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Black Airmen Talk Race in the Air Force

Air Force Magazine, 2 July 20 Rachel S. Cohen

Lt. Gen. Anthony J. Cotton is tired of being tired.

Cotton, the first Black three-star deputy commander of Air Force Global Strike Command, has seen police lights flash in his rearview mirror, has needed to convince people he was a wing commander, and has been told not to park in his own spot among spaces reserved for base leadership.

He has explained to others, over and over, what it's like to be Black in America. He wants people to listen. He wants them to get uncomfortable. He wants them to act.

"Here I am as a lieutenant general in the United States Air Force, but ... I have a common bond," he says. "When I see what happened to Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks—and the list goes on and on—it's visceral to me," he said, running through the recent history of Black Americans killed. "That could be my son. That could be my daughter. That could be me."

As civil unrest swept the nation following the death of George Floyd in May, a Black man who died after a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes, Black Airmen are wrestling with their own reality in an Air Force that still suffers from its own racial blind spots and systemic discrimination.

A dozen Black Airmen—including current and former officers, enlisted members, and civilians—shared their experience with Air Force Magazine in June, describing how race has influenced their lives and careers, and how the Air Force still needs to evolve.

Being Black in the Air Force, they said, can mean straddling the line between being respected and suspected. They described constantly moderating themselves to meet the expectations of others, and embracing the nation's needs despite feeling uncertain the nation they protect embraces them in return.

While some praised understanding and diverse leaders throughout their careers, others said they struggled to find a place among unwelcoming colleagues and commanders. They could feel included at work but face racial slurs and suspicion from their communities and neighbors. Some said they never felt passed over for promotion or otherwise slighted by the Air Force bureaucracy, but most pointed to racist comments, insensitive jokes, and other forms of discrimination as far back as their earliest days in Basic Military Training.

The Airmen interviewed joined the service because they wanted a meaningful job or they grew up in a military family. Some sought educational benefits or travel opportunities. For Master Sgt. Cederic Hill, a space operator at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., it was a chance for change he couldn't get at home.

"I've been called every name in the book you can think of," he said of growing up in a mostly white area outside Atlanta. "I've had bottles thrown at me as I walked down the street. My next-door neighbor, his uncle ... was a Grand Dragon in the [Ku Klux] Klan. ... I didn't feel like I was part of the nation."

When Hill joined the Air Force, he gained opportunities and a sense of acceptance he hadn't experienced in Georgia. But he still faced frustrations and fears, often as the only Black man in his workplace. One supervisor dubbed him "Token" and called him "the whitest Black person that he knows," words that cut at his sense of belonging in his workplace and in the Black community.

Tech. Sgt. Miles Starr, noncommissioned officer in charge of retention at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, said she has been mocked, ignored, and called "Aunt Jemima" at work since joining the Air Force in 2003.

Master Sgt. Michael Feggans, superintendent of the 71st Healthcare Operations Squadron at Vance Air Force Base, Okla., said superiors may demeaningly address Black Airmen as "boy." One suggested he go back to bagging groceries. Staff Sgt. Phillip Felton, who works in explosive ordnance disposal at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., said he was once told: "I think you're a [N-word], but it's not a bad thing."

Sometimes the speaker doesn't understand how hurtful such comments can be. Other times, problems are more deeply ingrained.

Black Airmen described being discouraged from applying for jobs where they wouldn't be welcomed, or repeatedly skipped over for professional opportunities and awards. They spoke of leaving bases that proved to be toxic environments, and of feeling like their chain of command wouldn't take discrimination reports seriously.

Tech. Sgt. Myeshia Tucker, an intelligence analyst at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, began basic training with short, natural hair that rolled into tight curls against her scalp. Although she was in line with service dress regulations, a white, male instructor told her it was "unprofessional," she said, and sent her to the salon to get it straightened. Then, when her natural curls returned in the Texas humidity, Tucker was reprimanded.

Another time, a supervisor told her she received a coveted opportunity only because "they can't turn down a Black female." And in still another incident, a colleague joked that the quality of an important briefing she was preparing wouldn't matter because she was a pretty Black woman.

"Even when I did well, it was so discounted," she said. "I was told that I got it because I was a Black woman and they needed to diversify. ... That's a trend I noticed early on."

Some Black Airmen say they face more discrimination when stationed in the United States than when serving overseas. One even said that Black service members deployed overseas sometimes worry more about family back home than they do about their own lives in combat zones.

The race-relations chasm between military and civilian life can seem just as wide. Hill said there's more accountability and teamwork on the military than in a civilian community, which helps ensure people are treated fairly.

Feggans said carrying a military ID card can provide a level of protection that a driver's license does not.

"My military ID has helped get me out of many incidents that never should have happened," he said, such as "getting pulled over with me and my friends, being told that you're in the wrong neighborhood, being accused of having guns and drugs in your vehicle, asking, 'How can you afford such a nice luxury car?' ... It's almost like my background and everything changes as soon as they see my military ID."

In both the military and civilian worlds, Black Airmen moderate themselves to fit others' expectations. They are told, in words and in actions, to be as loud or as quiet as the people around them, to smile so as not to be threatening, to speak a certain way. Lt. Col. Ja Rai Williams, assistant executive officer to the Air Force's Judge Advocate General, said her true feelings are covered by a mask that she only feels comfortable dropping around trusted family and friends.

Added Feggans: "It's a duality of serving in the military and serving as African Americans. You're used to looking at yourself from the outside as, 'How is my hair gonna be perceived? How's my accent going to be perceived?' The mannerisms—am I going to come off as the angry Black woman or the angry Black man? So it's a constant battle with yourself of trying to find a way to appease and to lead."

From the start, many Black Airmen feel the need to excel to prove they belong, knowing others are scrutinizing their progress.

"You're in a fishbowl," said A.G. Hatcher, the Air Force's acting deputy chief information officer who retired from Active duty as a colonel. "You've always got to be on your ... A-game. You've always got to show up. You've just got to produce, because you have to overdeliver."

Growing up in the Deep South, in Selma, Ala., Hatcher said he learned early on that "one, life wasn't fair, and two, if you're Black, you've got to be better." It also instilled in him a sense that everyone should get an equal shot at success.

As a company-grade Air Force officer years ago, Hatcher noticed he wasn't being offered the same opportunities as some of his peers. So he started nominating himself instead, hoping to pave his own way up the ranks. Once in leadership positions, he mentored others and diversified a staff of all white men to include more women and people of color.

Having a diverse array of mentors matters. Mentors of any race can show Black Airmen a path to leadership they may not have known existed, while building a cadre of Black leaders who can help others in the future. Taking on Black mentees, and putting more Black Airmen in leadership positions, helps build a more inclusive wing culture.

Sometimes an invitation declined can be misinterpreted, Cotton said. If a white flight commander invites newly arrived Airmen to come out for a weekend of elk hunting, a "young Airman who just came from the inner city or from an urban environment, who's never picked up a rifle in their life, might say, 'Yeah, I think I might pass,'" Cotton said. "That person could then get assessed by that flight chief: 'He's not a team player. ... I did my part, I asked them to join us.'" Meanwhile, that Airman might only feel more isolated.

Value of Diversity

Diverse workplaces can inspire and uplift people of all colors and offer a support structure when Airmen are struggling and need someone to talk to. That could be a matter of confronting a neighbor over a child using a racial slur or upset over constant news coverage of shootings and protests. Especially now, Black Airmen said they feel nervous, numb, exhausted, and sometimes silenced by their uniform.

“Because emotions are heightened, I’ve had to police myself,” Hill said. “I still have a job to do. I still have to project a professional image, but I also have to deal with the emotions that come from people within our community yelling and saying that, ‘We’re being shot, we’re being killed.’”

At one point during a shift at the Combined Space Operations Center shortly after Floyd’s death, Hill struggled to regain his composure when thinking about his family and current events. A friend online helped him calm down; he worried about being perceived as a stereotypical “angry Black man” in the workplace. He said his supervisor supported him by talking through those feelings during every shift.

Antoinette Allen, a former Active-duty Airman who later served in the National Guard until 2014, said it’s been heartbreakingly to watch people’s reactions to the thousands of Guardsmen who were deployed to support local law enforcement at protests around the country. She recalled a video of Black protesters taunting a Black Guardsman, telling him to drop his weapon and join the protests. The Guard is there to protect, not suppress, she said: “These are not two opposite sides.”

Black Airmen are heartened by the conversations about their longstanding challenges taking place across the service. But the experience of being Black in America, particularly for those who are the only Black person in their units, is still isolating.

“When I talk to them about the anxiety I have with my husband leaving the house every day and possibly not making it home, they’re not going to be able to relate,” Tucker said. “They’ll listen to me and I know they will, but there’s so much value to being able to relate to someone. So it’s very, extremely lonely for me right now.”

Sometimes friends and family ask: Why are you serving a country that doesn’t care about you? It’s a question Tucker can’t answer. “I don’t know what I’m going to do at the end of my contract. … If I do not stay, it won’t be because I didn’t do well,” the Hawaii-based Airman said. “Right now, I don’t feel valued. … If my contract was up next year, I know I would not renew.”

At Edwards Air Force Base, Felton said he’s proud to have a job in uniform where he can help people, but that it’s hard to justify the actions of the country he serves.

“I’m asked, ‘How can you work for a military who has conducted injustices in the past?’” he said. “That makes it difficult to accept those situations or to speak on them, but does that make it harder for me to do my job? No.”

Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark, the Air Force’s deputy chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration, knows those voices are out there.

Clark is dealing with America's recent turmoil both as a high-ranking military officer and as a father. His 18-year-old son took off on his bike one night for a Black Lives Matter protest in Washington, D.C., proud of his history and hungry for change. Tens of thousands of Airmen may feel the same way, Clark said.

"There's probably an anger that we don't even know about, that some of these Airmen who don't have someone to talk about it with, or someone to help guide them through this," Clark said. "But I am encouraged by what my kids saw: That this is everyone's solution, and that there are a lot of people who are angered by this, not just Black people, but a lot of people who want to do something about it."

He and other Air Force leaders said they are heartened by the service's decision to thoroughly study racial disparities in promotions and the military justice system, along with other factors that may block Black Airmen from feeling heard and from rising through the ranks.

Justice Deserved

The military justice issue hits home for Brandon Glover, a former Airman who left the service in 2009 amid a law enforcement mixup. Glover said he was accused of a crime off-base he didn't commit, then discharged from his post in Japan within days, despite officials realizing he wasn't at fault. Now a civilian intelligence employee with the Army, Glover argues the Air Force needs more impartial oversight of its military justice processes.

"I think the process of putting people out should have a certain time requirement as far as research, investigating, getting all the details," he added.

Others agree the first step toward understanding what Black Airmen face is allowing difficult conversations to take place. That was part of the aim of Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright's public statements on race, as well as his live discussions on the topic with Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein.

Felton said one supervisor "wasn't aware of how bad the situation was, just because he wasn't exposed to it." The discussion helped open his eyes, he said. "He was having a moment of reflection in his life," Felton continued. "I see that as a step in the right direction, because three years ago, I don't think that would have happened."

Others suggest support groups or open forums can help air feelings and problems in work and home life. Some units are creating task forces and distributing educational materials. While the Marine Corps is banning the Confederate flag and related imagery, the Air Force, so far, has not said if it will follow suit.

Retired Gen. Larry O. Spencer, the former Air Force Vice Chief of Staff and Air Force Association president, recalled the Air Force's race relations courses in the 1970s. "They were very intense, very emotional," he said. "Nobody liked it, and they ... did away with it."

But there's broad agreement on the need for periodic training at all levels to increase understanding of the lived experiences of women and people of color.

The new Space Force has a chance to build diversity and inclusion into its culture from the beginning. The space career field skews white, much like pilots and intelligence.

Hill wants to see the Space Force do a better job of celebrating Black history. He said he's never seen a base celebrate Juneteenth, the annual commemoration of the end of slavery observed on June 19. He's also tried—and failed—to highlight the achievements of prominent African Americans like music icon James Brown or political activist Malcolm X.

"When you are told you can't discuss or showcase influential and celebrity figures that played a significant part [in] our struggle, it is very discouraging," Hill said. "If we genuinely believe in diversity, we should take time to address it at different times of the year, not just the 'traditional' one or two times it is mandated."

Black Americans see the tide of public opinion turning, and some are cautiously optimistic that concrete action will follow. They stress that healing the divisions is a call for everyone—all Airmen, not just the Black community—to advocate for representation and fair treatment.

Cotton hopes the U.S. can reach a point where he doesn't have to talk to his adult children about how to stay safe every week.

"I am cautiously optimistic that we'll get after this ... not necessarily only from a Department of the Air Force perspective," he said. "It's time for our nation to really dive into this and get after it once and for all. And hopefully, you know, I don't have to have those conversations with my kids."

Command changes at 20th Air Force; both former commanders at Minot AFB

Minot Daily News, 8 July 20

F.E. WARREN AIR FORCE BASE, Wyoming – Maj. Gen. Ferdinand "Fred" Stoss will pass the 20th Air Force guidon to Maj. Gen. Michael Lutton during a change of command ceremony today at 10 a.m. at F. E. Warren AFB, Wyoming.

Both are former commanders of the 91st Missile Wing at Minot Air Force Base.

Lt. Gen. Anthony Cotton, deputy commander of Air Force Global Strike Command, is the presiding official for the ceremony. Tracing its lineage back to 1944, 20th Air Force will welcome its 24th commander.

Prior to this assignment, Lutton was the deputy director for Nuclear and Homeland Defense Operations, the Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Arlington, Virginia. He is a career space and missile officer and a graduate of the United States Air Force Weapons School. Lutton also served as weapons officer instructor, weapons squadron operations officer and weapons squadron commander. He commanded the United States Air Force's only group providing initial training for the nation's space and intercontinental ballistic missile operations and air launched cruise missile maintenance forces. He was commander of the 91st Missile Wing at Minot AFB from June 2014-June 2016.

The 20th Air Force commander is responsible for over 12,000 people for the nation's intercontinental ballistic missile force, organized into three operational wings. In addition, the commander oversees the 377th Air Base Wing at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico, which provides critical support to

the nuclear operation and mission partners.

20th Air Force is comprised of three missile wings and one air base wing – 90th Missile Wing, F. E. Warren AFB, Wyoming, 91st Missile Wing, Minot AFB, and 341st Missile Wing, Malmstrom AFB, Montana, and 377th Air Base Wing, Kirtland AFB, New Mexico. Additionally, 20th Air Force oversees the 576th Flight Test Squadron, Vandenberg AFB, California.

Stoss has been the 20th Air Force commander since January 2018. He is headed to his next assignment as director, Plans and Policy, United States Strategic Command, Offutt AFB, Nebraska. He was commander of the 91st Missile Wing at Minot Air Force Base from October 2009-June 2011.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, media will not be invited to the ceremony. The ceremony will be broadcasted live on the official 20th Air Force Facebook page.

VanHerck Nominated to Lead NORTHCOM

July 6, 2020 | By Brian W. Everstine

Lt. Gen. Glen D. VanHerck, currently the director of the Joint Staff, was nominated July 1 to take over as the next commander of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, the Pentagon announced July 6.

If confirmed, VanHerck will receive his fourth star and take over for Gen. Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy, who has led NORTHCOM since May 2018. The Pentagon has not announced O'Shaughnessy's next move.

Before the Joint Staff, VanHerck served as the commander of the U.S. Air Force Warfare Center and operations director for Air Force Global Strike Command, and commanded both the 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., and the 7th Bomb Wing at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. He is a command pilot with more than 3,200 hours in aircraft including the B-1, B-2, and F-35.

President Donald J. Trump also nominated Maj. Gen. Tony D. Bauernfeind to rise to lieutenant general as the vice commander of U.S. Special Operations Command. Bauernfeind is currently SOCOM's chief of staff.

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey A. Kruse, another nominee, is next in line to become the Director of National Intelligence's adviser for military affairs. He is also up for promotion to lieutenant general. Kruse is now the Pentagon's director for defense intelligence for warfighter support, working on ways to better collect and analyze intel using tools like artificial intelligence algorithms.

Air Force Magazine previously reported Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark is also nominated to become the next superintendent of the U.S. Air Force Academy, and the first Black officer to hold that post.

Clark Nominated to Lead Air Force Academy

July 5, 2020 | By Jennifer-Leigh Ophirory

President Donald J. Trump has nominated Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark to be the next U.S. Air Force Academy superintendent. If confirmed, Clark will replace Lt. Gen. Jay B. Silveria, who graduated from the Academy in 1985 and has led the school since August 2017. Silveria plans to retire later this year, according to a USAFA release.

"I am extremely humbled and honored by the nomination to serve as the Superintendent of the Air Force Academy," Clark said in the release. "I'm also excited for the opportunity to build on the tremendous work of Lt. Gen. Silveria and to give back to the institution that has given me so much. Go Falcons!"

Silveria said Clark "will be an extraordinary leader" for the school, citing his extensive history with the Academy and "exceptional leadership record," according to the release.

Clark, who currently works as the Air Force's deputy chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration, is a 1986 USAFA graduate and a former commandant of cadets, according to his service biography.

He holds four master's degrees—in human resource development, strategic studies, airpower studies, and national security studies—and graduated from U.S. military institutions including the Air Force Weapons School, the Naval Command and Staff College, the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, and the National War College.

Prior to his arrival at the Pentagon, he led 3rd Air Force and 8th Air Force, and served as vice-commander of Air Force Global Strike Command. He's also a command pilot with more than 4,200 flight hours, including 400 in combat, in aircraft including the B-1, EC-135, T-1, T-38, T-6, and C-21.

Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette fights to retain NNSA budget reins

By Colin Demarest cdmarest@aikenstandard.com // Jul 3, 2020 Updated Jul 3, 2020

U.S. Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette in a Monday letter urged senators to reconsider provisions included in a version of annual defense legislation that would give the Pentagon and other defense officials significant sway over the National Nuclear Security Administration and its nuclear weapons purse.

Brouillette, writing to Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman James Inhofe, R-Okla., said he had "deep concerns about several" things embedded in the panel's fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, including a section that would grant the Nuclear Weapons Council vetting power and influence over NNSA budgeting and priorities. That, among other things, the energy secretary continued in his two-page letter, would be detrimental.

"Since the establishment of DOE in 1977, the Secretary of Energy has been charged with the management of America's nuclear weapon capabilities," Brouillette wrote. "This authority is the most important responsibility that I hold as the Secretary of Energy." The National Nuclear Security

Administration, which operates at and has proposed a nuclear weapons mission ([plutonium pit production](#)) for the Savannah River Site, is a semiautonomous arm of the Energy Department. Its focus is on the nation's nuclear arsenal, nonproliferation and naval propulsion.

The energy secretary – currently Brouillette, who succeeded Rick Perry – oversees the budget process for the Energy Department and its NNSA. The balance between resources, "military necessity" and "civilian control," Brouillette suggested, is paramount. Tom Clements, the director of [Savannah River Site Watch](#), an independent monitoring group, in a Wednesday email blast described the Senate committee's directions as "disturbing."

The changes, if effectuated, Clements emphasized, could undermine nuclear cleanup funding – crucial to the Savannah River Site, home to millions of gallons of radioactive waste and other environmental threats. "This front-door attempt to neutralize the NNSA and reduce the Environmental Management budget must be rejected by the full Senate," Clements said. U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell had similar things to say [earlier this week](#). Cantwell, a Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, represents Washington state, home to the Hanford Site.

"This is a total jam by the DOD, neutering the Department of Energy on almost half of its budget, to basically say, 'We know better what to do,'" she said in a speech. "I hope my colleagues will speak loudly and clearly about this. This is a bipartisan issue." The National Nuclear Security Administration itself, according to spokesperson Ana Gamonal de Navarro, "strongly objects" to the same portions of the Senate committee's [National Defense Authorization Act](#), in general seen as a must-pass bill. "We urge Congress to allow DOE and NNSA to continue to work together to deliver a budget that will support our mission and commitment to the American people," Navarro said in a statement.

News & Opinion

Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles Still Matter

RealClear Defense, 4 July 20 Adam Lowther, William Murphy and Gerald Goodfellow

On July 1st, the House Armed Services Committee derailed an effort to kill funding for the U.S. Air Force's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) replacement, the Ground-based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD). This was a big win for the Air Force because the arms control community has set its sights on GBSD and its primary target. In a recent opinion piece for The Hill, arms control advocate William Hartung draws from his new Union of Concerned Scientists' report to call for the termination of GBSD, but the elimination of ICBMs altogether.

The claims made by Hartung and the arms control community are another example of the misinformation, so often repeated in public concerning nuclear deterrence and the United States' nuclear triad. Hartung's argument, at the very least, mischaracterizes the nation's nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) system, ICBM technology, and, most importantly, the role land-based missiles play in deterrence. Let us explain.

ICBMs and Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications

Hartung begins by arguing, “Former Secretary of Defense William Perry has rightly called these systems ‘some of the most dangerous weapons in the world’ because they could trigger an accidental nuclear war.” Most, including our adversaries, would agree ICBMs are “some of the most dangerous weapons in the world,” but this is key to deterrence. As a previous article notes, Perry’s argument about “accidental war” neither reflects the technical developments made in the nearly half-century since Perry’s 1970s “close call” experience nor discusses updates to NC3 technologies/procedures/processes and how our senior leaders would respond given today’s safeguards.

Currently, the United States possesses the most advanced space and terrestrial based integrated tactical warning and attack assessment systems in the world. It provides “dual phenomenology” in which multiple systems are required to vet and verify any indications and warning received by a system. China and Russia also possess capable systems that are improving to equal that of the United States. Thus, the insinuation ICBMs are somehow prone to accidental launch because of an error in the United States’ tactical warning system is far-fetched.

When Hartung suggests nuclear war is little more than one computer error away, he deeply misrepresents the nation’s nuclear command, control, and communications system, specifically designed to prevent the very mistakes they suggest. NC3 is built to be redundant and relies on both human and technical means to prevent accidental launches.

ICBM Technology

When Hartung suggests the current Minuteman III system is perfectly capable and should remain in service for several more decades, until land-based ballistic missiles are eliminated, he shows a misunderstanding of adversary capabilities. Since the MMIII was fielded in the 1970s, technology has progressed in dramatic ways.

Russia and China recently completed modernizing their nuclear arsenals, and are developing defensive systems specifically designed to mitigate American ICBMs. They are also hardening and burying facilities the United States would likely target. It should come as no surprise GBSD, the replacement system for the Minuteman III, is designed to overcome adversary defensive systems. Ensuring our adversaries know we can successfully strike is central to maintaining stable deterrence.

Although the specific capabilities of GBSD are highly classified, the need to field a system with 2020s technology instead of 1970s technology is apparent. When you consider ICBMs are the least expensive to acquire and most cost effective to maintain and operate of the nation’s nuclear weapon systems, fielding a highly reliable and cost effective system is a smart move.

ICBMs in Nuclear Strategy

Most concerning in Hartung’s editorial and the report is the misstatement of American nuclear strategy and glossing over the risk an ICBM-free nuclear force creates.

First, ICBMs are specifically designed to create a large number of targets—approximately 500—on American soil that require an adversary to specifically strike with more than 1,000 nuclear missiles in order to destroy America’s ability to strike back. By setting the bar for success so high,

ICBMs have helped prevent nuclear war and conventional war between the great powers for more than sixty years. Remember, nuclear weapons make nuclear powers and their allies unwilling to fight each other in a conventional war because of the fear of escalation.

If Hartung and his co-authors have their way and ICBMs are eliminated, the number of targets it takes to destroy the United States' nuclear arsenal shrinks from 500 to six—all of which can be destroyed or severely degraded with conventional weapons. Bomber and submarine bases are targets that, along with their aircraft and submarines, can be destroyed by low observable cruise missiles and conventional hypersonic weapons all before any response occurs.

These characteristics make ICBMs the most stabilizing leg of the nation's nuclear triad. More than any other leg of the triad, ICBMs reduce the temptation of nuclear armed adversaries from striking the U.S. first.

Hartung's suggestion that submarines are invulnerable is simply untrue. During the Cold War, American Los Angeles class attack submarines would wait outside Soviet submarine pens and successfully track Soviet ballistic missile submarines. Space-based assets and hydroacoustic arrays are becoming increasingly more capable of tracking submarines and will only be aided by quantum computing and artificial intelligence in the years to come. Thus, to say submarines are "invulnerable" is just not accurate.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, ICBMs remain as important to the nation's nuclear triad as they were when first fielded in 1959. If the desire of Americans is to maintain strategic stability, eliminating land-based ballistic missiles would have the exact opposite effect.

Don't take our word for it. Just look at Russian and Chinese nuclear modernization. Both countries have focused their efforts on modernizing their own ICBM forces. If they are merely Cold War relics, why are our adversaries so focused on advancing their own ICBM forces?

-- Dr. Adam Lowther is a professor at the U.S. Army's School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) at Ft. Leavenworth, KS. He was the founding Director of the U.S. Air Force's School of Advanced Nuclear Deterrence Studies (SANDS).

-- William Murphy is the Director of Senior Leader Education for Nuclear Command, Control and Communications at the Louisiana Tech Research Institute. He is also an Air Force reserve general officer assigned to Air Force Global Strike Command.

-- Brig Gen Gerald Goodfellow (USAF, Ret.) is the Executive Director of the Louisiana Tech Research Institute. During his 30-year Air Force career, he flew B-1, KC-135, and E-6B aircraft in support of the nation's nuclear mission. In his current position, he is responsible for teaching all of the Nuclear Command, Control and Communications continuing military education courses within the USAF.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the United States Army, United States Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

AFA's Air, Space & Cyber Conference Will Be Virtual

July 6, 2020 | By Jennifer-Leigh Oprihory

The Air Force Association will hold its 2020 Air, Space & Cyber Conference virtually amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the association announced July 6.

The online event will take place beginning Sept. 14 and will last at least three days, featuring a mix of live and on-demand conference sessions focusing on air, space, and cyber operations and issues. Sessions will include live addresses from senior leaders, support question-and-answer interaction, and provide unique opportunities to engage with Air Force, Space Force, and industry leadership.

The event will include a virtual exhibit hall highlighting cutting-edge industry developments and demonstrations, online meetings, and interactive presentations.

AFA's president, retired USAF Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, said the decision to shift from the traditional in-person event to an online experience was "extremely arduous," but under current circumstances, it would be impossible to host "a safe, high-caliber, in-person" conference for 12,000 attendees.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, state and county directives, and "feedback ... from prospective speakers, attendees, exhibitors, sponsors, Airmen, and Space Professionals" all factored into AFA's decision, Wright said.

"Our goal is to continue AFA's long tradition of hosting the premier event for defense and aerospace professionals around the world," Wright said. "Our virtual Air, Space and Cyber conference will offer the same exceptional line-up of speakers, world-class exhibits, professional development opportunities, and networking opportunities for industry, government, media, academia, and the public."

Details will emerge in the coming days and weeks as AFA posts updated information on the agenda, registration, exhibition, sponsorship, and participation details on its [website](#).

USAF Tackles 900 Action Items To Strengthen Security Forces

July 9, 2020 | By Rachel S. Cohen

After a British man eluded security at RAF Mildenhall, England, in 2017 and rammed an aircraft on the flightline with his car, the Air Force launched its Reconstitute Defender Initiative to ensure the 38,000 Airmen standing guard across 120 military bases around the world had the training, equipment, and esprit de corps they needed to get the job done.

In all, the service identified 900 action items to improve security, the last of which was recently completed, said Lt. Gen. Warren D. Berry, the Air Force's deputy chief of staff for logistics, engineering, and force protection, at an online Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies event July 9.

Video: Mitchell Institute on YouTube

More must still be done to institutionalize changes like mandatory time off, and to adapt to evolving base defense needs, but progress has been made, he said.

The Air Force is spending over \$180 million to upgrade equipment, according to Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein. For example, the M9 Beretta has been replaced by the more accurate Sig Sauer M18 pistol and defenders are getting the Heckler & Koch M320 grenade launcher and better precision rifles. The Army's Joint Light Tactical Vehicle is replacing aging Humvees, with the first ones going to training locations and bases that handle nuclear weapons and aircraft.

The service's first-ever female body armor is coming online, as well as new ballistic helmets and vests, Berry said. And research is underway on new technologies to help defend bases, he added without offering details. That could include directed-energy weapons to fend off small drones and cruise missiles.

Sometimes, improvements are as simple as digitizing records and helping Airmen to reach for their weapon more rapidly. "You would have to shove stuff aside to get the right guns out or fight with the locker system," Senior Airman Cory Loicao, 627th Security Forces Squadron flight armorer at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., said in a release. "With this new system, it has taken it down to [less than five minutes] per person."

USAF has also tried to instill a greater sense of duty and honor in security forces culture, Berry said. "It means something to wear the beret."

Defenders are ramping up training in small-unit tactics and law enforcement, and moving toward greater proficiency and muscle memory instead of simply qualifying for the job. Officials are pushing more regular training, and Goldfein has said security forces should be practicing marksmanship daily.

The Air Force also wants new communications equipment for security Airmen. Better connected Defenders will be able to react faster to breaches and problems. "The threat is outside the wire right now," Goldfein said last fall. "They are sizing us up, looking for weaknesses in our lines. What we want them to determine is that we are just too hard a target to penetrate."

Fourteen security forces squadrons began a "Squadron of the Future" project last year, including embedding trainers in every flight and increasing training from four to six days per month.

"Previously when we had to go to training, people generally [dragged] their feet," Tech. Sgt. Corey Southard, 422nd Security Forces Squadron noncommissioned officer in charge of training at RAF Croughton, England, said in a December 2019 release. "Now you have a trainer embedded amongst your flight. People are more receptive to it. ... The quicker they train you, the quicker you get out or go off to bigger and better things."

Berry said the Air Force still has unfunded security forces positions to fill, but leaders are comfortable with the personnel they have. He did not say how many of those jobs are vacant.

An ongoing facilities overhaul plan will likely change what the Air Force needs from its security forces. Protecting against small drones is one growing mission security forces face, Berry said.

"We are preparing for a future that will look significantly different than our past," the Air Force Security Forces Center said. "The future is full of frequent disruption, not just from technology, but also from people and leaders who are looking to do things better, more fairly, and more responsibly."

How the Coronavirus Has Changed the Way America Prepares for Nuclear War

The threat of the virus forced the Air Force to take new measures to adapt the crews overseeing U.S. arsenals of intercontinental ballistic missiles. By Paul D. Shinkman, Senior Writer, National Security July 9, 2020 U.S. News & World Report

Airmen from the 90th Maintenance Group are responsible for maintaining and repairing ICBMs on alert status Dec. 18, 2019, within the F.E. Warren missile complex, as they are one of three missile bases part of Air Force Global Strike Command. The Minuteman III, on alert at all three bases, replaced the Peacekeeper at F.E. Warren in the 1970s. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Abbigayle Williams)

THE CORONAVIRUS HAS forced the Air Force to reconsider how it operates the most powerful weapons in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, yielding unprecedented measures to remain ready for war as the pandemic spread across the globe.

The Air Force officers within the intercontinental ballistic missile program, known colloquially as "missileers," traditionally worked single shifts in their bunkers roughly 60 feet underground, sheltered by blast doors and supported by seemingly endless redundancies and backups. But facing the threat posed by the virus, and adversaries who seem determined to exploit it, now they and the staff who support them are working shifts as long as two weeks, isolated in facilities at the silos across missile fields in Montana, North Dakota and Wyoming to ensure they don't contract the virus. The moves are unprecedented and stretch beyond even the training scenarios for doomsday events that these forces previously practiced.

"We've never had a crisis in our history where we needed to have that type of capacity at our missile facilities for that long a period of time," Air Force Maj. Gen. Ferdinand "Fred" Stoss told U.S. News in an interview shortly before ending his tenure this week as commander of the 20th Air Force, which oversees the nation's intercontinental ballistic missile force.

And so far it appears to have worked. Though some members of the 20th Air Force have contracted the virus, none of those charged with what Stoss calls the "vital mission set" has yet tested positive for it.

That admission stands in stark contrast to other elements of the U.S. military that were effectively sidelined earlier this year by the spread of the disease, including the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier, which only returned to full duty last month.

The Air Force has documented almost 2,200 cases of the coronavirus as a part of the 22,000 positive diagnoses among all uniformed and civilian members of the Defense Department, according to the latest available figures. It is trailed only by the much smaller Marine Corps in cases among the active duty services.

A spokeswoman for the 20th Air Force declined to say specifically how many of its airmen had contracted the coronavirus. The Pentagon has hesitated to release too much detail about how the virus has affected its warfighting forces for fear of emboldening potential adversaries.

The airmen working in the missile fields had routinely conducted training exercises for contingencies that would interrupt their usual schedule of rotating in a new crew every day. Isolated moments in the past, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, have also contributed to plans they've developed for how to adapt to emergency situations.

But the circumstances during this pandemic, heightened by the persistent threat of the nuclear arsenals of China, Russia and North Korea, presented new challenges for the missileers, as well as the security forces, facility managers and staff like chefs that support them.

The missileers are now operating on 14-day schedules, during which time they stay in contained facilities at the silos with no outside contact other than electronic communication and the internet. Their replacement crews also enter a strict isolation for 14 days – matching the known incubation period of the virus – with limited abilities to travel during that time.

Their support staff had previously operated on a similar 14-day schedule, including the cooks at the facilities and the troops who protect them, but due to more abundant testing are now changing over every five days, Stoss says.

"We've never had one that is so long-term," Stoss says of the new scheduling requirements. "Now we've actually done it. We've documented it, we've improved upon it, and I just made some modifications last week. These will be enduring."

Some of the effects of the sweeping changes were unexpected. Stoss says morale has improved among crews that now spend more time together. The 20th Air Force has also improved internet connectivity to allow airmen to communicate more easily with the outside world and even play video games more readily to help pass the time.

"There's a synergy when they all deploy out together, stay out together and return together," he says.

And he echoed assertions from other senior members of the Defense Department, including Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein, that the military must remain prepared to continue on this unusual footing indefinitely: "This is going to be an issue, a real issue for us, for a long time."

After leaving his current position, Stoss will transition to U.S. Strategic Command, which oversees the entire military's nuclear forces among other forms of strategic deterrence, where he will become director of plans and policy.

Paul D. Shinkman, Senior Writer, National Security Paul Shinkman is a national security correspondent.

China rejects new US invite to join nuclear talks

Agence France-Presse, 10 July 20

China on Friday rejected a new US invitation to join arms control talks with Russia, complaining that Washington had continued to "pester" Beijing over the issue.

President Donald Trump's administration has demanded that China take part in talks on a successor to the New START treaty, which caps the nuclear warheads of the United States and Russia -- the two Cold War-era superpowers.

Beijing said in response that it would only join the talks if the US reduced its arsenal to match China's much smaller nuclear deterrent, prompting Washington to again issue a fresh invitation to the talks on Thursday.

But Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian poured cold water on the idea during a Friday press briefing.

"China's opposition of the so-called trilateral arms control negotiations is very clear," he said.

"However, the US continues to pester China, even distorting China's position."

Zhao said Washington's proposal for trilateral negotiations was "neither serious nor sincere", calling on it to instead respond to Russia's call for an extension of the treaty and further reduce its own nuclear arsenal.

The message in Russia's new nuclear weapons strategy: Don't mess with us, but let's talk

BusinessInsider.com, 5 July 20 Richard Weitz

For the first time ever, the Russian government has publicly released a document laying out the logic and principles underpinning its approach to nuclear deterrence.

Formally titled "Fundamentals of Russian State Nuclear Deterrence Policy," the report was approved by President Vladimir Putin and posted on the government's official information web portal on June 2. Previous iterations of Russia's deterrence policy, such as the one associated with the updated military doctrine it unveiled in 2010, were alluded to in public, but never published.

Why did Russia decide to publish its deterrence policy now? In part, it could be to dispel alleged Western misperceptions about when Russia might use nuclear weapons, specifically the Pentagon's assessment that Moscow would threaten to use nuclear weapons — or actually do so — to intimidate an adversary into yielding in a major crisis.

Previously referred to as "escalate to de-escalate," US officials currently describe this strategy as "escalate to win," and have used it to justify developing US low-yield nuclear weapons options to counter it.

The newly published strategy document implies that nuclear weapons deter escalation through their mere existence. Even so, the paper also warns adversaries against a range of actions that Moscow claims would raise the danger of nuclear war by presenting threats to Russia. These include deploying ballistic and cruise missiles, armed drones, missile defenses and even large concentrations of general-purpose forces — like a US Army brigade — near Russian territory.

Without mentioning the US or its allies, the wording thereby amplifies Moscow's familiar complaints about NATO military activities in Russia's vicinity, the alliance's nuclear-sharing doctrine, the US global missile defense architecture, and fears of new US ground-launched missiles being deployed near Russia.

In an effort to further bolster deterrence, the document warns adversaries that Moscow will inflict "unacceptable" damage in retaliation for any aggression against Russia or its allies. The wording underscores both Russia's nuclear capacity and its will to use it.

While it also notes the need to rely on conventional forces as well as economic, diplomatic and other means of non-nuclear deterrence, the document makes evident that Russian policymakers still perceive nuclear forces as essential for backstopping their growing but insufficient portfolio of conventional and political-military tools.

Additionally, the criterion for the size of Russia's nuclear forces as laid out in the policy paper — "a level sufficient to ensure nuclear deterrence" — is so vague as to justify an arsenal of any scale. The guidelines also emphasize Russia's flexible response options in terms of the magnitude, timing, means and targets of possible nuclear retaliation.

Russian military writings envisage the use of nuclear weapons in a range of scenarios, from regional conflicts to great-power wars. Likewise, Russian commanders have probably developed tailored nuclear force packages for many scenarios.

But the newly published nuclear deterrence policy notably goes beyond threatening nuclear retaliation for a nuclear strike on Russian territory. It affirms that Moscow might employ nuclear weapons to defend Russia or its allies against any attack causing mass destruction, including those

involving non-nuclear systems — presumably cyber or precision conventional weapons — that could inflict damage comparable to nuclear strikes.

As examples of what kind of threats this policy is meant to deter, the paper points to attacks targeting Russia's retaliatory nuclear arsenal, its national command authority or its critical civilian infrastructure. Russian policymakers clearly hope to deter the kind of decapitation strikes the US Air Force employed at the outset of the US wars in Iraq and Kosovo.

In this regard, the document also confirms Putin's earlier statements about Moscow's "launch under attack" posture, which considers the use of nuclear weapons based on "reliable information" of incoming missiles aimed at Russia or its allies.

This stance, designed to avert a potential US first strike with either nuclear or conventional weaponry on Russia's nuclear forces or supporting command-and-control architecture, is unnerving given the well-publicized flaws in Russia's strategic early warning system.

However, this declared posture may simply aim to discourage NATO from launching any missiles near Russia, including those with non-nuclear or low-yield nuclear warheads, since verifying if an incoming missile carries a large, small or non-nuclear payload is presently impossible.

To what extent the new document genuinely reflects the Russian leadership's thinking on nuclear war is unclear. But even if it does, the paper notes that the government can revise its deterrence doctrine at any time if internal or external conditions change.

Regarding the debate over escalation and a nuclear first strike, Western skeptics argue that Moscow's professed disinterest in waging a nuclear war is contradicted by a range of Russian actions and positions.

As a result of Russia's procurement practices, all of its new delivery systems are designed to deliver nuclear weapons, either exclusively or along with possible conventional payloads. Major military exercises regularly include drills simulating nuclear weapons use. And Russian military writings routinely include discussions of nuclear escalation scenarios and battlefield options.

In particular, Russia's sustained investment in improving both the quantity and quality of its so-called tactical nuclear weapons is widening a numerical imbalance with the United States that is already strongly in Moscow's favor, thereby providing ammunition to those who believe the Russian military would consider employing these weapons as part of an "escalate to win" strategy.

The document does not articulate how Russia's nuclear deterrence policy applies to China, which also deploys weapons of mass destruction, missiles and general-purpose forces near Russian territory. In all likelihood, Russian strategists plan to use nuclear weapons in the event of a major war with China, given the difficulties of defending the remote Russian Far East with conventional forces. But such contingencies have been absent from official discourse for the past decade.

When asked by a Russian reporter about the new policy paper, a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry responded reassuringly that "China respects and understands Russia's efforts to safeguard national security interests." If pressed, Russian officials could point to the document's wording, by which Russia's nuclear deterrence policy applies only to states that view Russia as a "potential adversary," which Chinese leaders profess not to

do.

The text mentions in passing that Russia will pursue "all necessary efforts for reducing the nuclear threat." Although perhaps not its main or even intended purpose, this passage does respond to the Trump administration's recently declared nuclear arms control agenda.

In several speeches and documents, US officials have formally laid out their goals of limiting Russia's new, nuclear-capable strategic weapons, nondeployed nuclear warheads and nonstrategic nuclear weapons — as well as of securing Moscow's support against nuclear proliferation and for including China in future negotiations on nuclear arms.

Russia's new nuclear deterrence policy delineates the US weapons, deployments and technologies that Russian officials will likely press to limit when Washington and Moscow resume their formal arms control talks in the coming weeks, such as American strategic defenses and nuclear weapons deployed in Europe.

As a public declaration partly designed for foreign audiences, Russia's paper on nuclear deterrence does not resolve Western debates about Russian nuclear strategy. However, it makes evident both the similarities and differences between Russian and US thinking about nuclear weapons. Both governments embrace nuclear deterrence while accusing the other of recklessly planning nuclear escalation.

Additionally, since the lengthy list of Russian concerns are unlikely to soon dissipate, the prospects for expanded Russian-American cooperation on nuclear arms control will remain modest no matter who wins the US presidential election in November.

-- Richard Weitz is a senior fellow and director of the Center for Political-Military Analysis at the Hudson Institute. He would like to thank the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for supporting his nuclear-related research and writing.

Future Missile War Needs New Kind of Command (PDF Above 35 pgs)

Integrating missile defense – shooting down incoming missiles – with missile offense – destroying the launchers before they fire again – requires major changes in how the military fights.

By [Sydney J. Freedberg Jr.](#) for Breaking Defense // on July 07, 2020 at 4:00 AM

A simplified (yes, really) overview of the Army's IBCS command-and-control network for air and missile defense.

WASHINGTON: Don't try to shoot down each arrow as it comes; shoot the archer. That's a time-honored military principle that US forces would struggle to implement in an actual war with China, Russia, North Korea, or Iran, warns a [new report](#) from thinktank CSIS.

New technology, like [the Army's IBCS command network – now entering a major field test](#) — can be part of the solution, but it's only part, writes [Brian Green](#), a veteran of 30 years in the Pentagon, Capitol Hill, and the aerospace industry. Equally important and problematic are the command-and-control arrangements that determine who makes the decision to fire what, at what, and when.

Today, the military has completely different units, command systems, doctrines, and legal/regulatory authorities for missile defense – which tries to shoot down threats the enemy has already launched – and for long range offensive strikes – which could keep the enemy from launching in the first place, or at least from getting off a second salvo, by destroying launchers, command posts, and targeting systems. While generals and doctrine-writers have talked about “offense-defense integration” for almost two decades, Green says, the concept remains shallow and incomplete.

“A thorough implementation of ODI would touch almost every aspect of the US military, including policy, doctrine, organization, training, materiel, and personnel,” Green writes. “It would require a fundamental rethinking of terms such as ‘offense’ and ‘defense’ and of how the joint force fights.” Indeed, it easily blurs into the even larger problem of coordinating all the services across all five domains of warfare – land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace – in what’s known as [Joint All-Domain Operations](#).

The bifurcation between offense and defense runs from the loftiest strategic level down to tactical:

- At the highest level, US Strategic Command commands both the nation’s nuclear deterrent and homeland missile defense. But these functions are split between three different subcommands within STRATCOM, one for Air Force ICBMs and bombers (offense), one for Navy ballistic missile submarines (also offense), and one for [Integrated Missile Defense](#).
- In forward theaters, the Army provides ground-based missile defense, but those units – Patriot batteries, THAAD, Sentinel radars – belong to separate brigades from the Army’s own long-range missile artillery, and they’re even less connected to offensive airstrikes from the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.
- The Navy’s AEGIS system arguably does the best job of integrating offense and defense in near-real-time, Green says, but even there, “different capabilities onboard a given ship can come under different commanders,” one with the authority to unleash Standard Missile interceptors against incoming threats and the other with the authority to fire Tomahawk missiles at the enemy launchers.

This division of labor might have worked when warfare was slower. But [China and Russia have invested massively](#) in their arsenals of long-range, precision-guided missiles, along with the sensors and command networks to direct them to their targets. So, on a lesser scale, have North Korea and Iran. The former deputy secretary of defense, Bob Work, warned of future conflicts in which “[salvo exchanges](#)” of hundreds of missiles – hopefully not nuclear ones – might rocket across the war zone within hours.

It’s been obvious for over a decade that current missile defense systems simply can’t cope with the sheer number of incoming threats involved, which led the chiefs of the Army and Navy to sign a famous “[eight-star memo](#)” in late 2014 that called, among other things, for stopping enemy missiles “left of launch.” But that approach would require real-time coordination between the offensive weapons, responsible for destroying enemy launchers, command posts, and targeting systems, and the defensive ones, responsible for shooting down whatever missiles made it into the air.

While Navy Aegis and Army IBCS show some promise, Green writes, neither is yet capable of moving the data required among all the users who would need it: Indeed, IBCS is still years away from connecting all the Army’s defensive systems, while Aegis only recently gained an [offensive anti-ship option, a modified SM-6](#), alongside its defensive missiles. As two Army generals cautioned in a recent interview with Breaking Defense, missile defense and offense have [distinctly different technical requirements](#) that limit the potential of using a single system to run both. There are different legal restrictions as well:

Even self-defense systems operate under strict limits, lest they accidentally shoot down friendly aircraft or civilian airliners, and offensive strikes can easily escalate a conflict. Green's [35-page paper](#) doesn't solve these problems. But it's useful examination of how complex they can become

Arms Control, the ICBM Force, and Ballistic Missile Defense

By [Mark B. Schneider](#) for Real Clear Defense // July 11, 2020

The U.S. has just started negotiations with the Russians on a new nuclear arms control treaty.

Our objectives include closing loopholes in the [New START Treaty](#), bringing in all nuclear [weapons](#), improving [verification](#) and bringing [China](#) into the negotiation. Russia has rejected these objectives; it seeks to extend the New START Treaty without changes, according to Deputy Chairman of the Russian National Security Council (and former President) Dmitry [Medvedev](#). Critically, a key Russian objective is to enhance limitations on U.S. missile [defenses](#). Our chief negotiator, Ambassador Marshall Billingslea, has said that extension of the Treaty will depend on progress with Russia on limiting all nuclear weapons and bringing China into the [negotiation](#).

The extension of the New START Treaty would keep in place its limitations on missile defenses (Article V, paragraph 2):

Each Party shall not convert and shall not use ICBM launchers and SLBM launchers for placement of missile defense interceptors therein. Each Party further shall not convert and shall not use launchers of missile defense interceptors for placement of ICBMs and SLBMs therein. This provision shall not apply to ICBM launchers that were converted prior to the signature of this Treaty for the placement of missile defense interceptors [therein](#).

Today, some advocate using ICBMs as missile defense interceptors and space launch vehicles and transferring the ICBM force to the new Space [Force](#). The New START Treaty's Article V, in combination with the restrictive New START definition of "missile defense interceptor" that requires that it must be used "solely" for missile [defense](#), prohibits using an ICBM for missile defense.

Putting our ICBMs under the Space Force is no more necessary than putting the Navy's Trident submarines or the Army's short-range ballistic missiles under the Space Force just because these missiles travel for a short time through space. Any significant space launch role for U.S. ICBMs is unlikely because of their limited orbital payload. Indeed, Russian efforts to market its much more powerful legacy Soviet ICBMs for space launch were not terribly successful.

Using a modified version of the Ground-based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD), the Minuteman III replacement ICBM, as our Next Generation Interceptor, is a bad idea. Just over 20 years ago, the Clinton administration rejected the use of the Minuteman III as the Ground-Based Interceptor (GBI), which currently protects the U.S. (I personally opposed the use of the Minuteman III as Director of Strategic Arms Control Policy in OSD).

While the START Treaty did not have New START's legal prohibitions on missile defense or its restrictive definition of missile defense interceptor, it was obvious that the Minuteman III was very old, less reliable than modern design, limited in number and that the START Treaty's restrictions on ICBM operations, notifications and its verification regime would create great problems, which the Russians would make worse. Many of these factors are still in play, and the Russians are now even more fanatically opposed to U.S. missile defense.

Putin's Russia has engaged in a [constant information war](#) with the [U.S.](#) and its [allies](#) with missile defense, the main target. A barely legal modification of the GBSD into a missile defense interceptor (a three percent change in first stage length or diameter) would hand Russia a stick with which to beat us. A side-by-side comparison of the two versions just after launch would appear to show the same missile. The Russians have a history of making factually and legally inaccurate compliance charges against the U.S.

For example, the Russian claim that the Aegis Ashore missile defense system in Europe was actually a prohibited deployment of INF-range [cruise missiles](#) was [bogus](#). Russia will claim that a GBSD-derived missile defense interceptor is an ICBM and that its launchers were covert ICBM launchers in violation of New START. Modifying the GBSD into a missile defense interceptor will negatively impact the U.S. large solid rocket motor industrial base, which is already in bad shape.

It would terminate half of the planned U.S. development of large solid fuel rockets. U.S. design activity almost ended in the 1990s, and the number of large solid rocket motor producers declined from [seven](#) to two, one of which is [struggling](#). After the GBSD, the only planned U.S. strategic missile program is the second Trident II life extension [program](#). Life extension programs do not exercise the full range of missile [design skills](#), which require full design [activity](#).

Had we taken similar advice in the 1990s and used the Minuteman III as the GBI, the result today would be a more degraded industrial base and a declining nuclear deterrent and missile defense capability. If we combine the two functions in essentially the same missile, any serious technical problem will impact both our deterrence and defense potential. A 2006 Defense Science Board report concluded that we were losing large missile design skills, including our ability to fix problems in existing missiles if they [develop](#).

A 2006 report by the DTRA Threat Reduction Advisory Committee said, "The current low level of effort on new or modified strategic strike systems is insufficient both to maintain the health of the infrastructure and to provide strategic options for the [nation](#)." This situation was made worse by the termination of the Space Shuttle Program and NASA's Ares booster [system](#) and other [cuts](#). The 2009 report of the U.S. Strategic Commission noted that "

The infrastructure that supports two-thirds of the strategic deterrent triad—the SLBMs and ICBMs—is not being [sustained](#)." Just after this report, OSD raised concerns that simply continuing small scale Trident II production "...does not adequately address maintaining the design and development skills required for developing our next generation strategic [systems](#)." A 2018 [Presidential report](#) and a 2019 OSD report on the U.S. industrial base said that over the last two decades, there were "no solid rocket motor [improvements](#)."

Converting the GBSD into a missile defense interceptor and terminating the MDA program for the Next Generation Interceptor would eliminate any serious competition in future ballistic missiles and large solid fuel rocket motors for space launch and would likely drive up [costs](#). This is not what we need in an era of competition with Russia and China, both of which have [multiple ballistic missile development](#) and [deployment](#) programs [underway](#).

It would be foolish indeed to ignore the fact that the GBSD is [under political attack from Minimum Deterrence/arms control](#) enthusiasts who frequently oppose missile defense. Adding the missile defense function in the GBSD program would simply make it a more attractive target, and these efforts would be supported by Russian and, probably, Chinese information warfare. The future of New START is unclear, but we should not assume arms control problems will disappear.

Even more significant is that if the U.S. builds only one new large solid fuel rocket over the next 50 years, we will very likely lose the ability to design such systems. This will impact nuclear deterrence, missile defense, potentially hypersonic boost-glide vehicles, and to a lesser degree space launch with solid rocket motors to the detriment of U.S. national security.

Dr. Mark B. Schneider is a Senior Analyst with the National Institute for Public Policy. Before his retirement from the Department of Defense Senior Executive Service, Dr. Schneider served in a number of senior positions within the Office of Secretary of Defense for Policy including Principal Director for Forces Policy, Principal Director for Strategic Defense, Space and Verification Policy, Director for Strategic Arms Control Policy and Representative of the Secretary of Defense to the Nuclear Arms Control Implementation Commissions. He also served in the senior Foreign Service as a Member of the State Department Policy Planning Staff.

Trump Plan to Build Nuclear Bombs

By [Ari Natter](#) and [Charlie McGee](#) for Bloomberg News // July 9, 2020, 4:00 AM EDT

- Revamping plutonium ‘pits’ would bring jobs to South Carolina
- Enduring radioactive contamination adds to environmental fears

A factory along South Carolina’s Savannah River produced tritium and plutonium for U.S. nuclear weapons during the Cold War, employing thousands of workers but leaving behind a toxic legacy of radioactive waste.

Now the Trump administration has proposed spending \$9 billion over 10 years to restart production of bomb parts there and at another site. The plan has raised the welcome prospect of new jobs though also rekindled environmental fears. And it’s set off alarms about a new nuclear arms race just as key treaties with [Russia](#) lapse. “It’s a waste of money and dangerous,” said Stephen Young, an expert on arms control and international security issues for the **Union of Concerned Scientists**.

President Donald Trump’s plan, announced by the departments of Energy and Defense in 2018, calls for restarting production of nuclear bomb ‘pits’ at the South Carolina site and another one in New Mexico. The bowling-ball sized spheres of plutonium act as the trigger in a nuclear warhead, setting off the explosive chain reaction. The U.S. hasn’t produced them on an industrial scale for nearly three decades.

The [National Nuclear Security Administration](#), the Energy Department arm responsible for manufacturing nuclear warheads for the Defense Department, says the existing ones [need to be replaced](#) because they are getting old and the technology has advanced to make them safer, an idea endorsed by [Congress](#) and Barack Obama when he was president. “The United States cannot postpone re-establishing this critical capability,” the NNSA says on its website. “Delaying the restoration of this capability could result in significant cost increases and risks to national security.”

While restarting production of nuclear weapons triggers was backed by Obama, the Trump administration has proposed increasing funding for the effort by 72% over existing levels and repurposing a facility at the Energy Department’s Savannah River Site, in Aiken County, South Carolina. The plan calls for producing at least 80 pits a year: 50 at Savannah River and 30 at an existing site in Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Legislation that would authorize the first \$1.4 billion of the Trump administration's request is expected to be approved by the Senate when it returns later this month. The House is working on its own version for the same amount that could be subject to amendment from Democrats who have expressed reservations about the plan. A decision by the NNSA on the Savannah River plan could come this fall.

The community around the Savannah River Site is split between those who are concerned about contamination and those eager for the jobs as the region's economy suffers along with the rest of the country during the pandemic. The site is still one of the state's largest employers having produced nuclear materials for non-defense purposes since 1988, including the space program, and medical and research efforts. Moving forward with pit production at the site would create more than 1,000 jobs.

But the 200,000-acre facility was named an Environmental Protection Agency Superfund priority clean up site in 1989 partly due to 37 million gallons of highly radioactive liquid waste stored in tanks on the premises. Nevertheless, the Aiken County Council twice unanimously passed resolutions supporting the return of plutonium pit production. "It makes sense from the environmental, economic and technical perspectives," Gary Bunker, chairman of the Aiken County Council, testified during an April hearing on the proposal held by the NNSA.

Others aren't convinced.

"To me, they haven't proven that this is going to be safe," said Pete LaBerge, a 70-year-old retiree who lives about three miles away from the Savannah River Site in nearby Windsor, which has 150 residents. He worries about a release of radiation. "Part of my theory is it's sort of a make-work program for the Energy Department."

'Preferred Alternative'

Opponents of the project say they fear it could suffer the same fate as the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility at the site, which was canceled because of cost overruns and delays after some \$8 billion of taxpayer money was spent on the project. Several metric tons of weapons grade plutonium, transferred from Russia to be converted into nuclear reactor fuel, remains on the property with nowhere to go.

"This isn't like, I don't know, remodeling a bowling alley into a restaurant," Representative Adam Smith, a Washington Democrat who chairs the Armed Services Committee said during a committee vote. He said he was "worried that we are going to spend billions of dollars, just like we did on the MOX facility, to get nothing." The Institute for Defense Analyses examined the proposal to manufacture pits in both Los Alamos and the South Carolina site and concluded the projects wouldn't be possible on the proposed schedules and budgets. The Alexandria, Virginia-based non-profit said success was "far from certain."

Plutonium Fears

"We don't want more plutonium in here to be stranded," said Tom Clements, director of [Savannah River Site Watch](#), a non-profit watchdog group. "How are they going to build new pits at a site that has no experience? They can't even make any now. They should try to demonstrate it at Los Alamos before trying to at Savannah River." Plutonium pit production has a checkered past. The nation's previous home for nuclear pit production, the Energy Department's Rocky Flats site 16 miles northwest of Denver, Colorado, at its peak produced 2,000 bomb pits a year.

But it was shutdown after a raid by the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) and EPA in 1989. An Energy Department contractor, [Rockwell International Corp.](#), signed a plea agreement in 1992 for violating environmental laws and [paid an \\$18.5 million fine](#). The area, also a Superfund site, has been closed for 28 years And the work can be fraught with risk. Lethal accidents can occur when too much plutonium is gathered together creating an uncontrolled chain reaction.“There would be a flash of neutrons that can be lethal,” said Jay Coghlan, executive director of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, a watchdog group. “It’s localized to the room you are in, but it would literally fry people.”

Politics at Play?

Other concerns include the increases in nuclear waste, accidents and fires that could spread fallout throughout surrounding communities. The Trump administration’s plan, which over 50 years would result in enough plutonium pits to replace those in each of the nation’s roughly 4,000 nuclear weapons, comes as experts are divided on whether the current pits, nearly all of which were produced between 1978 and 1989, need to be replaced, and how soon.

A 2007 report by JASON, the interdependent group of scientists who advise the government, concluded that most pits have lifetimes in excess of 100 years. “I think the old ones work just fine,” said Sharon Weiner, a nuclear weapons expert who is a professor at [American University](#). “I think we are safe to make the assessment that the pits in the nuclear weapons are good enough that we can postpone this decision for a significant period of time and maybe during that time we have new arms control agreements.”

Trump, who has promised to strengthen America’s nuclear arsenal, has [bowed out](#) of arms control agreements, particularly with Russia. He argues that Moscow was in violation of them. The Obama-era New START pact is set to expire in February and talks between the U.S. and Russia [resumed](#) last month. Supporters of the project counter that being unable to produce plutonium pits for new nuclear warheads puts the nation’s security at risk. “It’s alarming,” said John Harvey, who previously held senior positions overseeing U.S. nuclear weapons policy for both the Departments of Defense and Energy. “Eventually we are going to have to replace these things, they don’t live forever.”

The Chinese Communist Party’s ideology and global ambitions

Under Trump, Chinese intellectual property theft and security breaches aren’t tolerated

By Robert C. O’Brien for the WT // 09 July, 2020

For decades, conventional wisdom held that it was only a matter of time before China would become more liberal, first economically and, then, politically.

The more we opened our markets to China, the thinking went, the more we invested capital in China, the more we trained PRC bureaucrats, scientists, engineers, and even military officers, the more China would become like us. Prior to Donald J. Trump taking office, it was under this premise that we welcomed China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 with vast concessions, overlooked gross human rights abuses and turned a blind eye to widespread technology theft.

As China grew richer and stronger, we believed, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would liberalize to meet the rising aspirations of its people. We could not have been more wrong — and this miscalculation is the greatest failure of American foreign policy since the 1930s. How did we make such

a mistake? We did so by ignoring the Chinese Communist Party’s ideology. Instead of listening to their leaders and reading their key documents, we believed what we wanted to believe — that they were Communist in name only.

Let us be clear: The Chinese Communist Party is a selfproclaimed Marxist-Leninist organization. The Party General Secretary Xi Jinping sees himself as Josef Stalin’s successor. In fact, as journalist and former Australian government official John Garnaut has noted, the Chinese Communist Party is the last “ruling communist party that never split with Stalin, with the partial exception of North Korea.”

Under Marxist-Leninism, individuals do not have inherent value. People are merely a tool to achieve the ends of the nation state. These ideas may sound remote, but they are as fundamental to the Chinese Communist Party as the Bill of Rights is to Americans. China is not a workers’ paradise. Xi Jinping’s Marxist-Leninism is a totalitarian ideology, which holds that all important aspects of life should be controlled by the Party, especially ideology. Beijing’s efforts to dominate political thought are stated openly and pursued aggressively.

The Party is obsessed with ‘ideological security’ and issued a policy in 2013 stating that there should be “absolutely no opportunity or outlets for incorrect thinking or viewpoints to spread.” Within China, this policy means mandatory study sessions on Communist ideology and the required use of smartphone apps teaching so-called “Xi Jinping Thought.” It also means complete Party control of media and heavy censorship. Outside sources of information are banned — from foreign newspapers to Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp.

The Chinese Communist Party reinterprets religious texts, including the Bible, to support Party ideology. It locks up millions of Muslim Uyghurs and other minorities in re-education camps where they are subjected to political indoctrination and forced labor. If you express views contrary to the Party line, you are jailed. Americans should be concerned — Mr. Xi’s ambitions for ideological control are not limited to his own people. Efforts to control information and expression globally are well under way.

Nearly every Chinese language news outlet in the U.S. is controlled by the Party. Americans hear pro-Beijing propaganda on more than a dozen FM radio stations. Twitter has removed more than 170,000 CCP-linked accounts since August for spreading propaganda. In addition to influencing the information Americans receive regarding China, the Chinese Communist Party is increasingly using its leverage to control American speech.

For example, when the general manager of the Houston Rockets tweeted his support for peaceful Hong Kong protesters, the CCP announced its team’s games would not be shown on Chinese TV. The Party used its economic power to pressure others in basketball, including star players, to criticize the tweet on behalf of Beijing. In other instances, under pressure from the CCP, American, Delta and United Airlines removed references to Taiwan from their websites.

Mercedes Benz apologized for posting an inspirational quote from the Dalai Lama. In post-production, MGM digitally changed the invading military from China to North Korea in the “Red Dawn” remake. The Chinese Communist Party is also gathering data on individual Americans — your words, purchases, whereabouts, health records, posts, texts and social network. It collects your data through “backdoors” built into products that Chinese businesses such as Huawei and ZTE sell around the world — and they steal it. In 2014, the Chinese hacked Anthem Health Insurance; in 2015, the Office of Personnel Management, which holds security clearance information; in 2017, Equifax; and in 2019, Marriot Hotels.

In these instances alone, China gathered key information on more than 300 million Americans, to include names, birth dates, Social Security numbers, credit scores, health records and passport numbers. In 2016, a Chinese company even bought the dating app Grindr to harvest its data, including the HIV status of users, before the U.S. forced a divestiture on national security grounds. How will the Chinese Communist Party use this data you might ask?

The same way it uses data within China's borders: to target, influence, coerce and even blackmail you to say and do things that serve the Party's interests. The good news is that America has finally awoken to the threat. President Trump is taking decisive action to counter it. These actions include preventing companies that answer to the CCP's intelligence and security apparatus — to include Huawei — from accessing your data; requiring propaganda outlets to label themselves as such; imposing export and visa restrictions on entities and people complicit in repression; limiting the People's Liberation Army's ability to use student visa programs to steal U.S. technology; and restricting federal employee pension plans from investing in Chinese military and intelligence companies, among others.

Under Mr. Trump, the days of American passivity and naivety regarding China and its Communist rulers are over. Mr. Trump understands that lasting peace comes through strength. We are the strongest nation on Earth, and we will not bend. We will speak out, we will fight back and, above all, we will stay true to our principles — especially freedom of speech. These ideas stand in stark contrast to the Marxist-Leninist ideology embraced by the Chinese Communist Party.

Robert O'Brien is the assistant to the president for national security affairs.

Air Force Bases Need Space-Based Missile Defenses As Soon as Possible

By [Norman M. Haller](#) & [Peter Pry](#) for Real Clear Defense // July 07, 2020

The Air Force recently announced its "new bomber vision" in which "dynamic force employment" replaces continuous bomber presence at Guam.

The new vision is for bombers to pop up unexpectedly around the world, thus demonstrating a perpetual ability to project power. [1] The new vision can depict national resolve in the absence of a hot war. However, during an actual conflict, deploying bombers (or fighters) to bases that are not robustly defended against a range of attacks could be a quick way to lose the use of that base and, depending on the severity of the attack and in-place sheltering, many aircraft and trained personnel.

Air Force Chief General Charles Brown wants the Air Force to develop more mobile airbase defenses in light of longer-ranged Chinese missile threats. Given the panoply of existing and potential threats, General Brown is fortunate to be closely connected to the new Space Force, which can complement current land- and sea-based defenses to provide substantially better protection of potential Air Force bases.

Looking first at threats and defense capabilities

China and Russia have long-range kinetic attack capabilities with missiles launched from land or sea. North Korea and Iran have regional kinetic attack capabilities with missiles launched from land, future longer-range missiles appear possible, and both are developing sea-launched missiles. [2a, 2b, 2c] The current land-based and properly placed sea-based missile defenses could be effective against unsophisticated North Korean and Iranian

missile attacks. However, if China or Russia were to mount sophisticated attacks with ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, or hypersonic missiles—particularly in combination—such defenses would likely be severely challenged or defeated.

It is openly acknowledged that the U.S. cannot currently defend against hypersonic missiles, which have much lower trajectories than ordinary ballistic missiles. [3] China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran with nuclear developments, could also launch missiles or deploy satellites containing high-altitude electromagnetic (HEMP) warheads. “China’s classification of HEMP attack in military doctrine as ‘electronic warfare’ or ‘information warfare’ indicates that HEMP is not even considered a form of nuclear attack, but would be equivalent to non-nuclear EMP weapons and cyber warfare.” Insufficiently hardened essential electronics in Air Force, Army, and Navy systems at or defending airbases could be disabled by a HEMP field (10-100 kilovolts/meter). [4], [5]

What, specifically, does Space Force offer?

Space Force operates throughout the ultimate global "high ground," which enables looking down and attacking hostile missiles during launch when they are most vulnerable, as well as in flight all along their paths to targets. These look-down capabilities, which are slowly advancing, include developing new LEO (low earth orbit) satellites. [6] But more than sensors are important for countering advanced missiles! Space-based missile-defense systems, which were proven cost-effective decades ago, could be quickly deployed to provide global coverage of Air Force bases and potential missile-launch avenues toward those bases.

Spaceplanes, which also have other mission capabilities (such as countering attacks on U.S. satellites), could significantly assist the missile-defense mission during its development and deployment and their ability to closely observe and, if necessary, eliminate satellites determined to be HEMP-capable. [7] Space-based defenses could be deployed on top of an optimal combination of land- and sea-based defenses, as determined for different airbase locations. The space-based layer of, for example, 1,000 interceptors and a squadron of space planes, would enormously complement the Earth-based defenses, seriously complicate an attacker’s planning, and greatly improve America’s ability to deter or defeat missile and satellite attacks on global U.S. interests.

This kind of space-based layer could have relatively short initial deployment timelines (space planes, 2-3 years; interceptors, 5 years) and relatively modest costs—in the range of 3-4% of the approximate \$1 trillion likely needed to simultaneously modernize America’s nuclear arsenal to sustain MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) and catch up, at scale, in the arms race for hypersonic weapons.

Throughout history attacking forces, routinely had to re-evaluate their tactics and strategies for penetrating enemy defenses, which could deter or defeat prior planned attacks. Why should adversaries planning to attack U.S. airbases have the luxury of not confronting the strongest array of defenses? Regarding America’s nuclear deterrent, adding space-based defenses would not diminish the need for a capable triad of bombers plus land- and sea-based missiles; rather, it would balance and complement that purely offensive posture a substantial defensive component to increase deterrence.

To those who oppose space-based defenses because they could be perceived as “weaponizing” space, there is no malevolence to using space to defend America against other nations’ weapons that threaten us by flying through or existing in space. Indeed, robust space-based defenses could

revolutionize the threat environment presently dominated by offensive missile systems and strategies, deterring and making less likely the use of space for offensive weapons.

Norm Haller has led and assisted analyses, planning, and preparing reports for DoD and Congress on nuclear and non-nuclear forces for deterrence and defense against missile attacks; now a consultant, he served in the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and Nuclear Regulatory Commission as the Chairman's Executive Assistant.

Dr. Peter Vincent Pry is executive director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security. He served on the Congressional EMP Commission as chief of staff, the Congressional Strategic Posture Commission, the House Armed Services Committee, and the CIA. He is author of "Blackout Wars," and also of "The Power and the Light," available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

FBI chief reveals broad Chinese spy campaign

Wray sees overt, covert mission to subvert U.S. policies, power

BY BILL GERTZ for THE WASHINGTON TIMES // 8 July, 2020

Chinese intelligence agents and diplomats are actively subverting U.S. policies through bribery, blackmail and covert influence operations, FBI Director Christopher A. Wray said Tuesday in a major policy address.

The operations, the FBI chief said, are part of large-scale intelligence activities by China to recruit spies and steal information. “The greatest long-term threat to our nation’s information, intellectual property and to our economic vitality is the counterintelligence and economic espionage threat from China,” Mr. Wray told an audience at the Hudson Institute think tank. The Chinese operations range from traditional spying — recruiting agents inside government — to cyberattacks and data theft aimed at obtaining cutting-edge U.S. technology.

The theft has hit Fortune 100 companies down to small startup businesses. The speech by Mr. Wray is part of a concerted Trump administration effort to highlight what U.S. leaders see as the dangers and threats posed by China’s Communist Party leadership at a time when relations between Washington and Beijing are strained on a number of fronts. White House National Security Adviser Robert C. O’Brien spoke about the problem of China’s governing ideology last week. Additional addresses on China are planned for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Attorney General William Barr in the coming weeks.

Regarding “malign” subversion and influence operations, Mr. Wray said covert operations targeting American officials are underway “24/7, 365 days a year” and involve both intelligence operatives and Chinese diplomats. “China is engaged in a highly sophisticated, malign foreign influence campaign,” Mr. Wray said. “Its methods include bribery, blackmail and covert deals.” Mr. Wray said half of the 5,000 active FBI counterintelligence cases are related to China and that Beijing is “working to compromise American health care organizations, pharmaceutical companies and academic institutions conducting essential COVID-19 research.”

Chinese officials view the effort as a “generational fight” to overtake the U.S. economically and militarily, without giving up the government’s near-total control. “China is engaged in a whole-of-state effort to become the world’s only superpower by any means necessary,” Mr. Wray said. The victims of these activities are not just the U.S. government and American businesses but ordinary citizens as well, said Mr. Wray, adding that the operation is “on a scale so massive that it represents one of the largest transfers of wealth in human history.”

The speech offered more details and information about Chinese intelligence and influence operations than the FBI has ever made public before, Mr. Wray said. Mr. Wray said China has run intelligence operations to sway U.S. policy and attitudes toward Taiwan, aimed at undermining U.S. support for Taipei, an unofficial ally. China considers Taiwan a renegade province that will in time come under Beijing's control.

An American governor or member of a state legislature who announces plans to travel to the island often is targeted in overt and covert Chinese influence operations, including the use of paid and unpaid agents and U.S. media. Chinese pressure campaigns have resulted in American news outlets "self-censoring" their coverage in ways designed to avoid upsetting the government. China uses travel restrictions to pressure news organizations and businesses to cut off access and targets anyone viewed as opposing the Chinese Communist Party-ruled system, Mr. Wray said.

Chinese officials have also threatened to punish American companies located in districts of local politicians economically as a way to prevent the officials from traveling or supporting Taiwan. If overt pressure fails, China will then use more subversive "indirect, covert," means, identifying and pressuring people close to local officials in a bid to force them to align with Beijing's policies, he said.

"These intermediaries aren't telling the American official they are Communist Party pawns," Mr. Wray said. "Ultimately, China doesn't hesitate to use smoke, mirrors and misdirection to influence Americans." The objective is to "sway our government policies and distort our public discussion" in a bid to undermine U.S. support for places like Taiwan and Hong Kong, where pro-democracy advocates are facing repression from a recently imposed mainland security law, Mr. Wray said.

"Chinese diplomats also use both open, naked economic pressure and seemingly independent middlemen to push China's preferences on American officials," he said. FBI officials have also seen China seek to alter the narrative on its widely criticized handling of the COVID-19 outbreak among federal, state and local officials, Mr. Wray said. One unnamed state senator was asked by China to issue a resolution praising Beijing's response to the coronavirus outbreak.

"The punchline is this: All of these seemingly inconsequential pressures add up to a policymaking environment in which Americans find themselves held over a barrel by the Chinese Communist Party," Mr. Wray said. "All the while, China's government and Communist Party have brazenly violated well-settled norms and the rule of law." Chinese government activities also include large-scale cybertheft of Americans' personal information and intellectual property.

Chinese hackers in recent years have obtained personal data on half of the U.S. population and most of the adult population, including from the Equifax credit reporting company, Anthem health care company and the U.S. government's Office of Personnel Management, which holds records on federal employees. China also has attempted to influence and recruit American university professors and researchers, including Harvard University Chemistry Department Chairman Charles Lieber, who was indicted on charges of making false statements about payments from China.

One Chinese agent stole more than \$1 billion worth of proprietary technology from an Oklahoma petroleum company, said Mr. Wray. "This kind of thing is happening over and over across the country," he said. Chinese intelligence activities are so prevalent that the FBI opens a counterspy case on average every 10 hours, Mr. Wray said. Another program is the Chinese government, through its Ministry of Public Security, the police ministry, conducting covert efforts against Chinese dissidents abroad, including in the United States.

The program, known as “Fox Hunt,” was launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Mr. Wray said. Fox Hunt uses teams of agents from the Ministry of Public Security ostensibly engaged in global anti-corruption campaigns to target dissidents and other political opponents. The targets include political rivals, dissidents and critics who seek to expose China’s extensive human rights abuses.

Many of the targets live in the United States and are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and China is seeking to force them to return to China. Threats and imprisonment of family members are used in the operations to coerce targeted people to return, the FBI chief said. “Fox Hunt is a sweeping bid by General Secretary Xi to target Chinese nationals he sees as threats and who live outside of China across the world,” Mr. Wray said.

In one case, Chinese agents told the target of a Fox Hunt operation to return to China or “commit suicide,” Mr. Wray said. “These people are essentially engaged in rogue law enforcement … suppressing dissent and trying to pressure citizens,” he said. During a question period, Mr. Wray was asked about China’s three main intelligence agencies, the civilian spy service Ministry of State Security and the military People’s Liberation Army intelligence service. The Ministry of Public Security is a relative newcomer to the operation. “The Fox Hunt effort, for example, is more through the MPS, than it is the MSS or PLA,” Mr. Wray said. “But as a general rule, an awful lot of the kinds of things I was describing in my remarks are more geared to the MSS and the PLA.”

The Next Five Months Will Be The Most Dangerous in Generations

By Vago Muradian VAGO'S NOTEBOOK // 06 July 2020

China’s crackdown on Hong Kong and Russia’s targeting of US troops in Afghanistan — and how America and the world respond — could make the next five months the most dangerous in generations.

How the United States and its allies deal with these two powers will in turn determine how future generations will live. The trouble is, both Russia and China are confident America’s president won’t lead at a critical moment when global leadership is most needed and is more likely to use troops against Americans than real adversaries. Having dismissed as a hoax credible intelligence that Moscow paid the Taliban to attack US and allied soldiers, President Trump says he’s in no rush to punish Russia.

Although this information was known for more than a year, he inexplicably continues to help Moscow by working to return it to the G7 and cut US troops from Germany. That inaction, sadly, will further encourage miscalculation beyond Russia. Any nation that targets US troops using weapons or cash payments to proxies must be swiftly and unambiguously held accountable. A failure to do so sets a dangerous precedent, allowing an increasingly confrontational Beijing — or Tehran or Pyongyang — to conclude it can follow suit.

Making the situation more dangerous, China knows that despite tough talk, Trump is weak, having begged President Xi Jinping to help win reelection and his top priority is a trade deal benefitting his supporters. Convinced Trump won’t act to protect that deal — and uncertain that his successor will — China is dangerously incentivized to move on its next target, Taiwan, before November’s presidential election.

It remains to be seen whether Trump will sign a bill unanimously passed by Congress to sanction Chinese officials implementing the crackdown. Regardless, far tougher measures are needed to change Beijing's course. If former Vice President Joe Biden wins in November, however, his top advisors have said job one is to resuscitate US alliances worldwide to marshal them collectively stand up to China and Russia.

Xi was granted a life tenure promising to stand up to America, crack down on Hong Kong and take by force Taiwan, where he's increasing provocations to spark a reaction from Taipei to justify invasion. China's convinced its time has come and has the economic, diplomatic and military power to exploit an opening in the world lacking American leadership and distracted by the pandemic.

Beijing is expansionist and its Hong Kong play messages it will exert authority over territory it considers its own — like Taiwan, a nation China has methodically and successfully worked to isolate. Chinese leaders appear convinced they can invade and the world will back down to stay on Beijing's good side rather than fight for a democratic Taiwan. And why not? Past transgressions have gone unpunished because Washington and its allies have lacked the courage to do so.

China and Russia believe they can get away with provocations large or small by exploiting their adversaries' fears and greed — whether seizing territory, stealing intellectual property, killing enemies, imprisoning a million human beings for their race. The nations Russia and China threaten continue to do business with them. Germany depends on Russian gas, British banks want oligarch money and US firms want resources.

China's irresistible, offering affordable labor and access to its massive market in exchange for technology and investment. It and companies from America, Australia, Europe, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan grew wealthy, becoming so dependent that no transgression is big enough to risk a break. Anyone critical of Chinese actions are swiftly punished. The Trump administration deserves credit for labeling Huawei and ZTE as threats, constraining China's access to US technology, and more.

But US and allied reactions have been piecemeal rather than principled and strategic. For years, urgent calls for strategic action to more positively shape China's growth before it grew too strong to stop went unheeded. Now, the international community has precious little time left to respond. In fact, it may be too late. Absent presidential leadership, organizing the world will be impossible.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson accused Beijing of violating the handover agreement that ensures one nation, two systems through 2047. However, his proposal to allow 3 million Hong Kongers to resettle in Britain lets China off the hook. Congress can do little on its own, especially as lawmakers focus on reelection. They can sanction, but they can't align the US government or bring allies together.

So the stage is set for a potential disaster.

If Beijing attacks Taiwan, would Washington fight or conclude it either can't win or victory would be too costly given Chinese capabilities to keep rivals far from its shores? If Washington fights, it would be a world war involving Asia and Europe should NATO's Article V be triggered. Yes, the Taiwan Relations Act says Taiwan isn't a sovereign state or a treaty ally. But American policy holds the island's status can't be changed by force — ambiguity that's helped keep the peace — and promises to provide Taipei with weapons for its defense.

Having claimed the South and East China Seas, Beijing won't stop with Taiwan. Its rising muscularity with regional US allies could similarly trigger a conflagration. If Washington doesn't help Taiwan it will send a worrying signal to dozens of nations that rely on America as their security guarantor. In one move China would achieve two strategic goals — unite with what it says is a breakaway province and displace America as the world's dominant power.

The current rules-based order that ensured peace and prosperity since World War II would crumble as China institutes a new system with itself at its center. The economic and military implications for America and the world would be profound enough to warrant action. In 2021, \$741 billion will be spent for conventional and nuclear forces to support a superpower with an international leadership role, global economic interests and obligations.

If Washington's no longer a superpower, more can go to other priorities. Some argue leadership is so expensive China should take over so American can invest in itself. Deterrence isn't only a military calculation, but ultimately a political one. You can send two aircraft carriers to the South China Sea, but if your adversary is convinced you'll never use them, they might as well be paperweights.

So the next five months will be critical. America and its allies must find a way to push back on China now. If they don't, it will be clear that the game is already over, ushering in a new authoritarian age with dark global implications for us all.

CONGRESSIONAL

By Susan Cornwell

HASC

July 1: HASC Completed Markup of FY21 HASC Bill

- ALL ICBM PEs at PB
- Total of \$731.6 B
 - Base Budget of \$662.6B
 - OCO Budget of \$69B

SASC

June 11: SASC completed markup of FY21 SASC Bill

- ALL ICBM PEs at PB
- Total of \$740.5 Billion.
- Base Budget of \$636.4 billion for the Department of Defense and \$25.9 billion for national security programs within the Department of Energy.
- OCO Budget of \$69 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations and \$8.15 billion for military construction

HAC

July 8: HAC-D Marked up the FY21 Defense Bill

- SEE UPDATED ICBM CHART IN SEPARATE ATTACHMENT
 - GBSD lost \$60M
 - Missile Repl/Eq Ballistic lost \$1.53M
 - ICBM Fuze Mod lost \$3.458M
 - MM Mods lost \$23.684M and transferred \$4.173 to another line

Appropriations Committee Releases Fiscal Year 2021 Defense Funding Bill

July 7, 2020 Press Release

Legislation provides \$694.6 billion in discretionary spending to defend the nation against evolving threats, prepare for future challenges, and meet the needs of service members and military families; Legislation protects against misappropriation of Defense funds for border wall and requires return of any unobligated funds taken for the wall in FY 2020

WASHINGTON — The House Appropriations Committee today released the draft fiscal year 2021 Defense funding bill, which will be considered in subcommittee tomorrow. The legislation funds the Department of Defense, including operations and maintenance, readiness activities, research and development, equipment modernization, and health and quality-of-life programs for our troops and military families.

For fiscal year 2021, the bill provides \$694.6 billion in new discretionary spending authority for the Department of Defense for functions under the Defense Subcommittee's jurisdiction, an increase of \$1.3 billion above the FY 2020 enacted level, and \$3.7 billion below the President's budget request. This includes \$626.2 billion in base funding, an increase of \$3.5 billion above the FY 2020 enacted level, and \$3.5 billion below the President's request. It also includes \$68.4 billion for OCO/GWOT funding in title IX, a decrease of \$2.2 billion below the FY 2020 enacted level, and \$200 million below the President's request.

"This bill builds upon the efforts the Committee undertook last year regarding the morale and quality of life issues of those in uniform, their families, DoD civilians, and defense communities," said House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense Chairman Pete Visclosky. **"The bill provides a 3.0 percent pay raise for our servicemembers and again increases funding for military childcare facilities. I regret that this bill again must contain provisions to rein in the Department's habitual redirection of funding in contravention of Congressional intent. As we move forward in the FY 2021 process, I look forward to continuing to work with all Members of Congress to complete our work."**

"This bill provides the Defense Department with appropriate resources to address an evolving threat landscape and ensure the security of our nation and our allies," said House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey. **"The bill ensures that our servicemembers are well-trained and equipped and that they are prepared for future military needs. It also includes the full funding necessary to provide servicemembers with a 3.0 percent pay raise. We have the most capable and advanced military in the world, and this bill honors their mission by adequately funding programs to care for servicemembers and their families, and by including provisions to end the Trump administration's theft of defense funds to pay for a wasteful border wall."**

A summary of the draft fiscal year 2021 Defense bill is below. The full text of the bill is [here](#).

Bill Summary:

Military Personnel

Total:	\$162.3 billion
Base:	\$157.7 billion
OCO/GWOT (title IX):	\$4.6 billion

The FY 2021 Military Personnel recommendation is \$157.7 billion in base funding for active, reserve and National Guard military personnel, a decrease of \$1.2 billion below the budget request and an increase of \$7.5 billion above the FY 2020 enacted level.

- Funds active duty end strength of 1,351,500, an increase of 12,000 above current year and equal to the request. Funds reserve component end strength of 802,000, an increase of 1,200 above current year and equal to the request.
 - Army totals: 485,900 active duty, an increase of 5,900 above current year and equal to the request; 189,800 reserve, an increase of 300 above current year and equal to the request; and 336,500 Guard, an increase of 500 above current year and equal to the request.
 - Navy totals: 347,800 active duty, an increase of 7,300 above current year and equal to the request; and 58,800 reserve, a decrease of 200 below current year and equal to the request.
 - Marine Corps totals: 184,100 active duty, a decrease of 2,100 below current year and equal to the request; and 38,500 reserve, equal to current year and the request.
 - Air Force totals: 333,700 active duty, an increase of 900 above current year and equal to the request; 70,300 reserve, an increase of 200 above current year and equal to the request; and 108,100 Guard, an increase of 400 above current year and equal to the request.
- Provides full funding necessary to support the proposed 3.0 percent military pay raise.

- Increases funding by \$45 million above the President's request for the Department and Services' Sexual Assault Prevention and Response programs, for a total of \$323 million. This includes \$40 million for the Special Victims' Counsel and an increase of \$5 million above the request for the Department's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. In addition, provides \$4 million for the Sexual Trauma Pilot Program.

Operation and Maintenance

Total: \$254.5 billion
 Base: \$196.7 billion
 OCO/GWOT (title IX): \$57.8 billion

The FY 2021 Operation and Maintenance recommendation is \$196.7 billion in base funding, an increase of \$72.5 million above the budget request and a decrease of \$2.7 billion below the FY 2020 enacted level.

- Provides \$1.67 billion above the request for key readiness programs to prepare forces for combat operations and other peacetime missions: flying hours, tank miles, and steaming days; equipment, aviation, and ship depot maintenance; training; spare parts; and base operations.
- Provides \$24.7 billion to the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force for depot maintenance.
- Provides \$9.5 billion to fund SOCOM's operation and maintenance requirements.
- Provides \$22 million to the Special Operations Command to restore flight operations for the 137th Special Operations Wing.
- Provides \$80.3 million to the Special Operations Command to fund equipment lost or destroyed in combat.
- Provides \$1.486 billion for Environmental Restoration activities, \$413 million above the request, and \$70.8 million above the fiscal year 2020 enacted level. In addition, provides \$15 million for study and assessment of health implications of PFOS/PFOA contamination in drinking water.
- Provides \$270 million above the request to address public school infrastructure requirements on DoD installations.
- Provides an additional \$116 million for upgrades to childcare facilities and report language directing the services to present innovative ideas to assist Servicemembers with this quality of life issue.
- Provides \$2.49 billion to continue the transition of space activities to the Space Force.
- Provides increases for National Guard Youth Challenge (\$210m); and Starbase (+\$41.1 million).
- Provides an additional \$50 million for the Office of Economic Assistance for the Defense Community Infrastructure Program.
- Provides \$40 million for Impact Aid and \$10 million for Impact Aid for those with disabilities.
- Provides \$6.75 million for gender advisor programs.
- Provides \$10 million for the Maternity Uniform Pilot Program.
- Provides \$48 million for the Procurement Technical Assistance Program.
- Provides \$360 million for the Cooperative Threat Reduction program.
- Provides \$50 million for noise mitigation tools for communities.
- Provides \$1 million to the Army for the renaming of installations, facilities, roads and streets that bear the name of confederate leaders and officers.
- Provides \$450 million for COVID resupply and recovery.

Procurement

Total: \$140.1 billion

Base: \$133.6 billion

OCO/GWOT (title IX): \$6.5 billion

The FY 2021 Procurement recommendation is \$133.6 billion in base funding, an increase of \$2.8 billion above the budget request and a decrease of \$0.2 billion below the FY 2020 enacted level.

- Provides \$4.1 billion above the total funding request (including OCO/GWOT) for increased investments in ground vehicles, aircraft, ships, munitions, and other equipment.

Aircraft

- Funds the request of 24 F/A-18E/F Super Hornet aircraft (\$1.7 billion).
- Funds 91 F-35 aircraft, 12 more than the request (\$9.3 billion).
- Funds 12 F-15EX aircraft to recapitalize the F-15C/D fleet (\$1.2 billion).
- Funds the request of 15 KC-46 tankers (\$2.7 billion).
- Funds the request of 19 HH-60W combat rescue helicopters (\$1.1 billion).
- Funds 11 C/KC/MC-130J aircraft, 2 more than the request (\$965 million).
- Funds 16 MQ-9 Reaper air vehicles, 16 more than the request (\$344 million).
- Funds the first five CH-47F Block II Chinook aircraft and long-lead funding for the second five CH-47F Block II Chinook aircraft to ensure that the Army stays on schedule with the program of record (\$227 million).
- Provides \$141 million above the request to fund a total of 42 UH/HH-60M Blackhawk helicopters (\$866 million).
- Funds the requested 50 remanufactured AH-64 Apache helicopters (\$792 million).
- Funds eleven V-22 aircraft, two more than the request (\$1.1 billion).
- Funds three P-8A Poseidon aircraft for the Navy Reserve, three more than the request (\$510 million).
- Funds five E-2D Advanced Hawkeye aircraft, one more than the request (\$791 million).
- Funds nine CH-53K helicopters, two more than the request (\$1.05 billion).
- Funds a new start for SOCOM's Armed Overwatch Program.

Shipbuilding

- Provides \$22.3 billion to procure nine Navy ships, \$2.4 billion above the request.
- Funds are provided for two DDG-51 guided missile destroyers, the initial Columbia Class submarine, two SSN-774 attack submarines, one Frigate, one LPD-17 Flight II, and two towing, salvage, and rescue ships.

Vehicles/Force Protection

- Provides \$375 million above the request to upgrade a total of 259 Stryker combat vehicles (\$1.16 billion).
- Funds the request to upgrade 89 Abrams tanks to the M1A2 SEPv3 tank variant (\$1.02 billion).
- Provides an additional \$100 million for Army National Guard HMMWV modernization.
- Fully funds the Army's request for 1,920 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTVs) and 1,334 JLTV companion trailers.

Other

- Provides \$933 million to procure three National Security Space Launch services.
- Provides \$623 million to procure two GPS IIIIF spacecraft.
- Provides \$200 million to fully support Israeli Cooperative procurement programs (Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow).
- Includes \$1 billion for the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA).

- Provides \$758 million to mitigate the impacts of COVID on second, third, and fourth tier suppliers in the Defense Industrial Base.

Research, Development, Test and Evaluation

Total: \$104.6 billion

Base: \$104.3 billion

OCO/GWOT (title IX): \$0.3 billion

The FY 2021 RDT&E recommendation is \$104.3 billion in base funding, a decrease of \$1.9 billion below the budget request and a decrease of \$0.1 billion below the FY 2020 enacted level.

- Invests in basic and applied scientific research, development, test and evaluation of new technologies and equipment, and supports the research community so forces will have the systems and equipment for tomorrow's challenges.

Aircraft

- Fully funds the Block 4 follow-on development of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (\$1.6 billion).
- Fully funds the continued development of the Air Force's B-21 bomber program (\$2.8 billion).
- Fully funds development of the VC-25B Presidential Aircraft Replacement (\$801 million).
- Provides \$20 million above the request for the development of the Army's Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (\$154 million).
- Fully funds the design, build, and test of prototypes for the Army's Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft (\$513 million).
- Fully funds the continued development and testing of the CH-53K helicopter (\$407 million).

Vehicles and Ground Forces

- Provides \$10 million above the request to fund the Army's Long Range Hypersonic Weapon (\$811 million).
- Fully funds the Army's Extended Range Cannon Artillery (ERCA) modernization effort (\$421 million).

Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA)

- Provides \$3.51 billion for DARPA research programs.

Other

- Provides \$300 million for the Israeli cooperative research and development programs, including David's Sling and Arrow-3.
- Provides \$258 million for the Global Positioning System IIIF program.
- Provides \$482 million for the Global Positioning System III Operational Control Segment.
- Provides \$380 million for Global Positioning System user equipment.
- Provides \$561 million for National Security Space Launch to develop new U.S. space launch vehicles.
- Provides \$2.32 billion for Next Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared.

Revolving and Management Funds

Total: \$1.37 billion

Base Requirements: \$1.35 billion

OCO/GWOT (title IX): \$0.02 billion

The FY 2021 Revolving and Management Funds recommendation is \$1.35 billion in base funding, equal to the budget request and a decrease of \$210 million below the FY 2020 enacted level.

- Fully funds the Defense Working Capital Fund request for War Reserve material and commissary operations.
- Fully funds the Defense Commissary Agency to ensure servicemembers and their families receive continued savings for food and household goods as part of the military pay and benefits package.

Other Department of Defense Programs

Total: \$35.7 billion

Base Requirements: \$35.3 billion

OCO/GWOT (title IX): \$0.4 billion

Defense Health Programs

- \$33.3 billion plus \$365.1 million for OCO/GWOT Requirements.

Adds \$512.5 million for cancer research. The total amount is distributed as follows:

- \$150 million for the breast cancer research program;
- \$110 million for the prostate cancer research program;
- \$50 million for the kidney cancer research program;
- \$35 million for the ovarian cancer research program;
- \$20 million for the lung cancer research program;
- \$20 million for the melanoma research program;
- \$10 million for the pancreatic cancer research program;
- \$7.5 million for the rare cancer research program; and
- \$110 million for the cancer research program.
- Adds \$175 million for the peer reviewed psychological health and traumatic brain injury research program.
- Adds \$40 million for spinal cord research.
- Adds \$40 million for the joint warfighter medical research program.
- Adds \$150 million for COVID Resupply and Recovery

Chemical Agents and Munitions Destruction

- \$889.5 million, as requested.

Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid

- \$147.5 million, including for foreign disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and the humanitarian mine action program at levels above the budget request.

Drug Interdiction and Counter-Drug Activities

- \$746 million, including \$70 million above the budget request for the National Guard Counter-Drug Program.
- Does not continue funding for programs the Administration reduced during FY 2020 for the border wall.
- Does not fund an additional \$20 million requested in FY 2021 for the border wall.

Office of the Inspector General

- \$387.7 million, an increase of \$16.3 million above the request for oversight of funding provided in CARES.
- Includes \$24.1 million for OCO/GWOT Requirements, as requested.

General Provisions

- Includes \$2.5 billion in prior year rescissions plus \$1.5 billion in rescissions from prior year OCO/GWOT funding.
- Includes \$270 million for public schools on military installations.
- Does not include prior year provisions related to detainees at the military prison located in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.
- Provides that nothing in this Act may be construed as authorizing the use of force against Iran.

- Prohibits funds for the Taliban except support for reconciliation activities that also include the Afghan government, do not restrict the participation of women, and are authorized by law.
- Prohibits funds to establish permanent bases in Afghanistan or Iraq.
- Prohibits funds from being used in contravention of the War Powers Resolution.
- Requires the Secretary of Defense to notify Congress of any foreign contribution received relating to the stationing or operations of U.S. troops.
- Requires the Secretary of Defense to notify Congress of the opening or closing of foreign bases.
- Provides \$250 million for the ISR transfer fund to address near-term gaps in existing ISR capabilities.

Afghanistan Security Forces Fund

- \$3.05 billion. Funds may only be obligated if the Secretary of Defense certifies that the Afghanistan Security Forces are controlled by a civilian, representative government that is protecting human rights and women's rights and preventing terrorists from using the territory of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and U.S. allies.
- Provides not less than \$20 million for the recruitment and retention of women, which is twice the amount specified last year.
- Prevents payments to so-called "ghost soldiers" by prohibiting funds for Afghanistan security personnel who are not enrolled in the Afghanistan Personnel and Pay System.
- Directs quarterly reports to Congress on United States and coalition personnel in Afghanistan and the current conditions of the conflict, including metrics related to the peace agreement and an assessment of whether the Taliban is adhering to its commitments.

Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund

- \$700 million, including support for the Iraqi Security Forces, Kurdish Peshmerga, and the Syrian Democratic Forces fighting ISIS.
- Requires the Secretary of Defense to ensure that elements are appropriately vetted and have made commitments to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law.
- Prohibits funds to exercise United States control over any oil resource of Iraq or Syria.

Security Cooperation Programs

- \$1.14 billion for International Security Cooperation Programs.
 - \$160 million for programs with countries in the Africa Command area of responsibility, \$63 million above the request.
 - \$130 million for programs with countries in the Southern Command area of responsibility, \$61 million above the request.
 - \$105 million for programs with Jordan.
 - \$150 million for the Baltic Security Initiative.
 - \$3 million above the request for women's programs. \$3.75 million is also included in the bill for the training of U.S. personnel related to these programs.
- \$275 million for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, \$25 million above the request. Exempts funds from apportionment and requires the Secretary of Defense to inform Congress of any undue spending delays.

Congressional Oversight

- Prohibits the use of Defense funds for the President's border wall at our troops' expense. Also requires that any unobligated funds that were taken for the border wall in fiscal year 2020 be returned to their original accounts and used for the original purposes for which they were appropriated by Congress.

- Responds to the Department of Defense's abuse of congressionally granted reprogramming privileges by reducing transfer authority from the \$9.5 billion requested to \$1.9 billion and placing additional oversight mechanisms on the Department's ability to reprogram funds.
- Prohibits unnecessary nuclear weapons testing.
- Prohibits the transfer of F-35 fighters to Turkey to prevent the exposure of cutting-edge U.S. technology to Russian missile systems.
- Limits the deployment of active armed forces to the southern border unless costs are reimbursed by the requesting Department or agency.
- Conforms with the language included in Section 365 of H.R. 7120 regarding the transfer of any personal property of the Department of Defense to a state or local law enforcement agency.
- Provides \$1 million to the Army for the renaming of installations, facilities, roads and streets that bear the name of confederate leaders and officers since the Army has the preponderance of the entities to change.

Senate, House Set To Rumble Over Who Controls Nuke Budget

The provision seeks to prevent the Nuclear Weapons Council "from further encroaching on the development of the NNSA budget," Kingston Reif, director of arms control and threat reduction policy at the Arms Control Association, told Breaking Defense.

By [Theresa Hitchens](#) for Breaking Defense // on July 08, 2020 at 5:11 PM

WASHINGTON: The two sides of the Capitol are set for a fight on whether DoD should be given a stronger hand in developing the annual budget for nuclear weapons development — a fight that will be complicated due to the diametrically opposed positions of the committees involved.

The [House Appropriations Committee's 2021 budget bill](#) for the Energy Department would block the use of funds for DoD's Nuclear Weapons Council to participate in development of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) budget. The bill says in section 309 that no NNSA or any other DoE funds may be used "in furtherance of working through the Nuclear Weapons Council to guide, advise, assist, develop, or execute a budget for the National Nuclear Security Administration."

The provision seeks to prevent the Nuclear Weapons Council "from further encroaching on the development of the NNSA budget," Kingston Reif, director of arms control and threat reduction policy at the Arms Control Association, told Breaking D. That is a direct slap at the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), which is pushing to give the Defense Department — for the first time — levers to influence NNSA's nuclear weapons development budget. One of the longest-standing policy decisions governing nuclear weapons — not their delivery systems — is that funding and work would be controlled by civilians, in this case the Department of Energy. SASC can only engage in [oversight of "national security aspects of nuclear energy."](#)

[Despite being forced to compromise with leaders of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee](#) during the Senate floor vote July 2 on a package of amendments, SASC Chair James Inhofe was able to protect a [provision in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#) that gives DoD budgetary review rights. Energy Committee Chair Lisa Murkowski and Ranking Member Joe Manchin, along with Sen. Maria Cantwell, threatened to block the NDAA and were able to strip one section of the bill, Section 3111, that would have allowed DoD to veto Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette's budget decisions.

However, the compromise with Inhofe left another provision, Section 1652, that would allow the Nuclear Weapons Council a chop on the NNSA budget before it reaches Brouillette's desk. "It's not as ludicrous as the original Section 3111, but would nonetheless significantly expand the budget role and authority of the Nuclear Weapons Council," Reif said. How can industry help Special Operations Forces achieve specialized missions? A brief video interview with Leonardo DRS COO John Baylouny.

However, a SASC aide said the provision in Section 1652 doesn't do much more than clarify the Nuclear Weapons Council's current role. "Section 1652 just provides more detail than the existing section of code it is replacing (10 USC 179(d)(10)) but is consistent with the responsibilities of the Nuclear Weapons Council as laid out in law for many years," the aide told Breaking D today in an email. "It is also consistent with revisions to section 3111 made by the Cantwell/Manchin amendment."

Note that, as many have pointed out, the original version of 3111 would have effectively allowed DOD to make changes to the NNSA budget before submittal to OMB. Extant 10 USC 179(d)(10), section 1652, and section 3111 as amended simply specify points in the process for coordination and approval, consistent with current law." As if the disagreement on what SASC is trying to do wasn't complicated enough, the issue of who is expected to do what to whom in setting the rules is just as complicated.

The SASC and the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) set DoD policy via the NDAA — just as the Senate and House Energy committees set DoE policy. But the HAC has the power of the purse, providing funds for DoE and DoD via its energy and defense subcommittees; as does its Senate counterpart. That means there are four committees with fingers in the pie — all with differing positions on the issue of how NNSA's budget should be put together.

The HASC, for its part, has not included any language on the issue — so it is unclear what the full House will do when the NDAA comes up for a vote; and more unclear about how the House might come down in conference committee with the Senate. Of course, the safe bet is that the HASC doesn't want to change things since it did not include any language. That said, House Democrats (who are the majority party) have expressed some concerns about the powers already vested in the Nuclear Weapons Council, according to one Hill watcher, and what they see as a lack of transparency in its decision-making. Indeed, the HASC in its 2020 version of the NDAA asked for more regular briefings by the council.

On the Senate side, where the Republicans hold the majority, there has been bipartisan push back on the SASC language. Opponents include Sen. Lamar Alexander, who chairs the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on energy and water, making it unclear if the SAC will go along with the SASC — as is normally the case on the defense budget. Indeed, Alexander signed a July 1 letter to the SASC, obtained by Breaking D, opposing any transfer of NNSA budget authority to DoD. The letter says:

"As currently written, the Senate NDAA bill would strip the Secretary of Energy of the ability to manage some of the most sensitive national security programs that account for almost half of the Department's budget. Such changes could impede accountability and Congressional oversight, as well as imperil future funding for other critical DOE responsibilities such as promoting scientific and technological innovation, managing our National Laboratories, sponsoring basic research in the physical sciences, and ensuring cleanup of the nation's nuclear weapons complex." The letter, however, was written before Inhofe and Murkowski reached their NDAA compromise. The upshot? It's just too soon to predict which way the debate will go.

July 8: House Democrats released the 302(b) allocations for the 12 appropriation bills

Below are the dozen regular [subcommittee allocations](#), and how they compare with funding appropriated for the current fiscal year, based on Congressional Budget Office estimates:

Agriculture — \$23.98 billion; a \$487 million or 2.1 percent increase over fiscal 2020.

Commerce-Justice-Science — \$71.47 billion; a \$798 million or 1.1 percent increase.

Defense — \$626.19 billion; a \$3.53 billion or 0.6 percent increase.

Energy-Water — \$49.61 billion; a \$1.26 billion or 2.6 percent increase.

Financial Services — \$24.64 billion; an \$808 million or 3.4 percent increase.

Homeland Security — \$50.72 billion; a \$250 million or 0.5 percent increase.

Interior-Environment — \$36.76 billion; a \$771 million or 2.1 percent increase.

Labor-HHS-Education — \$182.91 billion; a \$128 million or 0.1 percent decrease.

Legislative Branch — \$5.3 billion; a \$251 million or 5 percent increase.

Military Construction-VA — \$102.65 billion; an \$838 million or 0.8 percent decrease.

State-Foreign Operations — \$47.85 billion; a \$1.17 billion or 2.5 percent increase.

Transportation-HUD — \$75.92 billion; a \$1.65 billion or 2.2 percent increase.

Senate, House Set to Rumble Over Who Controls Nuke Budget

BreakingDefense.com, 8 July 20 Theresa Hitchens

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AROUND THE WORLD



RUSSIA:

Situation Report – After 20 years in power, Putin makes himself president-for-life

By: [Morgan Wirthlin](#) for CSP // [July 7, 2020](#)

On July 4th, new amendments to the Russian constitution came into effect, allowing President Vladimir Putin to remain in office until 2036, making him the longest reigning Kremlin leader since Stalin.

Additional amendments banned same-sex marriage, stress the superiority of Russian law over international law, grant prosecutorial immunity to former presidents, and add a reference in the constitution to God. Putin proposed the changes in [January](#) which were then [approved](#) by Russian parliament and the Constitutional court. Putin insisted on a nationwide referendum, initially schedule in April, but postponed to the end of June due to coronavirus.

77.92% of Russians voted in favor of the reforms, with 65% voter turnout, [according](#) to the Russian Electoral Commission. The results of the referendum are questionable at best. The commission started [publishing](#) tallies before the voting ended. Up to 22 million votes may have been cast fraudulently, [according](#) to electoral researcher Sergei Shpilkin. All polling is faulty, particularly in authoritarian countries where people are fearful to share their real views.

However, Putin's approval rating hit a [historic](#) low in April at 59%, according to the Levada Center, the only independent pollster in Russia. Levada also [found](#) 62% of Russians are in favor of restricting the age of civil servants to 70 years of age, a way of asking voters their opinion on the amendments without mentioning Putin. Putin carefully choreographed his extension of power, planning a massive celebration on May 9th, the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. It would have been two weeks after the planned referendum.

"The holiday, envisioned as a kind of coronation for Putin's presidential reset and the triumphant return of Russia as a world power, went by almost unmarked," [writes](#) Alexander Zemlianichenko. Putin's waning popularity has accelerated due to the coronavirus response. Russia has had the [third-highest](#) coronavirus case load globally, and struggled to respond with a [decaying](#) Soviet healthcare system. The Kremlin has focused on controlling the message, [ordering](#) platforms to take down "false information" about the pandemic.

The [last time](#) Putin's approval rating dipped below 60% was November 2013 but sky-rocketed to 80% in March 2014 after Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. Putin has [always](#) united Russia by redirecting their anger at the Kremlin against a common enemy. It would be wise to watch Moscow closely during this time of global upheaval.

About Morgan Wirthlin is the Chief of Staff at the Center for Security Policy. She graduated from Brigham Young University with a degree in Political Science.

Putin says Russia pursuing ‘velvet glove’ policy on global arena

Touching on the canvassing campaign in the United States and another round of anti-Russian rhetoric, the Russian President noted that it is regrettable because it tells on the entire system of international relations and has adverse impacts on the Russian-US relations

From: Russia Today RT – TASS-- // 12 JUL, 10:23

MOSCOW, July 12. /TASS/. Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday he thinks Russia should pursue an-iron-fist-in-a-velvet-glove policy on the global.

In an interview with the Moscow. Kremlin. Putin program on the Rossiya-1 television channel, the president spoke about his vision of Moscow's style of behaving with foreign partners. "I don't think we should behave like lunatics when defending our interests, like someone who is running around with a razor in the hands and throwing curses," he said. "We have a saying - an iron fist in a velvet glove. This is about our style, I think."

Touching on the canvassing campaign in the United States and another round of anti-Russian rhetoric, the Russian president noted, "What is going on there, in the world's biggest economy, in the biggest nuclear and military power, is regrettable because it tells on the entire system of international relations and has adverse impacts on the Russian-US relations." .

Powerful Russian Submarine Seen Entering Baltic Sea

[H I Sutton](#)Contributor, [Aerospace & Defense](#) 10 July 2020

An Oscar-II class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine was seen entering the Baltic early Thursday.

Russia normally only deploys diesel-electric submarines to the area. While these are potent, and can carry a few long range cruise missiles, the arrival of the OSCAR-II is a massive increase in Russian Navy firepower. So when one turns up it gets noticed by NATO and the Baltic States. The upgraded Oscar-II cruise submarine can reportedly carry 72 cruise missiles of different types and ranges.

Its arrival was monitored by open-source intelligence analysts. As it passed under the Great Belt Bridge which spans the entrance of the Baltic, it had to do so on the surface, so it was briefly visible on the public webcams on the bridge. OSINT analysts [shared the information](#) and identified the submarine. The submarine is believed to be Orel (K-266), which is expected to appear at the Navy Day parade in St. Petersburg on July 26. There is often more to it than just a parade, however.

The submarine may participate in training exercises with other units, and is seen as a show force in the Baltic. Already the Russian Ministry of Defense has [shown naval vessels practicing an amphibious operation](#) ahead of the parade. Orel is significant because it has reportedly been upgraded

to carry P-800 Oniks missiles, replacing the original P-700 Granit anti-ship missiles. The Oniks is supersonic and can engage both warships and land targets.

The upgrade should also make it possible for the 3M14K Kalibr land-attack cruise missiles to be loaded. These are roughly equivalent to the U.S. Navy's Tomahawk cruise missile. Both of these new weapons are smaller than the Granits, so the overall load is increased from 24 weapons to 72. Both types of cruise missile have been combat-tested in Syria. While early war shots may have had limited success, the operational experience will have been invaluable for the Russian Navy. The missiles can be expected to perform better in future operations.

There is also a possibility that the upgraded submarines will carry the [3M22 Zircon anti-ship missile](#) in the future. This is a new hypersonic weapon which has been reported to travel at 8 times the speed of sound (Mach 8). The trade-off is range, so the Zircon is expected to be much shorter-ranged than either the Oniks and Kalibr. Kalibr, being the slowest, will have the longest range. Whether the upgrade actually included the new weapons has not been confirmed. But if it is true then it will only add to neighboring countries' unease.

And even the original Granit missiles represent an incredible amount of firepower in the context of the Baltic. No other country in the Baltic has cruise missile equipped submarines. It is not the first time in recent years that Russia has deployed powerfully armed nuclear submarines to the Baltic for the annual Navy Day parade. In 2017 the Typhoon class [submarine Dmitry Donskoy](#), the largest submarine in the world, visited for the parade. Then in 2018 it was the turn of Orel, and last year her Oscar-II class sistership Smolensk.

To get into the Baltic the vessels have to pass either between Denmark and Sweden, or go through the Great Belt waterway in Denmark. Orel took the Great Belt route. If Russian vessels sail through Danish waters individually, then they do not have to report their passage to Denmark. If three or more ships are sailing together however then they would do. All the same the movements are often monitored by Danish warships or aircraft. Orel was [photographed by a Danish C-130 Hercules](#) and shared in a press release today. So Orel's arrival isn't in itself a surprise, but it will all the same make local navies watch very closely.

[H I Sutton](#) - Using OSINT (Open Source Intelligence) to get to the stories first. Author of several books on Submarines, Special Forces and Narco subs. I mostly write about submarines

Guest Comment: It does not have Zircon yet, but three missiles per tube is still an enormous upgrade in firepower.



[CHINA:](#)

[China urges US to reduce nuclear arsenal](#)

By [John Bowden](#) for THE HILL // 07/08/20 09:38 AM EDT

Chinese officials said Wednesday that the country would gladly join trilateral nuclear negotiations with Russia and the U.S., provided that the U.S. is willing to reduce its nuclear arsenal to the scale of China's.

Russia and the U.S. began a new round of nuclear talks over the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) last month, with the Trump administration's top arms control official tweeting at the time: "China also invited. Will China show and negotiate in good faith?" A spokesperson for China's foreign ministry called the U.S. invitation to join nuclear talks with the Trump administration and Russia "nothing but a ploy to divert attention" from the U.S.'s alleged goal of walking away from new nuclear talks with Russia, [according to Reuters](#).

"I can assure you, if the U.S. says that they are ready to come down to the Chinese level, China would be happy to participate the next day," said Fu Cong, head of arms control for China's foreign ministry, according to Reuters. "But actually, we know that's not going to happen." "The [U.S.'s] real purpose is to get rid of all restrictions and have a free hand in seeking military superiority over any adversary, real or imagined," he added.

New START, negotiated under the Obama administration, caps the number of nuclear warheads each country can deploy at 1,550 apiece. The deal is set to expire in February. The comments from China also come one day after the the Trump administration officially pulled the United States out of the World Health Organization (WHO). [President Trump](#) has repeatedly accused the global health body of favoring China, and attacked the organization for its alleged slow response to the coronavirus.

Critics of the WHO and China claim that the global coronavirus response was hindered because of China's lack of transparency in the early stages of the outbreak.

China calls U.S. invite to nuclear talks a ploy to derail them

Associated Press, 8 July 20

BEIJING -- A senior Chinese arms control official called U.S. pressure to join nuclear arms talks with Russia an American ploy to avoid signing a new deal, and said China would gladly participate if the U.S. would agree to parity among all three nations.

"I can assure you that if the U.S. says that they are ready to come down to the Chinese level, China will be happy to participate the next day," Fu Cong, the director general of the Foreign Ministry's arms control department, said Wednesday. "But actually, we know that that's not going to happen."

Fu spoke to journalists in Beijing after the U.S. pointedly noted the Chinese absence at talks with Russia in Vienna two weeks ago on extending or replacing NEW Start, a 2010 arms reduction treaty that expires in February.

The pact is between the U.S. and Russia, long the world's major nuclear powers. The Trump administration wants China, as a rising military power, to join.

Fu called that demand unrealistic because China has a much smaller nuclear arsenal than the other two. By inviting China to join, the U.S. is creating a pretext to walk away from the talks without replacing the treaty, he said.

"The real purpose is to get rid of all the restrictions and have a free hand in seeking military superiority over any adversary, real or imagined," he said of U.S. intentions.

U.S. negotiator Marshall Billingslea told reporters after the talks in Vienna that any new agreement must subject China to restrictions. He expressed hopes that others in the international community would pressure China to join the talks in the future.

"A three-way nuclear arms control deal, in our view, has the best chance of avoiding an incredibly destabilizing three-way nuclear arms race," he said.

Fu said the U.S. and Russia should agree to reduce their arsenals first, and then China and others can join nuclear arms reduction efforts.

New START imposes limits on the number of U.S. and Russian long-range nuclear warheads and launchers. It can be extended by five years by mutual consent, which is what Russia is proposing to do.

The treaty is the last nuclear arms agreement between the two nations, after the Trump administration scrapped an intermediate-range nuclear forces treaty last year. That pact was also criticized because it did not cover China.

Fu said that U.S. missile defense systems in Asia, and its talk of deploying medium-range missiles in the region too, pose a strategic threat to China.

He wouldn't comment on China's nuclear weapons plans, but said it should not come as a surprise to anyone that China feels a need to improve its military capabilities.

China 'happy to' join arms control talks with US and Russia — if US cuts its nuclear arsenal down to China's level

Reuters, 8 July 20 Yew Lun Tian, Christian Schmollinger, Lincoln Feast

BEIJING (Reuters) - China would "be happy to" participate in trilateral arms control negotiations with the United States and Russia, but only if the United States were willing to reduce its nuclear arsenal to China's level, a senior Chinese diplomat said on Wednesday.

Washington has repeatedly called for China to join in trilateral negotiations to extend New START, a flagship nuclear arms treaty between the United States and Russia that is due to expire in February next year.

Fu Cong, head of the arms control department of Chinese foreign ministry, reiterated to reporters in Beijing on Wednesday that China has no interest in joining the negotiation with former Cold War-era superpowers, given that the US nuclear arsenal is about 20 times the size of China's.

"I can assure you, if the US says that they are ready to come down to the Chinese level, China would be happy to participate the next day," he said. "But actually, we know that's not going to happen."

Fu asserted that for the United States, asking China to participate in trilateral negotiations is "nothing but a ploy to divert attention" and an excuse for the United States to walk away from the New START extension.

"The real purpose is to get rid of all restrictions and have a free hand in seeking military superiority over any adversary, real or imagined," said Fu.

Fu maintained China is not "shying away from the international nuclear disarmament process" and is prepared to discuss within the framework of the United Nations Security Council's five permanent members all issues related to the reduction of nuclear risks.

This Chinese Submarine Could Drop a Nuclear Weapon on America

By: Caleb Larson for The National Interest // July 5, 2020

Here's What You Need To Remember: The nuclear submarine club is indeed a highly exclusive club—and those with nuclear ballistic missiles even more so. The real issue is how quiet the Jin-class is. China's Type 094, or Jin-class nuclear submarines are capable, but they may be tools for promoting national prestige rather than true nuclear deterrence.

Jin-class -- The Type 094, or Jin-class as it is also known, is operated by the People's Liberation Army Submarine Force. The Jin-class is a ballistic missile submarine that has an onboard nuclear reactor for propulsion. It is China's second generation of nuclear-powered submarines and is a direct successor to the Type 092, or Xia-Class of nuclear subs. The Jin-class was first launched in 2007, and became operational sometime in 2010. A total of 8 Jin-class hulls are believed to exist, though the class may ultimately grow to a total of 12 hulls.

JL-2 -- As ballistic missile submarine, the Jin-class is armed with nuclear ballistic missiles—the JL-2. The JL-2 is an improvement of the older JL-1 ballistic missile, which is in service aboard the older Type 092 ballistic missile submarines. It is bigger in both diameter and length, and has a greater range and bigger payload. The JL-2's range is estimated to be in the 8,000-9,000 kilometers, or approximately 5,000 to 5,600 miles. The warheads on the JL-2 are variable. It can be armed with a 1 megaton nuclear warhead, or several other lower-yield warheads. Although the distance from Beijing to Los Angeles is over 10,000 miles, a Type 094 submarine on patrol near Alaska would be able to hit the majority of the United States with the JL-2. The Type 094 began conducting nuclear deterrence patrols sometime in 2015.

Silent -- China's defense industry is notoriously tight-lipped about advancements in weapon systems. It is therefore difficult to ascertain with an absolute degree of certainty how quiet the Jin-class really is. It has been suggested that the Jin-class may be quieter than the Typhoon-class—Russia's quietest and most technologically advanced nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine. Still, the Jin-class may not yet be a Chinese wonder weapon. A report by this publication stated that the Jin-class may be detectable due to a design flaw at the rear of the hull near the missile hatches, which could create a detectable sonar signal.

Truth or Hype? -- While most nuclear-equipped ballistic missile submarines rely on the ocean for survivability and ensure a second-strike capability, China's strategy with the Jin-class may be a milder form of deterrence coupled with national prestige. The nuclear submarine club is indeed a highly exclusive club—and those with nuclear ballistic missiles even more so. The real issue is how quiet the Jin-class is. A report from the Office of Naval Intelligence stated that China's Jin-class is the "first credible at-sea second-strike nuclear capability." The Department of Defense concurred in a 2016 report stating that, "together these [the Jin-class and the JL-2 ballistic missile] will give the PLAN its first credible long-range sea-based nuclear capability." Assuming that it is not as quiet as has been hyped, the Jin-class may serve as deterrence in a local theater of conflict (i.e., the South China Sea), rather than as a truly global nuclear deterrence tool.

Caleb Larson holds a Master of Public Policy degree from the Willy Brandt School of Public Policy. He lives in Berlin and writes on U.S. and Russian foreign and defense policy, German politics, and culture.



NORTH KOREA:

North Korean leader's sister says another summit unlikely but 'a surprise thing may still happen'

Reuters, 9 July 20 Sangmi Cha and Josh Smith

SEOUL -- Kim Yo Jong, the sister of North Korea's leader, said another summit with the United States would only be useful for Washington at this point, adding her country had no intention of "threatening the U.S.," according to state media.

Kim said in her personal opinion, there is unlikely to be another summit between leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump this year but "a surprise thing may still happen," news agency KCNA reported on Friday.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Thursday he was "very hopeful" about resuming talks with North Korea about denuclearization and appeared to leave open the possibility of another summit between the countries' leaders.

Kim Yo Jong's comments came a day after the U.S. point man for North Korea, Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun, wrapped up a three-day visit to Seoul where he rejected speculation he was seeking to meet North Korean officials during his trip, but said the United States was open to talks.

Recent North Korean statements have rejected the idea of new talks, and Kim reiterated Pyongyang's objections to what it sees as hostile and self-serving policies of the United States.

"We would like to make it clear that it does not necessarily mean the denuclearization is not possible," Kim Yo Jong said. "But what we mean is that it is not possible at this point of time."

Her comments were couched in a somewhat softer tone than previous statements, and she even noted she had received special permission to view recordings of the recent Fourth of July Independence Day celebrations in the United States.

"We do not have the slightest intention to pose a threat to the U.S.... Everything will go smoothly if they leave us alone and make no provocation on us," she said.

Kim said it was unclear if mixed messages of engagement and pressure from Trump and his aides are an "intentional scheme or a result of the President's loose grip of power."

She said her brother had instructed her to pass on greetings to Trump and send him wishes for success in his work.

But even if the relationship between the leaders is good, Washington will return to being hostile and North Korea needs to shape its policies in preparation for leaders other than Trump, Kim said.

Kim Jong Un and Trump exchanged threats and insults in 2017 as North Korea rapidly advanced its missile and nuclear weapons technology, before ties warmed in early 2018.

The two leaders have met three times, but failed to find a compromise over the North's nuclear weapons program, or the international sanctions imposed on Pyongyang.

North Korea: sidelining economic development to prioritise strategic weapons?

Is Pyongyang readjusting its defence policy priorities? Haena Jo examines defence spending to show the subtle indicators that nuclear weapons development will again take precedence over general economic development in North Korea.

By: Haena Jo Research Analyst for Defence and Military Analysis for IISS // 10th July 2020

Pyongyang's demolition of the Inter-Korean Joint Liaison Office on 16 June was typical of its sledgehammer diplomacy, leaving the world to ponder what message the government was sending. However, there may be subtle indicators that North Korea's defence policy priorities and expenditure are undergoing a readjustment, following a brief period when it seemed that nuclear weapons development might no longer take precedence over general economic development, or the modernisation of elements of North Korea's other military capabilities.

Moving beyond byungjin?

Opened in 2018, the Kaesong Inter-Korean Joint Liaison Office was a manifestation of the then improving relations between North Korea and South Korea. At the same time, Pyongyang was moving away from the decades-long principle of byungjin, which had until then been re-emphasised by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Byungjin aimed to balance North Korea's nuclear weapons programme with civil-economic development. Under Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un's predecessor, nuclear weapons development had taken precedence.

In 2018, Kim Jong-un [said](#) that the dual goals enshrined in byungjin had been achieved, with economic development now the priority. This shift was reflected in the 2018 ‘Socialist Economic Construction’ plan (社會主義經濟建設, 사회주의경제건설), which emphasised the development of information technology and the country’s wider science base. The last five-year plan shaped by byungjin was unveiled by Kim Jong-un in May 2016 and ends in 2020.

Even before the announcement of the Socialist Economic Construction plan, it was apparent that Pyongyang had revised its priorities. Kim’s 2016–2020 ‘National Economic Development Strategy’ refocused policies toward technological development and trade diversification. Goals included 8% annual economic growth and a reduced reliance on China, which had grown to account for over 90% of North Korea’s export and import trade.

A reasonable expectation was that this emphasis on the development of the civil economy would be accompanied by some reduction in defence expenditure. This, however, does not appear to have taken place: North Korea’s allocation of state expenditures to defence has remained static at 15.8% since 2016 according to state budget announcements. What’s more, Kim’s National Economic Development Strategy has failed to deliver the targeted 8% annual growth, and the country remains almost completely dependent on China for trade.

Explaining static defence spending

While byungjin’s dual aims of developing nuclear weapons and the economy were declared to have been met, the national ideology of juche, or self-reliance, remains in place. This in part may explain the lack of change to defence spending, with some funding moved perhaps from nuclear to conventional weapons development. The 2018–19 state budget, for example, noted the intent to ‘increase the capability of national defence and to contribute to developing modernised weapons systems and munitions production processes’.

However, with the failure of nuclear talks with the United States, and the associated failure to get sanctions lifted, Pyongyang is becoming again more bellicose. Kim’s comments at the end of 2019 also suggested that elements of the byungjin principle were being re-emphasised. His December 2019 speech at a meeting of the ruling Workers’ Party’s Central Committee underscored a need to refocus on [strategic weapons development](#), even if this were to come at the cost of short-term economic gain. Additionally, at a meeting in May 2020, the Central Military Commission of the Workers’ Party outlined ‘new policies for further increasing’ North Korea’s nuclear capabilities, but state media did not provide details.

Parsing defence expenditure

Determining the official figures for North Korea’s defence expenditure is relatively straightforward using the state’s official media outlet. What this figure means is considerably more complicated. Every year between the end of March and the beginning of April, the Supreme People’s Assembly announces the proposed growth of state revenues and expenditures and the proportion of expenditure allocated to defence.

The figures, however, are less transparent than they first appear, given the lack of real-world values, and their divergence from the international norms of estimating economic data. The [2019 World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers](#), published by the US State Department, estimates that North Korea spent between 21.9% and 24.4% of GDP (between US\$3.7 billion and US\$4.2bn in 2017\$) annually on the military between 2007 and 2017.

Converting the figures released by North Korean state media using the same market exchange rates over the same period results in far lower numbers, between US\$0.64bn and US\$1.2bn, which accounted for 3.9–6.9% of GDP. The 2020 budget would convert to approximately US\$1.5bn (2017\$) at market exchange rates, still well below the US State Department's estimates. Adopting a purchasing power parity (PPP) rate to account for the lower cost of production inputs in North Korea would place actual military spending much higher – closer to US\$8bn–US\$10bn annually since 2007.

Although official spending figures exist, the lack of transparency makes any kind of regional comparison tentative at best. Kim's December 2019 declaration on 'strategic weapons development' suggests that for the near term at least, nuclear weapons development will be a priority again for defence expenditure and the state, be it under the principle of byungjin or otherwise. There would therefore appear to be a reduced emphasis on the wider development of the civil economy. Whether the renewed focus on strategic systems is also at the cost of investment in conventional weapons is for now an open question.

NK poised to test submarine-launched ballistic missile: think tank

[By Choi Si-young](#) for the Kores Herald // Published : Jul 8, 2020 - 15:40 Updated : Jul 8, 2020 - 18:02

North Korea appears to be weighing the timing to test a submarine-launched ballistic missile as part of the aggression it threatened to stage last month, a think tank that is part of Seoul's Defense Ministry said Wednesday.

"With an SLBM launch, Pyongyang could deliver strongest shockwaves it intends to the international community, while shunning the risk of being seen as defying the UN Security Council resolutions," the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses said in a report. The resolutions denouncing the North's weapons of mass destruction program so far have not specifically touched on SLBMs, it explained.

The North would rely on a method attractive enough to lure the attention of the US to the stalled nuclear talks but would be careful not to go about stretching that method to the extreme to abort the talks altogether, according to the think tank. The institute said the North could put off provocation until after the America presidential election in November if the US-China feud does not grow into a full-on collision, which the North thinks greatly caters to its interest because a distracted Washington could not hit back at a provoking Pyongyang as forcefully as it would, according to the think tank.

Another North Korean analyst, however, said Pyongyang would forge ahead with a missile launch before November's election. "Leader Kim would prefer sealing a nuclear deal with a bragging Trump than with his Democratic rival, since Democrats are pickier over decommissioning the nuclear arsenal," said Park Won-gon, an international studies professor at Handong University, adding that a provocation would come measured so as not to hamper Trump's reelection bid.

Park said he was betting on the North's SLBM or satellite launch aimed to earn sanctions relief from the Trump administration, which would find it increasingly harder to slam Pyongyang upon provocation because that opens the door to disputing the two years of progress that Washington has touted so far. Park advised the Moon administration to prepare to respond to a real military strike and not a show of force by Pyongyang, adding that

he should make the joint defense readiness between Seoul and Washington clear and be ready to deploy strategic military assets upon provocation.

Meanwhile, the North's state media KCNA reported Wednesday that leader Kim Jong-un had visited a mausoleum at Pyongyang's Kumsusan Palace of the Sun to mark the anniversary of the death of his grandfather, the regime's founding leader Kim Il-Sung. The 36-year-old Kim sparked speculation over his health when he missed his grandfather's birthday in April, which is marked with a major holiday there.

Kim was shown accompanied by his sister Kim Yo-jong and key party members, in a clear sign to discredit mushrooming speculation over his health. Pyongyang's state-run newspaper and other propaganda outlets produced extensive coverage idolizing the young leader, without a message for either Seoul or Washington, while the two allies were discussing inter-Korean affairs, with US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun set to wrap up his three-day trip here Thursday.

By Choi Si-young (siyoungchoi@heraldcorp.com)



SOUTH KOREA:

NSTR



IRAN:

Iran explosion: Panic erupts as huge third blast in three weeks rocks capital

EXPLOSIONS have rocked the Iranian capital of Tehran, according to online reports. This marks the third blast in three weeks for the country.

By [Edward Browne](#) for the UK Express // PUBLISHED: 00:02, Sat, Jul 11, 2020 | UPDATED: 00:13, Sat, Jul 11, 2020

Tehran: Fire erupts from building following explosion.

Another deadly explosion was heard in western Tehran on Friday, according to local reports of a blast at a missile warehouse. However, sources claim there have been more than one in multiple regions. An intelligence official told The New York Times said that Israel was possibly behind the attack. This has not yet been confirmed. Initial reports say the confirmed blast hit a missile warehouse belonging to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Authorities have not yet provided any information on the cause of the blasts. Journalist Hasan Sari claims there was more than one explosion, with others hitting the regions of Garmdareh and Quds. Social media users have confirmed at least one of these, with one writing: “Another explosion in Iran, this time in west Tehran, causing power outage”. Unofficial news site Spectator Index claimed there had been reports that “strategic sites” had been “targeted”.

Meanwhile, observers have claimed fake pictures and videos are circulating on social media of the blasts. One user posted a video of a man appearing to be on the ground in a region west of Tehran at 04:00 local time who claimed there had been a power outage but no sounds of an explosion. The tweet reads: “reporters on the ground, no sounds of explosions, I was getting ready to go to work and we experienced almost 15 minutes of power outage, but nothing unusually [sic], no sounds of emergency or fire fighter vehicles, everything seem normal in the area.”

The news follows a series of blasts in or near Tehran in recent days. One such explosion occurred this Monday with reports of two people killed. That blast hit a factory belonging to a car manufacturer in the city of Baqershahr near to Tehran according to the Jerusalem post, and was caused by an accident involving oxygen tanks. On July 1, at least 19 people were killed and several others injured when an explosion hit the Sina Athar clinic, according to the BBC.

Tehran fire department spokesman Jalal Maleki said firefighters had rescued 20 people but that others died due to heat and smoke. Mr Maleki added that the clinic carried out medical imaging and surgeries. And on June 26, another blast hit Tehran which defence ministry officials attributed to an industrial gas tank explosion. Ministry spokesman Davoud Abdi said: “A gas tank exploded in the Parchin public area. Thank God there were no casualties.”

Iran Says It Is Negotiating 25-Year Bilateral Deal With China

By [RFE/RL](#) // July 06, 2020 05:19 GMT

Iran has been negotiating a 25-year accord with China “with confidence and conviction,” Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told parliament on July 5, saying its terms will be announced once the deal is struck.

Zarif insisted there was nothing secret about the prospective deal, which he said was raised publicly in January 2016 when President Xi Jinping visited Tehran. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also has publicly supported a strategic bilateral partnership with China. China is Iran's top trading partner and a key market for Iranian crude oil exports, which have been severely curtailed by U.S. sanctions.

Zarif made the comments in his first address to parliament since a new session began in late May after elections that were dominated by hard-liners. During the session, Zarif was heckled by lawmakers largely over his key role in negotiating a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, which the U.S. unilaterally abandoned in 2018 before reimposing sanctions. U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the deal saying it was not decisive enough in ensuring Iran would never be able to develop a nuclear weapon.

Trump wants Tehran to negotiate a new accord that would place indefinite curbs on its nuclear program and restrict Tehran's ballistic missile program. Iran has gradually rolled back its commitments under the accord since the United States withdrew. The 2015 deal provided the Islamic republic relief from international sanctions in return for limits on its nuclear program, but Iranian hard-liners staunchly opposed the multilateral agreement, arguing the United States could never be trusted.

Hard-liners in the Iranian parliament also said on July 5 they were [seeking to summon Zarif and President Hassan Rohani](#) to respond to accusations of "betraying the people." Several deputies called Rohani a liar as they heckled him continuously. Lawmaker Mohammed-Taghi Nagh-Ali said during the session that Rohani and Zarif have betrayed the people and "must therefore be held responsible," according to the semiofficial ILNA news agency.

Rohani's policies have led to the country's current economic crisis, and his arguments are "no longer acceptable," Nagh-Ali said. Some 200 members of parliament have tabled a motion to question Rohani. Since winning their seats in February, hard-liners in Iran have been putting greater pressure on Rohani, accusing him of making too many concessions to Western nations and getting little in return. Rohani argues that U.S. sanctions and the global coronavirus pandemic are behind the economic crisis.

With reporting by Reuters, AFP, and dpa

Iran: Suspicions Mount Of Foreign Hand In Fire At Sensitive Natanz Nuclear Site

By [Golnaz Esfandiari](#) for RFE/RL // July 08, 2020 17:52 GMT

There is growing support among outside security experts for the notion that an "incident" at Iran's main nuclear-enrichment facility last week was an act of sabotage in a shadow war aimed at setting back Tehran's nuclear activities.

Many analysts believe that a foreign state, possibly Israel, was behind the July 2 fire at the Natanz facility in Iran's central Isfahan Province. The conflagration caused "considerable financial damage," according to Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, which had originally sought to downplay the incident. An image [released by Iran](#) in the aftermath of the incident and satellite images released abroad showed significant damage -- including ripped-out doors, scorch marks, and a collapsed roof -- at a building where centrifuges were assembled.

Iranian authorities have said they know the cause of the incident but have withheld any public announcement due to "security" issues. "Many countries have a clear interest to delay the Iranian nuclear military project; one of them is Israel," Yaakov Amidror, a retired major general and former national-security adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, told RFE/RL. Iran maintains that all of its nuclear activities are peaceful.

And it has opened its known nuclear sites to UN inspectors since signing a deal in 2015 exchanging curbs on its nuclear program for sanctions relief with world powers including the United States, which has since walked away from the deal. But the United States and Israel have for years accused Iran of a long-running effort to acquire a nuclear bomb-making capability.

Previous Attacks

They are thought to have targeted Iran's nuclear program in the past with cyberattacks and malicious software, or malware. One of those suspected joint efforts was the Stuxnet computer worm, which damaged Iran's nuclear infrastructure according to reports that began to emerge in 2010. At least four Iranian nuclear scientists were assassinated between 2010 and 2012, engendering speculation that the killings were part of a suspected covert campaign waged by Israel against Iran's nuclear program.

After last week's fire at Natanz, The Washington Post on July 6 [quoted a Middle Eastern security official](#) as saying a "huge explosive device" had been planted by Israeli operatives to "send a signal" to Tehran. "There was an opportunity, and someone in Israel calculated the risk and took the opportunity," the unnamed official told the paper. On July 5, [The New York Times](#) quoted "a Middle Eastern intelligence official with knowledge of the episode" as saying Israel had targeted Natanz using what the paper called "a powerful bomb."

Israel has neither confirmed nor denied any role in the incident. Speaking on July 5, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz said his country wasn't "necessarily" behind every incident in Iran, adding that Israel's long-standing policy is not to allow Iran access to nuclear capabilities. Ilan Goldenberg, director of the Middle East Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, said Israel has demonstrated the ability "to penetrate Iran's nuclear program," most recently in 2018 when Israeli agents are reported to have broken into a warehouse in the Iranian capital and extracted a trove of documents detailing the country's nuclear activities.

"It is the type of operation that Israel might conduct at any time when it sees the opportunity," Goldenberg, who previously headed an Iran team in the Office of the U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, told RFE/RL.

'Perception Of Chaos'

Speaking generally and not about this specific incident, he suggested the aim of such operations might be to delay Iran's nuclear program "as much as possible." "For Israelis, there is also the additional benefit of trying to create the perception of chaos at a time when the Iranian government is struggling with an economic crisis and COVID-19," he added. The Natanz incident comes amid a gradual backing away by Tehran from its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal.

It has said its moves are a response to the May 2018 withdrawal from the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA) by U.S. President Donald Trump and the reimposition of harsh U.S. sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy. Raz Zimmt, an Iran analyst at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv, suggested that the incident at Natanz could reflect Israeli concern about Iran's expansion of its nuclear activities beyond the limit set in the nuclear deal, which Israel opposed.

"Not only that Iran still refuses to return to negotiations, but it has withdrawn from its commitments to the JCPOA shortening the breakout time considerably," he said in a reference to the period needed to amass enough weapons-grade uranium to arm a nuclear weapon.

"Under those circumstances, and especially considering the possibility that it would be difficult to go back to the JCPOA whether Trump wins the U.S. elections [in November] or [Democratic challenger] Joe Biden [does], Israel is back in the dilemma of either to allow Iran to continue advancing its nuclear program up to a short distance from a breakout capability or to use covert operations, or even a military option in the future, in order to delay Iran's nuclear program," Zimmt said.

Tehran's Dilemma

Any sabotage targeting Natanz, if conducted by Israel, could pose a dilemma for Tehran on how to respond. Admitting an Israeli role could be interpreted as showing that Tehran was unable to prevent such an attack and would also likely suggest a need for retaliation, which could in turn prompt Israeli action. "The reason why authorities are not ready to point their fingers at Israel is that they would then be forced to react.

"At least at the same level, which would be very difficult, and it would result in Israeli retaliation," said former Iranian diplomat Hossein Alizadeh, who thinks Tehran's "cautious" reaction appears to confirm the assessment that Natanz was targeted by a foreign power. Speaking on July 7, Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei suggested that reports claiming an Israeli role in the destruction at Natanz were part of a "psychological war" against his country.

"The Israeli regime should be aware that creating a norm-breaking narrative on any attack against our nuclear facilities, even if it is only propaganda, is considered as stepping in the path of violating red lines of global peace and security," Rabiei was [quoted as saying](#) by the semiofficial Mehr news agency.

Suspicious Incidents

The fire at the Natanz facility follows several other suspicious incidents, including a June 25 [explosion at a gas-storage facility](#) near a military base east of Tehran. That has led to speculation about a possible Israeli or U.S. effort to destabilize Iran's clerical establishment, which is already under intense pressure due to sanctions, growing public discontent, and a coronavirus outbreak that has killed more than 12,000 Iranians and infected nearly 250,000, according to official figures that are thought to be a significant underreporting.

Analyst Zimmt, meanwhile, warned of the danger of speculating about connections between such events. "It is inevitable that some of the incidents are also related to infrastructure problems due to the difficult economic situation or mismanagement," he said.



INDIA:

Indian, Chinese forces reportedly pull back from area of deadly clash

BY AIJAZ HUSSEIN, EMILY S CHMALL AND SAM MCNEIL ASSOCIATED PRESS for the WT // 8 July, 2020

SRINAGAR, INDIA | Indian and Chinese soldiers have backed away from the site of a deadly clash last month in the Galwan Valley along the undemarcated border, Indian security officials said Tuesday, a sign of the countries' progress in disengaging from a months-long standoff.

The two sides also appeared to have dismantled recent construction along the river valley high in the Karakoram mountains, satellite images showed. Three Indian security officials familiar with the developments said soldiers on both sides have moved back about a half-mile from the site of their clash on June 15, when military personnel fought with rocks, clubs and their fists in hand-to-hand combat that left 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers dead.

The two sides have also moved apart at two locations in the Hot Spring area, out of at least five places where Indian officials said the Chinese had crossed the Line of Actual Control, the area of the border that remains disputed following a 1962 war that ended in an uneasy truce. They said soldiers continued to stand at close range at two other sites along the 2,100-mile informal boundary, at Depsang and Pangong Lake. At the picturesque lake, the Chinese were 5 miles within the disputed border area, the officials said.

Satellite images from June 28 appeared to show that the Indians had built a wall on their side of the Galwan Valley and the Chinese had expanded a camp at the end of a long road connected to Chinese military bases farther from the poorly defined border, according to experts. But images released on Monday by Maxar, a Colorado-based satellite imagery company, showed those recent additions now gone.

The countries' special representatives on the border issue, Indian national security adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, agreed in a phone call Sunday that "maintenance of peace and tranquility in the India-China border areas was essential for the further development of our bilateral relations," and to "complete the ongoing disengagement process along the LAC expeditiously," India's foreign ministry said in a statement Monday. The phone call came after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an unannounced visit to a military base in the Indian territory of Ladakh, visiting injured soldiers and praising their bravery.

The face-off began in early May, first at three places including Pangong Lake, and then escalated to two other places in Depsang and Galwan in June. India and China have blamed each other for provoking the June 15 brawl in the Galwan Valley, the Asian giants' most violent encounter in 45 years, and have staked fresh claims to the area where it occurred. China's ambassador to India, Sun Weidong, told the Press Trust of India news agency that there were "casualties between the two sides," but Chinese officials have not detailed any deaths or injuries on their side.



PAKISTAN:

NSTR



UNITED KINGDOM:

NSTR



FRANCE:

NSTR



ISRAEL:

Israel launches spy satellite, hints at role in Iranian nuclear fire

BY JOSEF FEDERMAN ASSOCIATED PRESS for the Washington Times // 07 July 2020

JERUSALEM | Israel said it successfully launched a new spy satellite into space on Monday as its leaders hinted it was behind a massive fire at an Iranian nuclear site last week — potentially ratcheting up a long-running covert war.

If Israel was responsible for the fire at the heavily fortified Natanz facility, it would mark another in a series of daring strikes against Iran's nuclear program attributed to Israel, while also risking Iranian retaliation on either Israeli or Western targets. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed the launch of the new Ofek 16 satellite, the latest addition to a fleet deployed over the past two decades.

"The success of the Ofek 16 satellite very much increases our ability to act against Israel's enemies, near and far alike," he told his Cabinet. "It greatly expands our ability to act on land, at sea, in the air and also in space." Mr. Netanyahu did not mention Iran or last week's fire. But the Islamic Republic is Israel's top security concern and a target of its satellite intelligence-gathering efforts. After initially playing down last

Thursday's fire, Iranian officials over the weekend confirmed the blaze was much more powerful than initially indicated and that advanced centrifuges at the top-secret facility had been damaged. Iran's nuclear agency said the damage to the centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for both civilian and military purposes, could delay research and development for the "medium term." Iran has not directly blamed the fire on Israel or anyone else.

Israel, which accuses Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons, has neither confirmed nor denied involvement in the fire. But a growing pile of evidence is pointing toward Israel — one of the few countries with the motivation and capability to pull it off. In a speech on Sunday, Israeli Foreign

Minister Gabi Ashkenazi noted that it was Israel's longterm strategy to prevent Iran from gaining the ability to build a nuclear weapon. He made no mention of the Natanz incident but noted that Israel takes "actions that are better left unsaid."

A group calling itself the "Cheetahs of the Homeland" has claimed responsibility for the fire. The fact that Iran experts have never heard of the group, and that Iranian opposition groups denied involvement, has raised questions about possible foreign involvement. The group, claiming its members were dissidents from Iranian security services, referred to the site as "Kashan," the home of a one-time Jewish community, instead of the modern name of Natanz.

Israel and the U.S. are believed to have created the "Stuxnet" computer virus, which attacked Iran's nuclear program a decade ago. At the time, Mr. Ashkenazi was Israel's military chief of staff. More recently, Israel uncovered what it called Iran's "nuclear archive," a collection of thousands of documents seized by Mossad agents from a Tehran warehouse in 2018. Israel The Ofek 16 reconnaissance satellite blasts off in Israel on Monday. The satellite, which entered orbit, joins a collection of spy satellites that Israel has deployed in recent years.

contends the documents prove that Iran intended to develop nuclear weapons and hid its efforts from the international community. Earlier this year, Israel was suspected of crippling an Iranian port in a hacking attack in response to an alleged Iranian cyberattack that targeted Israel's water supply. The Natanz fire came less than a week after an explosion in an area east of Tehran that analysts believe hides an underground tunnel system and missile production sites.

Iran has long claimed its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only. The International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, says Iran has been enriching uranium to about 4.5% purity — far below the grade needed to make bombs but higher than the terms of the 2015 international nuclear deal that President Trump has now repudiated. Iran says its breaches are a response to Mr. Trump's 2018 decision to withdraw the U.S. from the deal and to impose painful economic sanctions.

Yoel Guzansky, a senior fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies and former Iran specialist on Israel's National Security Council, said it was difficult to say for sure whether Israel was involved in the fire, either directly or with Western or Arab partners opposed to Iran. He also said that not everything that happens in Iran is necessarily the result of cyberwarfare or sabotage. "Having said that, some of the things that happened in Iran in the last week are not coincidence," he said.

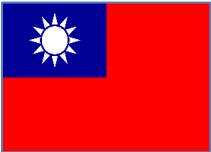
He said the perpetrators of the fire might have had several goals, most critically to slow Iran's nuclear program. They might also have wanted to send a message to Iran that there is a cost for continued nuclear research. There might be pressure to draw Iran back to negotiations. Monday's satellite launch did not appear to be directly connected to the developments in Natanz, given the lengthy preparations involved.

Israel does not confirm the number of its operational satellites but Amnon Harari, the head of the Defense Ministry's Space and Satellite Administration, mentioned at least two others: the Ofek 5, launched in 2002, and the Ofek 11, launched in 2016.



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