NDAA authorizes funding and includes policies that will improve quality of life for those who sacrifice so much in defense of our nation. The legislation provides for the requested 3 percent pay raise for our troops and prioritizes support for family readiness, including spouse employment opportunities and child care. Troop end strength is authorized largely in line with the Administration’s request, but reflects a cautious approach, due to the effects of the novel coronavirus pandemic on recruitment and training. The bill also ensures previous reforms to the military privatized housing program and to the military health system are implemented to rigorous standards, and reemphasizes a focus on training to ensure our service members can conduct their missions safely.

Accelerating Implementation of the National Defense Strategy

The National Defense Strategy underpins the FY21 NDAA, guiding its policies and investments. To deter, fight and win against strategic competitors, our forces must be in the right places, at the right time, with the right capabilities and equipment. The FY21 NDAA positions the U.S. military for success — bolstering development of joint capabilities, emphasizing a combat-credible forward posture and ensuring the United States can compete effectively with China and Russia. Critically, the NDAA prioritizes the Indo-Pacific theater by establishing the Pacific Deterrence

Initiative (PDI) to focus resources on credibility gaps in the region and enhancing transparency and oversight. Throughout the bill, alliances and partnerships are strengthened and enhanced.

Maintaining or Regaining our Military Superiority

The FY21 NDAA acknowledges the need to restore, maintain or expand our comparative advantage over China and Russia, particularly for key capabilities and technologies like hypersonic weapons, biotechnologies and cybersecurity. The bill spurs innovation to allow the United States to attain asymmetric military advantage. The bill directs investments and supports equipment, weapons platforms and programs that will protect our military supremacy in the seas, in the skies, in space, in cyberspace, and on land, including next-generation aircraft, battle force ships design and nuclear modernization. The bill promotes the concept that the best way to preserve peace around the world is through a credible and effective military deterrent — ensuring that our adversaries receive the message that under any circumstances, they will never win a fight against the United States.

Creating a More Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Organization within the Pentagon

The third tenet of the National Defense Strategy is to “reform the Department’s business practices for greater performance and affordability.” As such, the NDAA implements policies, targets investments and directs oversight that ensures the Department of Defense will be a more responsive steward of taxpayer dollars and a more responsive support system for our troops in the field, with the most efficient and effective management possible. Building on reforms enacted in years past, the legislation reforms the Pentagon’s budgeting process and addresses how the Pentagon recruits and retains top civilian talent, particularly in high-demand science, technology and acquisition fields. The ongoing pandemic exposed and exacerbated weaknesses in the supply chain, and the NDAA works to repair these gaps, improve resiliency of the supply chain and strengthen the defense industrial base as a whole.

HASC

Subcommittee Markup Press Background Briefings

****MEDIA ADVISORY****

June 12, 2020

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Armed Services Committee Staff will host bipartisan background briefings on Friday, June 19 and Monday, June 22, ahead of subcommittee markups. These briefings will cover topics in the subcommittee marks and provide an opportunity for members of the press to learn more about the provisions in the bill before the markups commence.

The background briefings are off-camera, open to Capitol Hill credentialed media only, and will each last approximately 30 minutes.

WHAT: Subcommittee Markup Press Briefings

WHO: HASC Subcommittee Staff

WHERE: RSVP to caleb.randall-bodman@mail.house.gov to receive the Microsoft Teams link and dial-in.

Friday, June 19

3:00pm ET – Subcommittee on Intelligence and Emerging Threats and Capabilities

4:15pm ET – Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

Monday, June 22

11:30am ET – Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces

1:15pm ET – Subcommittee on Military Personnel

2:30pm ET – Subcommittee on Readiness

3:45pm ET – Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces

Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Thornberry Announce Markup Schedule for Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act

June 5, 2020

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representatives Adam Smith (D-Wash.) and Mac Thornberry (R-TX), Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, today released the full committee and subcommittee markup schedule for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2021.

House Armed Services Committee Subcommittees will consider their contributions on the following days and times:

Monday, June 22, 2020

11:00 AM — Subcommittee on Intelligence and Emerging Threats and Capabilities Markup (Rayburn 2118 and Cisco Webex)

1:00 PM — Subcommittee on Strategic Forces Markup (Rayburn 2118 and Cisco Webex)

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

11:00 AM — Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces Markup (Rayburn 2118 and Cisco Webex)

1:00 PM — Subcommittee on Military Personnel Markup (Rayburn 2118 and Cisco Webex)

3:00 PM — Subcommittee on Readiness Markup (Rayburn 2118 and Cisco Webex)

4:30 PM — Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces Markup (Rayburn 2118 and Cisco Webex)

Wednesday, July 1, 2020

10:00 AM — Full Committee Markup (Longworth 1100 and Cisco Webex)

Congress Urges Trump Admin to Rein in China's Growing Nuclear Arsenal

Republican lawmakers call for overhaul of aging U.S. nuclear weapons

[Adam Kredo](#) for The WFB // June 15, 2020 2:35 PM

A delegation of 40 Republican lawmakers is urging the Trump administration to constrain China's nuclear weapons program and significantly overhaul America's own arsenal of aging nuclear arms, according to a letter sent Monday to President Donald Trump.

China is on pace to triple its stockpile of nuclear arms, including missiles capable of reaching America, GOP House lawmakers warned in a letter sent Monday to the White House and reported by the Washington Free Beacon for the first time. Beijing's proliferation efforts warrant increased U.S. readiness and lethality in the Indo-Pacific region, they said. "The Chinese regime has put its aggressive nuclear ambitions on full display," necessitating an immediate intervention by the Trump administration, the lawmakers wrote in a letter spearheaded by Rep. Liz Cheney (R., Wyo.).

GOP hawks in Congress want to bolster recent efforts by the Trump administration to include China in the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (known as New START), an arms control pact that restricts the number of nuclear missiles the United States and Russia can deploy. As China looks to expand its program past these caps—with a particular emphasis on countering U.S. capabilities—the Trump administration can no longer ignore the imminent threat this poses, according to the lawmakers.

In a move likely to rankle the arms control community, the GOP delegation is calling on the Trump administration to significantly expand the United States' nuclear arms program to counter China. This would include the construction of advanced missile and missile-defense capabilities, as well as a complete overhaul of the U.S. nuclear triad—land-based nuclear missiles, nuclear-armed submarines, and nuclear-capable aircraft bombers.

"Powered by the state-mandated fusion of its defense and civilian sectors, China, after many years of proclaiming its minimum nuclear deterrent, has developed its own nuclear triad to directly rival America," the lawmakers wrote. In addition to modernizing its arsenal, China is "developing capabilities to evade U.S. missile defenses," a threat that necessitates Beijing's inclusion in the New START treaty.

China is already seeking to expand its nuclear arsenal to more than 1,000 warheads, triple its current stockpile. The Communist regime will at least double its weapons cache in the next decade, in what Defense Intelligence Agency director Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley recently described as "the most rapid expansion and diversification of its nuclear arsenal" in history. The White House must also renew efforts to bring China to the negotiating table, including discussions that reach beyond the New START treaty, the lawmakers said.

It is unclear, however, how much leverage the United States has over China. As negotiations with Russia over the New START treaty languish, the Trump administration has threatened to let the agreement lapse next year if China is not included in the talks. Opponents of this approach argue that the United States has little power to bring China to the negotiating table and risks allowing the most significant arms control treaty in history to collapse.

Republican lawmakers are backing the Trump administration's stance and hope to show the White House that these efforts will be supported by allies in Congress. Trump's "directive to bring China to the table has only grown in urgency since the spread of the coronavirus pandemic," the lawmakers

wrote. "We must compel the CCP to be transparent about both this devastating virus and its nuclear capabilities and ambitions." In addition to Cheney, the letter is backed by prominent Republican China hawks, including Reps. Jim Banks (Ind.), Mike Gallagher (Wis.), Doug Lamborn (Colo.), and Lee Zeldin (N.Y.), among many others.

Horsford and Titus back measure to block nuclear weapons testing

By [John Sadler](#) ([contact](#)) for The Las Vegas Sun // Sunday, June 14, 2020 | 2 a.m.

Nevada lawmakers have been on the offensive over the last two weeks after a *Washington Post* report revealed the Trump administration has discussed resuming nuclear testing.

A group of lawmakers, including two members of Nevada's House delegation, have brought forward a bill that would hit the federal government in the pocketbook, taking away its ability to fund further testing. Going after the money, they say, is likely the best way to stop further testing. Democratic Rep. Steve Horsford's district makes up much of North Las Vegas and stretches into the state's rural areas to include the Nevada National Security Site, which in 1992 was the last location to conduct a nuclear weapons test.

Horsford last week signed the legislation — known as the Preserving Leadership Against Nuclear Explosives Testing (PLANET) Act — which would restrict funds for fiscal year starting July 1 from being used to expand testing. Democratic Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey is carrying the legislation. Though Nevada has not been mentioned explicitly, the state's history with nuclear testing, along with the existence of the Nevada National Security Site, puts it at the forefront of locations where a test could be conducted. The site is 60 miles north of Las Vegas.

"Based on the role that Nevada has played historically with the test site and testing range, our amount of federal land, and the airspace just puts us on the list of places where this is likely to occur when and if nuclear testing were allowed to resume under the Trump proposal," Horsford said. The site still sees subcritical testing, which tests equipment without using plutonium or a surrogate material and, therefore, cannot cause a nuclear chain reaction and explosion.

In the late-'90s, after both the United States and Russia paused nuclear testing, the United Nations adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to prohibit testing. The U.S. Senate has not ratified the treaty, and the abstention of the United States and eight other countries, including nuclear powers like India and Pakistan, means the treaty has not gone into effect. Democratic Rep. Dina Titus, whose district makes up Las Vegas proper and the Las Vegas Strip, also signed onto the bill.

Titus said going after funding seems to be the only way to stop any proposed testing on a congressional level, and that she doesn't see ratification of the treaty happening. "They haven't ratified it in the however many years it's been pending, so this is really the only effective way," Titus said. Although former President Barack Obama unsuccessfully made ratification a goal, Trump said in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review that the country would not seek ratification.

"It's very similar to the situation with Yucca Mountain. It's federal property, it's federal policy. They have jurisdiction over it, so the state could protest and the state could sue and the state could do things like it's doing to Yucca Mountain," Titus said. "Because this is national security, I think

they'd even have a harder time stopping this.” Horsford said that politicians from affected areas should have a say in nuclear matters, and that passing legislation to require local consent on nuclear matters is important.

Titus said that public opinion will likely mobilize against any outright movement to resume testing. “It’s an ironic situation. We welcomed nuclear testing after (World War II). It was a pride that we had. They said that desert was blooming with atoms,” Titus said. “It was a real source of legitimacy for Nevada, a real source of federal revenue for Nevada.” After years of testing, she said, and the federal government’s move to store nuclear waste permanently at **Yucca Mountain**, Nevadans’ patience had run out.

The storage site’s designation in the 1980s, she said, came during a time of increased government distrust compared to the more patriotic environment after World War II. “(A) feeling was, we had done our share and, finally, dumping waste is not a glamorous, patriotic, sexy thing, like (testing) was when it first went off and it kind of had all that imagery associated with it,” she said. “So we went from supporting testing to not supporting waste and, now, I think we would be against either one.”

The political outcry from Democrats was swift after the report. Former Vice President Joe Biden, Trump’s presumptive challenger in the 2020 presidential election, called Trump’s reasoning “delusional.” The Washington Post reported that Trump administration officials had raised concerns about Russia and China conducting low-yield nuclear tests. This cannot be corroborated by publicly available evidence and has been denied by both countries.

“A resumption of testing is more likely to prompt other countries to resume militarily significant nuclear testing and undermine our nuclear nonproliferation goals,” Biden said in a statement. “How can the United States persuade North Korea not to test and to give up its nuclear weapons, and how can we persuade Iran not to pursue nuclear weapons, if we set the destructive example of testing nuclear weapons for coercive purposes?”

Current testing and certification procedures of the nuclear stockpile does not include outright chain reactions or explosions, a method Biden said “by all accounts” is satisfactory today. Titus reiterated the bill would not affect any current nuclear stockpile activities and would simply push back on any testing expansion. It’s a fight she said she and others aren’t dropping. “We’re going to stay on top of him,” she said.

SASC Wants to Reshape Industrial Base, Create ‘Innovation Base’

Air Force Magazine June 15, 2020 | By [John A. Tirpak](#)

The Senate Armed Services Committee wants to widen the net of companies participating in the defense industrial base to take full advantage of home-grown technology.

If the Senate provisions in the 2021 defense policy bill hold in conference, there will be more protections on intellectual property and less reliance on foreign suppliers, the panel said in its overview of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. Details of the proposed bill are expected this week. The SASC, in a 20-page summary of the NDAA, said it wants to “reshape” the defense industrial base into the “National Security Innovation Base,” to promote its agility and resiliency, “mitigating risks” of relying on foreign suppliers, while at the same time investing with allies and partners. This

will require a “whole of government approach,” the SASC said, which generally means coordination between Defense, Commerce, the State Department, and law enforcement.

The panel said it authorized \$100 million over the Pentagon’s request for expanding domestic “and friendly” industrial capacity, including manufacturing technologies. The overall aim is to make the Pentagon’s technology development more “nimble, efficient, and responsive.”

The Senate version of the defense bill “ensures” the Pentagon is “exploring all pathways to expand domestic capacity,” while protecting proprietary and intellectual property and defense-sensitive data “from being infiltrated by the government of China.”

The bill directs the preparation of reports on how to ensure the supply of “microelectronics, rare earth minerals, medical devices, personal protective equipment, and pharmaceutical ingredients,” among other commodities where the supply base has shifted overseas. SASC wants analyses of the foreign industrial base and how it drives risk to the U.S. “from overreliance on China and their economic aggression.”

The bill would also expand the role of small businesses in meeting defense needs, extending programs for streamlined contracting and quick payment—authorities the Air Force has been bolstering for the last three years.

The language also directs the Pentagon to use “mission-based budgeting” tools to improve its decision-making and improve transparency to Congress, and ensure that each service’s budget “more accurately reflects” its actual budget. It directs the Defense Secretary to send Congress a report every year on the “enterprise business operations” of the Pentagon and “each defense agency and field activities.”

The bill will include some “enforcement” measures, ensuring more frequent delivery of software and updates to users, and “balancing the use of open source software with securing it.” It also allows for more “side-by-side comparative testing for one or more programs of record to introduce competition from and capture commercial innovation.”

In order to attract and better retain high-tech talent, the SASC version of the bill includes a pilot program “to offer higher compensation than normally allowed by the executive schedule for a limited number of positions requiring extremely high levels of experience managing complex organizations.” Under the pilot program, DOD would enhance pay for top research and development, and acquisition and technology positions.

Senate panel approves \$10M to prepare for nuclear test 'if necessary'

By [Rebecca Kheel](#) - 06/15/20 05:01 PM EDT

The Senate Armed Services Committee has advanced an amendment aimed at reducing the amount of time it would take to carry out a nuclear test.

The amendment, offered by Sen. [Tom Cotton](#) (R-Ark.), would make at least \$10 million available to “carry out projects related to reducing the time required to execute a nuclear test if necessary,” according to a copy of the measure obtained by The Hill on Monday. The amendment was approved in a party-line, 14-13 vote during the committee’s closed-door markup of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) last week, a congressional aide said.

The committee announced Thursday that it had approve this year's NDAA and released a summary, but the full text and committee report, including every amendment that was adopted, has not yet been released. Asked about Cotton's amendment, a committee spokesperson said the bill text "should be" available "soon." Cotton's amendment comes after the Trump administration reportedly raised the prospect of resuming nuclear testing as a negotiating tactic in efforts to secure a trilateral nuclear agreement with Russia and China.

The Washington Post [reported last month](#) that the idea of conducting the United States's first nuclear test in decades was raised at a May 15 meeting of senior officials. One official told the Post the idea for a test is "very much an ongoing conversation," while another official said a decision was made to avoid resuming testing. The United States has not conducted an explosive nuclear test since 1992, checking the efficacy and reliability of its weapons instead with subcritical tests that produce no nuclear yield, computer simulations and other scientific methods.

The only country known to have conducted a nuclear test this century is North Korea. The Trump administration, without evidence, has also in recent months accused Russia and China of conducting very low-yield tests. The United States has adhered to a moratorium even as it has not ratified a United Nations agreement to ban testing known as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. The treaty has not been ratified by enough countries to enter into force, but major world powers have followed its main tenet of ending nuclear tests.

Earlier this month, top House Democrats [wrote a letter to the Pentagon](#) and the Energy Department calling the idea of resuming nuclear testing "unfathomable." Democrats in the House and Senate have also introduced bills that seek to prevent a resumption in nuclear testing. In response to Cotton's amendment, Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, said conducting a nuclear test would be "beyond reckless."

"A U.S. nuclear test blast would certainly not advance efforts to rein in Chinese and Russian nuclear arsenals or create a better environment for negotiations," he said in a statement to The Hill. "Instead, it would break the de facto global nuclear test moratorium, likely trigger nuclear testing by other states, and set off a new nuclear arms race in which everyone would come out a loser." Kimball also called on Congress to "step in to prevent the United States from becoming a nonproliferation rogue state by enacting a prohibition on the use of taxpayers' funds to resume nuclear weapons testing in their upcoming votes on the defense authorization and the energy appropriations bills."

Congressional Republicans to Unveil Largest Iran Sanctions Plan in History

Unprecedented legislative package aims to reassert GOP role in foreign policy, bankrupt Tehran

Adam Kredo for the WFB // June 8, 2020 5:00 AM

Congressional Republicans will unveil this week the largest package of Iran sanctions in history, an unprecedented plan that aims to cripple Tehran's global terrorism enterprise and bankrupt the cash-strapped regime, according to a copy of the legislative package exclusively obtained by the Washington Free Beacon.

The Republican Study Committee (RSC), the largest caucus of GOP lawmakers in Congress, will on Wednesday release a massive legislative proposal targeting malign regimes across the globe, including Russia, China, and Iran. The policy proposal includes more than 140 new initiatives intending to reassert Republican leadership on the foreign policy stage. The Iran portion includes "the toughest sanctions that have ever been proposed by Congress on Iran."

According to Rep. Mike Johnson (R., La.), the RSC's chairman. It would greatly expand the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign and force the removal of several contested policies that Republicans argue have kept the Iran nuclear accord on life support since President Donald Trump abandoned it in 2018. The legislative proposal specifically tackles some of the thorniest issues in U.S. foreign policy: contested American taxpayer aid to Lebanon and other Middle Eastern nations controlled by Iran, sanctions waivers that have kept Tehran's nuclear program alive, and the 2002 authorization for use of military force in Iraq, which Republicans view as severely outdated given the rise of numerous new terror factions.

Johnson and Rep. Joe Wilson (R., S.C.), head of the RSC's foreign affairs and national security task force, told the Free Beacon that their proposal is more than a conservative wish list. Some Democrats could support many of the priorities, including foreign policy leaders such as Sen. Robert Menendez (D., N.J.), Rep. Ted Deutch (D., Fla.), and Rep. Eliot Engel (D., N.Y.)—all of whom have expressed concerns about the Iran nuclear deal and Tehran's regional ambitions.

"We're not doing this for messaging purposes," Johnson said. "Many of these things we would expect and should be bipartisan because this is one of these issues that every person who looks at the situation objectively should agree to." The most significant proposal, however, is likely to pit Republican lawmakers against elements in the Trump administration. In a move likely to spark a turf war with the State Department, the RSC is calling on Congress to unilaterally cancel a set of sanctions waivers that have legitimized Iran's nuclear program and increased its footprint in Iraq.

The waivers are one of the biggest points of contention between the Trump administration and Iran hawks in Congress. While a months-long pressure campaign in May forced the State Department to cancel waivers for Iran's nuclear facilities—including a military bunker that formerly housed the country's atomic weapons program—others still remain in place. The most significant current waiver allows Iran to sell electricity to Iraq.

Under this waiver, the countries inked a two-year \$800 million electricity deal late last week, providing Tehran an even greater foothold into Iraq's economy and government. Under the GOP's new plan, the administration would be barred from lifting sanctions without first obtaining consent from the House and Senate. It also would take the unprecedented step of sanctioning every Iraqi militia group responsible for attacking the U.S. embassy compound in Baghdad earlier this year. Most of these groups are not currently subject to U.S. sanctions.

Republicans are "concerned that there needs to be consistency about" America's Iran sanctions policy, Johnson said, acknowledging that these waivers undermine the president's maximum pressure campaign. Other proposals complement policies already undertaken by the Trump administration, such as efforts to invoke the snapback of all international sanctions on Iran that were originally lifted as part of the landmark nuclear deal.

With a United Nations-endorsed arms embargo on Iran set to expire in October, Republican hawks and their allies in the administration now see snapback as key to stopping countries like Russia and China from selling arms to the Islamic Republic. To further the possibility of snapback, the RSC proposes new legislation mandating the United States to use its influence at the U.N. Security Council to ensure international sanctions are reimposed.

If the arms embargo on Iran is not extended, Congress could play a central role in crafting new embargoes on the sale of weapons to Iran. This would include "new sanctions on the arms industries of countries like Russia and China that return to selling weapons to Iran, the banks facilitating any sale of weapons to Iran, and the companies shipping weapons," according to the proposal.

U.S. aid to Lebanon has also emerged as a top priority for Republican lawmakers—and a potential flashpoint between them and the Trump administration. While the State Department has aggressively defended the millions in U.S. taxpayer aid provided each year to the Lebanese government and its military, Republicans are increasingly willing to criticize a policy they say emboldens Hezbollah, the Iranian terror proxy controlling the country.

For the first time, the RSC and its allies are calling for a complete halt of U.S. aid in Lebanon, potentially paving the way for a showdown with typically hawkish Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Earlier this year, Pompeo told the Free Beacon his administration still views U.S. aid to Lebanon's armed forces as beneficial. Both Johnson and Wilson said there is no valid reason to continue awarding Lebanon with taxpayer aid as Hezbollah systematically takes control of the country.

"They're using U.S. taxpayer dollars supposedly to counter Hezbollah, and that may have been true in the past, but it does not appear to be true anymore," Johnson said. "That money is being spent in ways that are counterproductive to our goals in the region." Other sanctions would target Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's multibillion-dollar financial empire, as well as the country's petrochemical, financial, and automotive sectors.

The GOP also recognizes that in the years since the 9/11 terror attacks, the regional threat landscape has shifted dramatically. They are now calling for a reassessment of the war authorizations granted in 2001 and 2002—a call certain to rankle antiwar Democrats who view these authorities as carte blanche for the administration to wage endless wars. The RSC argues that both war authorizations are out of date and do not give the president adequate authority to combat a bevy of new terror factions, primarily those armed and funded by Iran.

While Democrats have pushed to have these authorizations revoked, Republicans view them as critical to the U.S. military campaign against these growing factions. "We're not going to take the Ilhan Omar approach," Rep. Wilson said. "It's important we don't open the door for Ilhan and AOC [Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D., N.Y.)] and the thirty leftists who call for disbanding the American military."

AROUND THE WORLD



RUSSIA:

US Preparing For Much 'Bigger, More Capable' Missile Arsenal Of Russia – Envoy To NATO

Sputnik News (Russia), June 16 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- The United States is preparing for a "much bigger" missile arsenal of Russia, but no plans have been set for that yet, Kay Bailey Hutchison, the US permanent representative to NATO, said Tuesday.

"Most certainly, America is looking at the Russian missile buildup. The reports that come back are very troubling and we know that we need to prepare for a much bigger arsenal and a much more capable arsenal than we have seen in the past from Russia. So yes, the US is looking at the ways that we would deter, and NATO is also going to be looking at what should be a deterrence in Europe," Hutchison told a briefing.

The representative remarked that there are no plans for that yet.

"We are in talks with Russia, hopefully with China as well, on nuclear missile capability and hopefully the containment of nuclear capabilities by all three countries - US, Russia and China," Hutchison added.

"But also we are looking at ways to guard both ourselves, US as well as Europe, in what Russia might be doing that could be harmful for the peace in Europe. And when you say will there be a capabilities in Europe - anything that's done in Europe would be with the permission of the countries where there would be a deterrence or there could be moveable, mobile deterrences or it could be waterbound deterrences. So there could be many ways to deter Russia. I don't think there's been anything clearly decided at this point either by the United States or by our European allies," the US envoy said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly condemned the NATO expansion in Europe and its deployment of military infrastructure closer to the Russian borders.

Putin says Russia will be able to counter hypersonic weapons

From Reuters News Wire // 9 hrs ago

MOSCOW, June 14 (Reuters) - Russia will soon be in a position to counter hypersonic arms deployed by other countries, President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday, adding that Moscow was ahead of the United States in developing new types of weapons. Hypersonic glide vehicles can steer an unpredictable course and manoeuvre sharply as they approach impact. They also follow a much flatter and lower trajectory than ballistic missiles.

Washington and Moscow have been expanding their defence capabilities as some Cold War-era arms control agreements collapsed during worsening of Russia's ties with the West. Last year Russia deployed its first hypersonic nuclear-capable missiles, while the Pentagon has a goal of fielding hypersonic capabilities in the early to mid-2020s. "It's very likely that we will have means to combat hypersonic weapons by the time the world's leading countries have such weapons," Putin was quoted as saying by the RIA news agency. While Russia and the United States had broadly the same number of nuclear weapons, Putin said Moscow was ahead in advanced arms development.

(Reporting by Maria Kiselyova; Editing by Mark Potter and Alexander Smith)

Russia to enhance its Western group amid NATO countries' enhancing air, missile defenses – State Duma member

Interfax (Russia), June 17 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- Russia will continue enhancing its group in the Western sector after the statements of the NATO member states' defense ministers on the additional procurement of the Patriot surface-to-air missile systems, State Duma Defense Committee deputy head Yury Shvytkin said.

"We will continue enhancing our group in the Western sector based on the continuing external challenges amid these statements," Shvytkin told Interfax on Wednesday.

"In any case, Russia reinforces its group in the Western sector both with personnel and relevant missile systems," he said.

"We understand that the Western sector is now especially militarized on the part of the NATO countries and, of course, we cannot stand idle and refrain from taking relevant tit-for-tat measures," Shvytkin said.

"Stoltenberg's statement is an additional signal for us that we're on a right track and must not become self-complacent," he said. "At the same time, I would like to point out that our missile systems are ready to overcome any air defense system," the parliamentarian said.

"Undoubtedly, such statements do not bring stability and order; it will only result in another round of tensions," he said.

The NATO countries' defense ministers made a decision at their summit to enhance the alliance's missile and air defense system to counter Russia's missile threat, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Wednesday.

"At our meeting today Ministers discussed these challenges and agreed a balanced package of political and military elements. This includes strengthening our integrated air and missile defense," Stoltenberg said at a press conference following the first day of consultations of defense

ministers while listing measures taken to counter Russia and its nuclear arsenal. When it comes to its nuclear rhetoric, "Russia's behavior is destabilizing and dangerous," Stoltenberg said.



CHINA:

China develops weapons to fry US electric grid, eyes high-tech ‘Pearl Harbor’ attack

by [Paul Bedard](#) for The Washington Examiner // June 18, 2020 08:35 AM

With the help of stolen U.S. technology, China has developed at least three types of high-tech weapons to attack the electric grid and key technologies in a “surprise Pearl Harbor” assault that could send America into a deadly blackout, according to a new analysis.

According to the report from the independent EMP Task Force on National and Homeland Security, China has built a network of satellites, high-speed missiles, and “super-electromagnetic pulse” weapons that could melt down the U.S. electric network, fry critical communications, and stifle aircraft carrier groups. According to the report, written by the task force’s executive director, **Peter Pry**, long an expert on EMP warfare, China developed the weapons as part of its “Total Information Warfare” that includes hacking raids on computers.

What’s more, despite China’s promises to attack only after being attacked, Pry revealed new data to show that the communist nation is lying and eager to shoot first with “high-altitude electromagnetic pulse,” or HEMP, weapons launched from satellites, ships, and land. “China’s military doctrine — including numerous examples presented here of using HEMP attack to win on the battlefield, defeat U.S. aircraft carriers, and achieve against the U.S. homeland a surprise ‘Pearl Harbor’ writ large — is replete with technical and operational planning consistent with a nuclear first-strike,” said Pry in his report provided to Secrets.

He added that while some believe China’s promise not to fire first, there are key U.S. officials who don’t buy it. For example, he cited February 2020 testimony from the chief of U.S. Strategic Command, Adm. Charles Richard, who said that he could “drive a truck through China’s no first use policy.” Pry has helped awaken the nation to the threat posed by an EMP attack, either from a military foe or solar event. Once a concern that resulted in eye-rolling by officials in Washington, the Pentagon and President Trump take the threat seriously and are slowly moving to build protections from an attack.

Those efforts come as China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran move to build and deploy the weapons which, essentially, launch a nuclear weapon into the atmosphere to explode and disable electronics below, including flying aircraft. A report done while Pry was a key member of a congressional EMP commission years ago found that an EMP attack on the East Coast electric grid could lead to the death of 90% of the population within a year from looting, a lack of food and water, and desperation attacks. Even short electric blackouts, such as one in New York in 1977, resulted in looting.

In his new 14-page report, he outlined China’s weaponry.

First is a “Super-EMP” weapon, built with stolen U.S. military technology. It is a nuclear warhead on a missile that could be used against ships and on the battlefield, he said. He cited a Chinese Army news article that said an attack would be like a 21st century “Pearl Harbor.” It said, “a highly computerized open society like the United States is extremely vulnerable to electronic attacks from all sides. This is because the U.S. economy, from banks to telephone systems and from power plants to iron and steel works, relies entirely on computer network.”

Second are hypersonic weapons, including missiles, that can send a warhead at five-times the speed of sound to a target. And third is the development of EMP satellites armed with nuclear weapons that can float for years in the sky. Said Pry, “The U.S. should be very concerned about a scenario where China uses nuclear space weapons, perhaps ICBMs and IRBMs with specialized warheads, to quickly sweep the skies of U.S. satellites, even at the risk of losing PRC satellites, which could then be replaced with a surge of satellites launched by China to capture the ‘high frontier’ and cripple U.S. military capabilities.”



NORTH KOREA:

As Kim Jong-un Turns Hostile to South Korea, His Sister Does the Talking

New York Times Online, June 17 | Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL, South Korea -- When North Korea decided to join the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea and kick off a giddy period of rapprochement on the peninsula, its charm offensive was fronted by a smiling face: Kim Yo-jong, the only sister of the North’s top leader, Kim Jong-un.

Now, as Mr. Kim threatens to extinguish the fragile détente with a new cycle of bellicose actions and military provocations, it’s his sister who is again speaking for the nation, this time heaping scorn on South Korea — a signal of her deepening clout in the hereditary regime.

“It was sickening to listen to his speech,” Ms. Kim said of the South’s leader, Moon Jae-in, in a statement on Wednesday, referring to his message this week calling for peace on the Korean Peninsula. “He seems to be insane, though he appears to be normal outwardly.”

“So I decided to prepare a bomb of words to let it known to our people,” she said.

In North Korea, few leaders other than Mr. Kim can issue first-person statements like that. But Ms. Kim, 32, who is her brother’s top spokeswoman and policy coordinator, wields far more power than is suggested by her age and meager titles: first deputy departmental chief in the ruling Workers’ Party and an alternate — not a regular — member of its Politburo.

Her influence in a hierarchy studded with aging generals and party secretaries derives from the “revolutionary blood” coursing through her body. She is a granddaughter of Kim Il-sung, North Korea’s founder, who is still revered as a godlike figure in the North.

That makes her a potential candidate — even in the North’s deeply patriarchal culture — to replace her brother, who is believed to be 36, should he die or become incapacitated.

Ms. Kim’s systematic rise adds a sense of continuity to North Korea’s succession plans, analysts said. In North Korea, future top leaders must build credentials as someone who can stand up against South Korea and the United States.

“What we see right now is North Korea working out a contingency succession plan in case Kim Jong-un’s health goes bad,” said Yoo Dong-ryul, a North Korea specialist at the Korea Institute for Liberal Democracy in Seoul.

“The problem with Kim Yo-jong as successor is that she is a woman and is still too young,” he added. “So her brother is helping her lead the offense against South Korea and establish her leadership so she can dissipate any reservations the hard-line stalwarts in the military and party might have about her.”

Mr. Kim’s long absences from public view in recent months have spurred speculation about whether he was seriously ill, what might happen to the North’s nuclear arsenal and who would succeed him if he became incapacitated. If he had to give up power, none of his three children — all believed to be preteens — are old enough to take over.

Mr. Kim has an older brother, Kim Jong-chol, who is said to have been considered by their father to be too effeminate to lead the highly militarized country. He has never been seen in public with his younger brother.

In 2017, Mr. Kim had his half brother, Jong-nam, assassinated in Kuala Lumpur. He also executed his uncle Jang Song-thaek.

Mr. Kim has another uncle, Kim Pyong-il, 65, who was recalled home last year after decades of serving as a low-key ambassador to Eastern European countries. But after being away for so long, he has no power base in Pyongyang. Mr. Kim’s aunt, Kim Kyong-hui, Mr. Jang’s wife, is ailing.

All this leaves Ms. Kim the most likely hereditary successor if her brother dies before his children grow up, analysts said.

She and Mr. Kim attended schools in Switzerland as teenagers. But the outside world had seen little of her until she appeared beside him during the funeral of their father, Kim Jong-il, in 2011. Some experts in South Korea say she is married to Choe Song, who is said to work at Office 39, a secretive agency that manages funds for the Kim family. Mr. Choe is a son of Choe Ryong-hae, who holds the most senior party titles after Mr. Kim.

Ms. Kim grabbed global attention when she became the first member of the Kim family to cross the border into South Korea, attending the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, in 2018. Later, she was at her brother’s side at his summits with Mr. Moon, President Trump and President Xi Jinping of China.

She stood next to Mr. Kim when he signed a joint statement with Mr. Trump after their historic first summit on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, held in Singapore in June 2018. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was her American counterpart during the ceremony.

Ms. Kim apparently lost her Politburo job as Mr. Kim replaced his foreign policy team after the collapse of his second summit with Mr. Trump, which was held in Vietnam in February last year.

But this year, with Mr. Kim shifting to an increasingly hostile relationship with Seoul and Washington as his diplomatic efforts with Mr. Trump stall, Ms. Kim's stock began rising again.

Since March, she has been issuing statements under her own name, lashing Mr. Moon's office for its "imbecile way of thinking." She praised a letter that Mr. Trump sent to her brother in March, calling it a "good judgment" but not enough to improve ties.

Since last week, North Korea's state news media has depicted her as the orchestrator of a rapid-fire series of statements and moves that have raised tensions on the Korean Peninsula. On Tuesday, the North blew up the inter-Korean liaison office in the border city of Kaesong, and a day later, the North Korean military threatened to resume drills along the disputed western sea border with the South.

Ms. Kim's offensive claimed a first political casualty in South Korea on Wednesday. The unification minister, Kim Yeon-chul, stepped down, taking responsibility for the deterioration in relations with the North, which has followed the South's failed efforts to mediate between North Korea and the United States.

The North's sudden turn toward animosity with the South — and, by extension, the United States — may reflect a desire to unify the country in the face of an economy further hobbled by the coronavirus pandemic and of a deepening need to push for concessions on international sanctions, said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul.

Placing Ms. Kim up front in North Korea's growing confrontation with Seoul and Washington may also give Mr. Kim "diplomatic flexibility" if he wants to change course, Mr. Easley said.

Whatever the motivation behind the growing tension, it has made one thing clear: Ms. Kim's consolidation of her position as the true No. 2 in her brother's government, said Lee Seong-hyon, an analyst at the Sejong Institute, a research center in South Korea.

"As she leads the offense against South Korea like a general, it silences those old hard-liners in the Politburo who may think she cannot be the leader," Mr. Lee said.

Kim's sister says N. Korea will take 'action' against South: KCNA

From the [AFP](#) // June 13, 2020

Seoul (AFP) - North Korea will take "action" against the South and entrust its military to carry it out, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong Un, threatened Saturday in a statement carried by the KCNA news agency.

"I feel it is high time to surely break with the south Korean authorities. We will soon take a next action," she said in the latest denunciation of Seoul. Since last week the North has issued a series of vitriolic condemnations of the South over activists sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets over the border -- something defectors do on a regular basis. "By exercising my power authorized by the Supreme Leader, our Party and the state, I gave an instruction to the arms of the department in charge of the affairs with enemy to decisively carry out the next action," said Kim Yo Jong, who is a key advisor to her brother.

She added that "the right to taking the next action against the enemy will be entrusted to the General Staff of our army." Kim did not elaborate on what the military action would be but appeared to threaten the destruction of the Joint Liaison Office, in the North Korean border city of Kaesong. "Before long, a tragic scene of the useless north-south joint liaison office completely collapsed would be seen," her statement on KCNA said.

Last week she condemned Seoul for not blocking activists from flying balloons carrying anti-regime leaflets across the border. Pyongyang has since issued a series of statements and held several citizens' rallies railing against the South, with KCNA describing leaflet scattering as "an act of a preemptive attack that precedes a war". "It is necessary to make them keenly feel what they have done," said Kim Yo Jong, referring to what she called the South's failure to stop the leaflet campaign.

It was the second angry outburst from Pyongyang on Saturday. Earlier in the day, the North excoriated the South for making "nonsensical talking" about the denuclearisation process and trying to "meddle" in the US-North talks. Inter-Korean ties have been at a standstill since the collapse of the second US-North summit in Hanoi in February last year, with a deadlock over the concessions Washington was willing to offer in return for Pyongyang's denuclearisation measures.

Saturday's broadside came a day after Pyongyang issued a stinging denunciation of the United States on the second anniversary of a landmark summit in Singapore where President Donald Trump shook hands with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. It contained some of the harshest criticism Pyongyang has sent Washington's way in recent months and cast doubts over the future of the long-deadlocked nuclear talks process.



SOUTH KOREA:

South Korea on alert following threats from the North two years after first Trump-Kim summit

By [KIM GAMEL](#) | STARS AND STRIPES // Published: June 14, 2020

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea held an emergency security meeting Sunday and said its military was on alert after a series of threats from the North as rising tensions replaced hopes for peace and denuclearization.

The moves came amid growing concern the divided peninsula faced a new crisis more than two years after President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held an unprecedented summit in Singapore. Kim's influential sister warned Saturday that the North would destroy an inter-Korean liaison office and unleash the army against the South due to anger over Seoul's failure to stop activists from floating anti-regime leaflets across the border.

South Korea's national security director, Chung Eui-yong, convened a video conference with other top security officials Sunday morning to discuss the situation, which the government called "grave." The defense ministry in Seoul said it was closely monitoring North Korean military moves and maintaining a defensive posture "in preparation for all eventualities." It also called on the North to stick to an inter-Korean military agreement aimed at restoring peace "and the prevention of accidental clashes."

On Saturday, Kim Yo Jong, the North Korean leader's sister who has recently been elevated in status as an official, said "it is high time to surely break with the South Korean authorities" and promised to "soon take a next action," according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency. "Before long, a tragic scene of the useless north-south joint liaison office completely collapsed would be seen," she said, calling the South an "enemy."

"If I drop a hint of our next plan the South Korean authorities are anxious about, the right to taking the next action against the enemy will be entrusted to the General Staff of our army," she added. "Our army, too, will determine something for cooling down our people's resentment and surely carry out it, I believe," she said. "Rubbish must be thrown into dustbin." Kim didn't specify a military action, and the North has not carried out previous threats, including a December promise to unveil a new "strategic weapon" that many predicted would be an intercontinental ballistic weapon.

But experts speculated North Korea may conduct an artillery test or another action in the sea off the western coast, which would likely upset the South but stop short of provoking the United States. Trump has been dismissive about a series of short-range missile tests in recent months but suggested the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile or another nuclear test would be a red line.

The North Korean saber-rattling underscored the collapse of U.S.-led efforts to persuade the Kim regime to abandon its nuclear weapons, which reached a high point during the June 12, 2018, summit in Singapore. The leaders made a vague promise to work toward the "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" during the highly symbolic summit, the first-ever between a U.S. and North Korean leader.

But expectations of a breakthrough were dashed when Trump and Kim failed to reach a new deal in a second summit in February 2019 due to disagreements over the extent of sanctions removal in exchange for the dismantling of an aging nuclear facility. North Korea, meanwhile, has continued to make progress in its nuclear weapons program. Trump has claimed the summits with Kim as a foreign policy success, saying they had prevented another war on the peninsula by ending months of long-range missile and nuclear tests by the North.

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Son Gwon essentially declared diplomacy dead in a statement marking the anniversary of the summit on Friday. Hopes for improved North Korean-U.S. relations have “now been shifted into despair” and “even a slim ray of optimism for peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula has faded away into a dark nightmare,” Ri was quoted as saying by KCNA.

He also warned that the professed good relationship between Kim and Trump was at risk if Washington maintains economic pressure against the North. “The question is whether there will be a need to keep holding hands shaken in Singapore, as we see that there is nothing of factual improvement to be made simply by maintaining personal relations” between the two leaders, Ri said.

S Korea's leader calls on North to stop raising tensions

By: HYUNG-JIN KIM for the [Associated Press](#) // June 15, 2020

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea’s president called on North Korea to stop raising animosities and return to talks, saying Monday the rivals must not reverse the peace deals that he and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reached during 2018 summits.

President Moon Jae-in’s efforts to defuse rising animosities came after North Korea threatened Friday to destroy an inter-Korean liaison office located in North Korea and take unspecified military steps against South Korea. If North Korean were to take such actions it would be a serious setback to Moon’s efforts toward Korean reconciliation and finding a negotiated solution to the North Korean nuclear issue.

“North Korea must not sever communications and create tensions to turn back the clock to a past confrontational period,” Moon said during a meeting with top presidential advisers, according to his office. “We must not push back the pledges of peace that Chairman Kim Jong Un and I made.” Moon, a liberal who met Kim three times in 2018, was a driving force behind now-dormant diplomatic efforts between Pyongyang and Washington, including the summit between Kim and President Donald Trump in Singapore in 2018.

During two of the three inter-Korean summits, Moon and Kim agreed to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and take other steps to boost exchanges and dial down military tensions. Those summits initially helped to improve their countries' ties significantly, before their relations became strained again after the breakdown of a second Kim-Trump summit in Vietnam in early 2019.

North Korea has recently unleashed a slew of harsh rhetoric against South Korea, accusing it of failing to prevent activists from launching propaganda leaflets across their border. In an apparent bid to soothe North Korea, Moon’s government vowed to ban civilian leafleting campaign. North Korea has said the South Korean response lacks sincerity. Some observers say North Korea is frustrated because Seoul has failed to break away from Washington and revive stalled joint economic projects held back by U.S.-led sanctions.

They also speculate North Korea initially thought Moon would help it win badly needed sanctions relief but got upset after Kim returned home empty handed from the 2019 summit with Trump. Moon said the two Koreas must take the initiative in finding a breakthrough, calling the nations “the masters of the destiny for the Korean Peninsula.” He said his government will keep striving to promote dialogue with North Korea.

Monday marks the 20th anniversary of the first-ever inter-Korean summit — between Kim’s late father Kim Jong Il and South Korea's then-President Kim Dae-jung in Pyongyang. The Koreas remain split along the world’s most heavily fortified border since they were divided into a U.S.-backed South Korea and a Soviet-controlled North Korea at the end of the World War II in 1945.



IRAN:

Iran test fires cruise missiles resistant to ‘electronic war,’ says naval chief

By: The Associated Press for Defense News // 6 hours ago

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran test fired cruise missiles in a naval exercise in the Gulf of Oman and northern Indian Ocean, state media reported Thursday.

The report by the official IRNA news agency said the missiles destroyed targets at a distance of 280 kilometers (170 miles). It said the tests took place during a naval drill by Iran’s Navy in the Gulf of Oman and Indian Ocean. IRNA said the missiles’ range can be extended but gave no details. The news agency said two kinds of missiles were fired, without elaborating, and broadcast images of projectiles being launched from both a truck and a ship, hitting a buoyant target in the sea.

Iran’s Navy chief, Adm. Hossein Khanzadi, told state TV that the “homing” c-class cruise missiles have new warheads that can hit targets with high accuracy at a close distance. He said the missiles are capable of resisting “any kind of electronic war.” “The important point about these missiles is that they are fully equipped with homing,” Khanzadi said. Homing is a missile guidance system in which the missile has all necessary electronics for tracking and hitting a target.

“It means they are of the fire-and-forget type. We fire the missile and the data is on the missile itself, it has various navigation systems built in,” Khanzadi added. The report was the first of a drill since May, when a missile fired during an Iranian training exercise [mistakenly struck](#) an Iranian naval vessel instead of its intended target in waters near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, killing 19 sailors and wounding 15 others.

It also comes after a tense naval encounter between Iranian and U.S. forces in the nearby Arabian Gulf. In April, the U.S. accused Iran of conducting “dangerous and harassing” maneuvers near American warships in the northern Arabian Gulf. Iran also was suspected of briefly seizing a Hong Kong-flagged oil tanker before that. Iran regularly holds exercises in the Gulf of Oman, which is close to the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Arabian Gulf through which 20 percent of the world’s oil trade passes.

The U.S. has been actively campaigning to keep a United Nations arms embargo in place on Iran that is due to expire in November. President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from Tehran’s nuclear deal with world powers two years ago, launching a maximum pressure campaign against Iran that has pushed the archrivals to the verge of conflict.



IRAQ:

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INDIA:

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PAKISTAN:

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UNITED KINGDOM:

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FRANCE:

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Germany:

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ISRAEL:

Iran edging closer to nuclear bomb, Israeli defense officials assess – report

Officials said to tell Gantz Tehran hasn't increased uranium enrichment during pandemic, but is still just 2 years away from bomb

By [TOI staff](#) // 14 June 2020,

Israeli defense officials believe Iran hasn't increased the pace of its nuclear enrichment in recent months, but nevertheless could be just two years from producing an atomic weapon, a report said Sunday.

The Walla news site quoted the unnamed senior officials as saying Jerusalem estimates the Islamic Republic continues to enrich uranium at a four percent level, the same as when the coronavirus crisis hit earlier this year. However, the report said Defense Minister Benny Gantz has been presented with an assessment that Tehran is just six months away from producing all the components of an atomic bomb, and two years away from assembling such a bomb.

The sources were quoted as saying that if Iran decides to hasten its enrichment, Israel would have to “reconsider” its reaction to the development and to the crumbling of the 2015 nuclear deal, with “all options” put on the table. They said that full attention was not being currently paid to the subject by US President Donald Trump's administration, which is preoccupied with his reelection campaign.

Still, the officials added that Trump's term was very positive toward Israel and included security cooperation at levels not seen for decades. Some officials were said to fear that a change of power in Washington would set back Israel in its struggle against Iran. The International Atomic Energy Agency said in a report earlier this month that Iran was breaching the landmark pact and has for months blocked inspections at two sites where nuclear activity may have occurred in the past.

The Vienna-based agency noted “with serious concern that, for over four months, Iran has denied access to the agency... to two locations.” Iran insisted Thursday that it was ready to resolve any issues with the UN nuclear watchdog, expressing “disappointment” over the IAEA's report. Iran

argues that the requests for access are based on “fabricated information,” accusing the United States and Israel of trying to “exert pressure on the agency.”

Israel has claimed that its intelligence services have new information on Iran’s alleged previous nuclear weapons program. The IAEA has said that its access requests were based on “concrete information” that had been validated. The report is expected to be discussed at a meeting of the agency’s board of governors starting Monday. In a separate report, also to be discussed during the board meeting, the IAEA warned that Iran’s enriched uranium stockpile is now almost eight times the limit set in the nuclear deal the country signed with world powers in 2015. Iran has been progressively breaking restrictions laid down in the 2015 deal in retaliation for US withdrawal from the accord in 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions.

AFP contributed to this report.



JAPAN:

Japan halts deployment of U.S.-made missile defense system

From: [KYODO NEWS](#) // 8 hours ago - 00:32 | [All](#), [Japan](#)

TOKYO - Japan has decided to suspend a plan to deploy the U.S.-developed Aegis Ashore missile defense system, designed to counter the threat of North Korean ballistic missiles, due to technical problems and ballooning costs, Defense Minister Taro Kono said Monday.

In an abrupt announcement, Kono said it would be difficult to ensure that the rocket booster of an interceptor missile would land in a Self-Defense Forces training area or the sea, as promised, without hardware modifications. "In view of the cost and (more) time (needed) for the deployment, we will halt the process," Kono told reporters, adding that he informed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Friday of the decision related to the defense system that was expected to go into operation in fiscal 2025 at the earliest.

The Japanese government decided in 2017 to deploy two Aegis Ashore batteries. They were to supplement the Maritime Self-Defense Force's Aegis-equipped destroyers, with one candidate site in the northeastern prefecture of Akita and the other in the western prefecture of Yamaguchi. "For the time being, we'll maintain our missile defense capability by Aegis-equipped destroyers," Kono said.

The minister said he intends to discuss Japan's future missile defense policy in the National Security Council. "It came out of the blue and I was surprised," Yamaguchi Gov. Tsugumasa Muraoka told reporters at the prefectural government's office. Akita Gov. Norihisa Satake said the government's judgment was "sensible," adding that he received a phone call from Kono after 5 p.m. and was told of the suspension.

Kono said he will visit the two governors before long to explain to them in person the reasoning behind the suspension. The purchase of the costly batteries was decided by Japan after a series of ballistic missiles launched by North Korea and U.S. President Donald Trump's push to sell more military equipment under the "Buy American" policy. The purchase of the units as well as their 30-year operation and maintenance were estimated to cost about 450 billion yen (\$4.2 billion).

The Japanese government has so far spent or allocated nearly 200 billion yen in total for the deployment plan. The plan was originally unpopular with residents concerned about the health effects of electromagnetic waves emitted by Aegis Ashore's radar, as well as the possibility of their communities becoming a target in an armed conflict. The Defense Ministry was also found to have conducted an erroneous geographical survey to select Akita's Araya district as the hosting site.

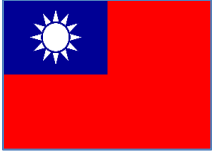
Faced with criticism, the government decided to redo geographical assessments at 20 potential sites in the northeastern region of Tohoku, including Araya. It had aimed to come up with fresh survey results by March 20, but the schedule has been repeatedly pushed back due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. As for the site in Yamaguchi, the ministry had said the Ground Self-Defense Force's Mutsumi training area straddling Hagi and Abu remained the candidate site for hosting the Aegis unit.

Since August 2018, the ministry had stated that rocket boosters would fall within the perimeter of the training ground, without affecting the lives of people residing around the facility. But talks with the United States led to the conclusion that the safety of the municipalities could not be ensured and technical challenges would not be resolved just by software modifications, Kono said. Following the announcement, Tetsuro Fukuyama, secretary general of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, told reporters that the main opposition party will grill the Abe administration for making the decision at the last minute before the current parliament session ends Wednesday.

Fukuyama said the initial budget for fiscal 2020 that incorporated a 12.9 billion yen spending plan in connection with the process of the Aegis Ashore deployment needs to be revised. "They had taken no heed of our argument that the spending shouldn't be in the budget given that the locations to deploy them are not fixed," he said. The party's Diet affairs chief Jun Azumi said that Japan was "pressed by the United States to buy an expensive item. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is politically responsible for it."

Negative reactions also came from lawmakers of the Liberal Democratic Party, led by Abe. Takeo Kawamura, a former Cabinet secretary whose constituency is where the Yamaguchi training area is situated, said he was taken by surprise and urged the Defense Ministry to explain the situation in detail. A former defense minister, who spoke on condition of anonymity, suggested the government is inconsistent with its past claim that Japan would be unable to defend itself from missiles only by Aegis-equipped destroyers. Meanwhile, another former defense minister, Gen Nakatani, said on a TV program that Kono "made a good decision," noting that how much Japan needs to pay for the deployment had become unpredictable.

Jun 16, 2020 | [KYODO NEWS](#)



TAWIAN:

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