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ADMINISTRATION/PROGRAM SPECIFICS

Nuclear digital sustainment team wins acquisition award

Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center Public Affairs, 8 June 20 Leah Bryant

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. -- A digital sustainment team for the next U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) recently won one of the Air Force Service Acquisition Executive's Product Support Innovation awards.

The awards recognize Air Force program offices and teams who challenge traditional sustainment approaches and create new, innovative ways to maximize readiness or reduce the life-cycle costs of their programs, from rapid acquisition activities to sustaining existing systems.

"It's great to see this team of exceptional Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center members recognized for their outstanding work," said Maj. Gen. Shaun Morris, AFNWC commander and Air Force program executive officer for strategic systems.

The center is developing the Air Force's new Ground Based Strategic Deterrent weapon system to replace the aging LGM-30G Minuteman III ICBM, which first became operational in the mid-1960s. While some Minuteman III components and subsystems have been upgraded over the years, most have supported over 50 years of continuous operation. The GBSD ICBM is expected to begin deploying to U.S. missile fields in the late 2020s.

The award recognized the following team members for developing a first-of-its-kind digital sustainment strategy for the GBSD weapon system:

- Lynn Betts
- Sharon Dore
- Rodolfo Villafranca
- William James
- Anthony Purkey

"Our product support team is leading the way in bringing sustainment into the Digital Engineering Age," said Col. Jason Bartolomei, GBSD Systems director. "The team has invented stunning new digital visualizations that integrate GBSD risks and issues into an innovative risk management model."

They also created the Air Force's first product support software architecture and digital thread, which link strategic logistic and test data for the land-based leg of the U.S. nuclear triad.

"This team is changing the way we think about acquisition and sustainment," Bartolomei said. "Their performance is consistent with the innovative spirit, dedication and drive the whole ICBM enterprise brings to the fight every day."

The GBSD program office is part of AFNWC's GBSD Systems Directorate at Hill AFB, Utah.

About AFNWC

Headquartered at Kirtland AFB, the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center is responsible for synchronizing all aspects of nuclear materiel management on behalf of Air Force Materiel Command, in direct support of Air Force Global Strike Command. It has more than 1,400 personnel assigned to 18 locations worldwide. More information on the center is available at www.afnwc.af.mil.

Roper Pushes Moving Project Maven to Air Force

BreakingDefense.com, 11 June 20 Theresa Hitchens

WASHINGTON -- Air Force acquisition czar Will Roper says he is considering taking over DoD's artificial intelligence (AI) experiment, Project Maven, to make it operational while the service pushes its own AI capabilities into the field.

"I was just speaking with USDI today about the potential of transitioning Maven over to the Air Force and making it an operational reality day-to-day," Roper said.

Project Maven begun in 2017, was designed to put machine-learning to work to sort through the masses of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) data generated by DoD and Intelligence Community (IC) platforms. It has been a bit controversial, with Google pulling out of the effort in 2018; and the head of Air Combat Command head Gen. Mike Holmes saying he didn't believe it was ready for prime time.

Roper explained that the Air Force was best positioned to take on Project Maven because of its progress in standing up capabilities under its Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS) family of systems, each dubbed with the prefix ONE. This includes the cloudONE for remote data storage, processing and access; platformONE for securely building software; the dataONE library; and the deviceONE that allows secure remote access to classified data.

Via the ABMS effort, which is the Air Force's flagship for enabling Joint All Domain Command and Control, the Air Force has been able to build the "AI infrastructure" that allows an AI system to actually do analysis, Roper stressed.

"That boring part, the AI infrastructure, is what has been critically absent in the Department, and we are finally doing it in the Air Force," Roper said. "So cloudONE, platformONE, dataONE — this family of ONE systems — builds a tech stack that really is about getting data in proper custody so that analytics can be built on top of it and we can finally go do AI at scale."

The key, he said, is "data curation and custody, so that that data is discoverable by analytics algorithms that are able to assess its import to different missions, and then push it to the machine, without having to have people be inside the loop." And that, of course, is what Project Maven focused on, the algorithms.

Roper said the Air Force already has an "AI at scale operational today with the Distributed Common Ground System" as well as one being used for "predictive maintenance" that the service hopes have in use for 16 different assets within the next 18 months.

The DCGS family of systems, an effort that began way back in 1998, is DoD's flagship capability for providing daily processing, exploitation and production of analysis from DoD to ISR platforms. Predictive maintenance is using AI to figure out what parts of a weapon system or platform are likely to break next, to ease and speed logistics planning.

In both these instances, he explained, the environment is benign. That won't be so on the battlefield, where adversaries will be attempting to hack and spoof US AI systems — something that he says is all too easily done today.

“It's harder than meets the eye to try to teach an algorithm to know that something is messing with them,” he said. “They inherently trust their data.”

“I think there is this belief that that AI will just churn through it — throw enough data at it and everything will be okay — and that's not the case,” he elaborated. “We need another generation of this technology.”

Thus, for the moment, the best solution is for humans and machines to work in tandem — as the Air Force is looking to do with the Skyborg project and the development of an AI co-pilot Roper has nicknamed R2D2. “We need to be pairing our AI with people,” Roper stressed.

Still, Roper is enthusiastic about the progress made by the ABMS effort toward AI, including working with Northern Command on its response to COVID-19 — helping predict where pandemic hot spots might arise.

“We're excited that we have that first taste of AI changing operations,” he enthused. “That AI flag has now been planted for the department. We have seen a future that only silicon was able to see; the human brain was not. If we can get that out onto the battlefield and use the ABMS event in September as our stepping stone, then what a wonderful step towards getting our department and our military away from thinking of itself primarily in terms of the platforms that produce data, and rather instead of the insights that are created by that data, many of them being created by AI,” he said.

(The Air Force is planning the second “ABMS OnRamp,” to follow the debut field demonstration in December, for the first week of September. As Breaking D readers know, that second exercise will feature a scenario centered on Space Command operations.)

Roper also waxed enthusiastic about the recent decision by the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center (JAIC) to move its development operations to cloudONE. They are not alone, he said.

“I believe that portions of the Aegis Weapon System, and the F-18 are also using cloudONE for development,” he said.

The Air Force has “put a ton of effort into getting it certified at the various security levels, classified to critical unclassified information,” he added. CloudONE now can be used with secret-level and Top Secret/Special Access Program (TS/SAP) level data, and Roper said that by the end of June it will be certified for use with Secret/Special Access Program level data.

This makes it available to software developers across security levels, and opens the door for use by more Air Force weapons development programs,

he explained.

For example, Roper said that the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent Program (GBSD) “will absolutely be using cloudONE and platformONE for its development.” And, he said, in talking with the F-35 program office he expects “they will do some portion of their development” using cloudONE.

Further, he said the highly classified B-21 bomber program will be “moving in at the right point for them.” He noted that prime contractor Northrop Grumman has just demonstrated the use of Kubernetes — a software development technique that helps manage multiple “containerized applications” (i.e. with its own operating system) across multiple machines in a secure manner — on flight-ready hardware. Indeed, he noted, the B-21 program involves an initiative called DevStar that is trying to establish an autonomous testing capability.

An Air Force spokesperson said in a statement that DevStar is “an Air Force initiative to use modern software development paradigms to rapidly deliver software to weapon systems while continually meeting safety, security, airworthiness and other compliance requirements that traditionally are performed in serial.” The Air Force website on the initiative shows it is trying to go beyond DevSecOps that seeks to build IT security into software upfront — to include super-high security and safety measures that will allow use in developing highly classified nuclear weapons-related systems.

“And you’re gonna keep seeing more of the Air Force move into this,” Roper said. “You will hear people use terms like Agile Development and DevOps and DevSecOps — they are not all the same. The tech stack underneath that is producing the software matters.”

PlatformONE, he said, is one critical tool in producing software for the Air Force. “It is what is automating all those things that we have people doing today and people doing them in serial,” he said. And, he added, the use of platformONE and cloudONE in combination is “magic” that allows the sharing of software code across weapon systems development programs.

“One of my ambitions for this year is to have code that’s been written for, say, B-21 run on F-16 and vice versa, and not have any humans check it in between.”

Defense industry’s COVID costs could tank DoD modernization plans

Defense News Online, 10 June 20 Joe Gould

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon is facing billions of dollars in pandemic-related claims, which may force it to dip into modernization and readiness accounts if Congress doesn’t backfill the money, the department’s top acquisitions official said Wednesday.

Testifying at the House Armed Services Committee, Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment Ellen Lord reaffirmed the Pentagon’s commitment to request supplemental appropriations from Congress, beyond its fiscal 2021 budget of \$740 billion. It’s been seven weeks since Department of Defense officials first publicly disclosed a request was coming; that request is currently sitting with the White House Office of Management and Budget.

The defense industry claims are expected to be covered by Section 3610 of the coronavirus relief package, among other provisions, Lord said. To

give an idea of the scope, one of the major prime contractors told the DoD it and its suppliers could claim as much as \$1 billion.

Under Section 3610, the Pentagon and other agencies can reimburse suppliers for expenses to keep workers employed. Under other provisions, contractors can seek reimbursement for leave and DoD-directed purchases of personal protective equipment, cleaning, and costs associated with spacing out workers in factories.

“The department does not have the funding to cover these costs,” Lord said, which she later said were “in the lower end” of “double-digit billions of dollars.”

Lord affirmed the Defense Department would need Congress to pass supplemental appropriations beyond its fiscal 2021 budget during an exchange with HASC ranking member Mac Thornberry, R-Texas.

“Otherwise these contractors are going to have to eat several billion dollars, which could well come at their employees’ expense, which this was supposed to help to begin with,” Thornberry noted.

“There’s a choice there,” Lord said. “Whether we want to eat into readiness and modernization — and slow down modernization or readiness on an ongoing basis — or whether we want to remedy the situation in the next six months or so ... and continue to have the ready forces we need for our national security.”

Though some House Democrats have expressed reservations about the size of the Pentagon’s budget request, HASC Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee Chairman Joe Courtney, D-Conn., expressed support, saying: “The intent of Congress needs to be followed up on with an appropriation.”

Courtney called on the DoD to provide Congress the data underlying its request, when the request actually arrives on Capitol Hill, saying it would foster conversation among lawmakers.

The Pentagon has rough calculations, but contractors have not yet filed claims, Lord said, because Congress has not drafted an appropriations bill. She speculated the full extent of the issues will emerge over time.

“I believe they are concerned that they’ll get a one-time shot and want to make sure what the entire situation is,” she said. “We believe we understand the lower end of the number.”

Transforming the Civilian Defender Program

Air Force Security Forces Center, 5 June 20 Heidi L. Scheppers

ARLINGTON, Va. -- U.S. Air Force leadership declared 2020 as the Year of Integrated Base Defense (IBD), focusing on how every Air and Space Professional fits into a layered defensive network. IBD is greater in scope than any single career field. It requires active participation between all Air

Force Specialty Codes and ranks to operate as a cohesive fighting force.

As the Year of Integrated Base Defense starts, we are preparing for a future that will look significantly different than our past. 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. We need a force that is more lethal and ready.

Defenders, to include Civilian Defenders, are a critical part of the Year of Integrated Base Defense.

This year, we continue to invest in the Civilian Defender Program to create the most lethal and ready force. We have invested in human capital, training, retention, and career growth.

In February 2019, the Air Combat Command Security Forces Director requested assistance with right-sizing their squadrons and providing complementary Civilian Defender continuity positions for each of their units. Specifically, the positions requested were Deputy Director, Assistant Operations Manager, Criminal History Data Analyst, and Civilian Defender Program Manager. These positions would serve as civilian growth opportunities, a sorely needed mechanism to leverage civilians in the human capital domain of each unit by developing specific functions and positions.

Retaining existing personnel is a fundamental need in the Civilian Defender program. Security Forces leaders pursued efforts to incentivize staying in the career field, by upgrading the baseline position from a General Schedule GS-6 to a GS-7 level. On September 23, 2019, the entry-level core foundational GS-0083-07 Standard Core Personnel Document (SCPD) was classified, published and posted in the Air Force Personnel Center SCPD Library for use. Security Forces units have been actively upgrading their GS-0083-06 positions to GS-0083-07. These officers, have on the average seen a salary increase of \$4 – 5,000 dollars dependent on the unit's location.

Additional efforts to improve retention of Civilian Defenders include a career development pyramid that demonstrates the progression of steps showing opportunity for growth from the entry level GS-07 to Deputy Director Positions at the GS-13 level. The use of the recruitment, retention and relocation (3R) and Special Salary Rate (SSR) incentives are available for used in Security Forces units. There are currently 26 Security Forces units that receive SSR and three that are using 3R incentives.

In association with AFPC's Security Career Field Team and AFPC's Classification Section, AFSFC continues to develop the necessary SCPDs to both meet ACC's right-sizing efforts as well as grow a comprehensive career growth construct for Civilian Defenders Air Force-wide.

In addition to retaining personnel, Security Forces leadership recognized the need to hire the right people at the right time. As a result, in September 2019, Headquarters Air Force/A4S obtained Direct Hire Authority (DHA) from OPM for the 0083 police officer series throughout the Department of Defense. This effort helps expedite hiring activities and to date, approximately 245 Civilian Defender personnel have been hired under DHA.

Please refer to the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness) memorandum signed Sept. 30, 2019, and the Deputy Secretary of Defense memorandum, "Implementation of Direct-Hire Authority for Shortage Category and/or Critical Need Positions," signed June 6, 2017 for details.

AFSFC in collaboration with VA-LETC launched the first 10-Week Civilian Defender Academy class in October 2019, to meet Peace Officer Standardization and Training certification. On December, 20, 2020, 23 Civilian Defenders graduated the first 10-week class. A second class of 27 Civilian Defenders graduated on March 13, 2020.

This partnership has enabled the development of three additional follow-on courses. The follow-on advanced courses will be comprised of a five-day Deputy Director, 10-day Supervisor and five-day Field Training courses are in development and are in the planning phase to launch in FY21. These follow-on courses will help provide Defenders with improved skills, ready to perform integrated defense missions at Air Force installations.

The National Defense Strategy states that our homeland is no longer a sanctuary. The communities we serve and the threats we protect them from are increasingly diverse and complex, necessitating a more sophisticated response to the challenges now and in the future. Transforming the Civilian Defender program will aid our ability to respond to those challenges.

— *Mrs. Heidi L. Scheppers, Deputy Director, Security Forces
DCS/Logistics, Engineering & Force Protection*

U.S. and Russia to Meet June 22 on Curbing Nuclear Stockpiles

By: Nick Wadhams for Bloomberg News // 2 hrs ago

(Bloomberg) -- The U.S. and Russia will send senior officials to Vienna on June 22 for a new round of arms-control talks, a State Department official said, as the Trump administration tries to enlist Moscow's help bringing China into broader negotiations to limit all three countries' nuclear weapons stockpiles.

The official didn't rule out that the U.S. may be willing to extend the Obama-era New Start nuclear-weapons treaty, which is set to expire in February, provided Russia commits to three-way arms control with China and helps to bring a resistant Beijing to the table. The administration has invited China to the talks in Vienna, though its attendance isn't a precondition, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity about diplomatic exchanges.

China said Tuesday that it did not intend to participate in the talks. "China has repeatedly stated its position," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a daily news briefing in Beijing. "We have no intention to participate in the so-called trilateral arms control negotiations with the U.S. and Russia. That's consistent and clear." Even a willingness to consider a New Start extension marks a concession by the Trump administration, which had previously rebuffed Russian calls to open such talks.

The 10-year-old treaty, the last one capping the nuclear forces of the former Cold War foes, has an option to renew for a further five years with the agreement of both parties. Some arms control experts have said they feared the administration was going to let the treaty expire unless it extracted a concrete commitment from China to participate in broader talks. But officials in Beijing have so far balked at trilateral talks, arguing that they are far behind Moscow and Washington, which together hold more than 90% of the world's nuclear weapons.

At this month's meeting, the U.S. will be represented by Marshall Billingslea, the special presidential envoy for arms control, while Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov will represent President Vladimir Putin's government, the official said. It's too early to discuss how long any New Start extension might last, according to the official. It will be Billingslea's first meeting with a Russian official to discuss arms control and suggests the Trump administration has softened its stance on extending New Start.

Billingslea has also been nominated as undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, but Republicans put that on hold until they get answers on the firing of the State Department inspector general.

Walking Away

The official said the U.S. reserves the right to walk away from talks at any time, is still determined to pursue broader negotiations that include China and still wants a vastly expanded arms control regime with far more robust verification measures. The official declined to say what that might encompass. Billingslea indicated previously that the U.S. has a list of demands on Russia as well as China for a broader arms control agreement.

That would include getting Russia to agree to stricter verification measures along with a major new demand: that any future arms-control regime has to include all nuclear weapons, not just strategic warheads. Trump administration officials have insisted on China joining the talks because they believe that while the country has far fewer nuclear arms than the U.S. and Russia, it is in the middle of what they call a major buildup of nuclear weapons.

"China needs to be a part of this -- stop hiding behind the Great Wall of Secrecy," Billingslea wrote in a tweet on May 21. "Seeking great power status means assuming great power responsibility. No secretive, unconstrained nuclear buildup." Billingslea said the U.S. wants to avoid a new arms race though he signaled the U.S. wouldn't shrink from one if no agreements are reached, according to remarks he made to the Hudson Institute last month. "We know how to win these races, and we know how to spend the adversary into oblivion," Billingslea said. "If we have to, we will, but we sure would like to avoid it."

(Updates with China foreign ministry comment in fourth paragraph.)

The Pentagon Can't Afford All of the Weapons It Wants, New Report Says

Based on projected funding levels, the military will be forced to choose winners and losers among its priority projects.

By Marcus Weisgerber Global Business Editor for Defense One // June 9, 2020

The Pentagon cannot afford all of the new weapons it wants to buy and will be forced to choose winners and losers, absent an influx of cash, a new [assessment](#) from data and analytics firm Govini.

More cash is unlikely, experts say, regardless of whether President Trump wins a second term or is defeated by his Democratic challenger Joe Biden. Moreover, they predict the Pentagon will face increased competition for dollars as the United States tries to dig itself out of a recession brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, which has left more than 30 million American without jobs. "I don't see a Biden administration making big, big cuts to defense," said Robert Work, a deputy defense secretary during the Obama administration who is now chairman of Govini, an artificial intelligence-driven analysis firm.

“But what I see a potential Biden administration doing is defining the priorities within defense in a different way.” “But no matter what happens,” Work said, “there’s going to be a new National Security Strategy and a new National Defense Strategy and there will be new priorities, without question.” Defense Secretary Mark Esper has said the Pentagon [needs 3 percent to 5 percent annual growth](#) in its coffers to make investments in new weapons.

The Trump administration [has asked Congress to approve](#) a \$740.5 billion defense budget for fiscal 2021. The Pentagon’s share of that budget request: \$705 billion — much the rest goes to the Energy Department for nuclear weapons projects. Pentagon budget documents forecast a \$722 billion spending request for fiscal 2022, a 2.4 percent increase. That projection is likely to change as it was forecast well before the coronavirus pandemic prompted Congress to approve trillions of dollars in stimulus funding.

“But there may be pressures to lower the deficit in FY-21 and so you might see a big recision drill,” Work said. And there’s also the results of November’s presidential election. “I don’t expect a major perturbation in ‘21, but ‘22 is wide open,” Work said. “The way I’m handicapping it is: ‘22 and out is going to be really, really tough and it will only get tougher depending on the pressure from the top and whether or not the defense [budget] really starts to decline.”

Flat or reduced spending would prompt decisions, like whether to buy new weapons or improve existing ones. The military has spent billions of dollars developing new technology for weapons, but much of it has not yet been put into serial production. With future funding in question, the Pentagon has expedited a number of expensive weapons deals, including [a new class of Navy frigates](#).

When Boeing said it [would not enter a bid](#) on an \$85 billion program to build new nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles, the Air Force said it would move forward with Northrop Grumman, the only other bidder, instead of delaying the project to ensure competition. If Trump remains in the White House, defense spending changes are still expected. “The shelflife of the 2018 National Defense Strategy is about a year to 18 months,” Work said, referring to the document that forecasts greater competition with Russia and China and fewer counterinsurgency conflicts in the military’s future.

Work said he does not see the Pentagon’s major security concerns outlined in the National Defense Strategy going away in a Biden administration, however, he sees additional areas of focus. “I don’t see a major cut in defense spending coming out of a Democratic administration, although I could be wrong,” he said. “But I do see different national security priorities that would make the adjustments within the department more difficult. There’d just be more priorities to try to spread the money around.”

Defense spending is already in the crosshairs of progressive Democrats in the House who have [called for cuts to defense spending](#) to boost the funding for the government’s coronavirus response. “With a shift in strategy, we can be safer while spending less,” said William Hartung, director of the Arms and Security Program at Center for International Policy. “I think we could cut the budget by at least 10% to 15% from current levels, for savings of over \$1.2 trillion over the next decade that could be shifted to more urgent priorities like dealing with and preventing pandemics and addressing the greatest risk of all — climate change.”

Scaling back major weapon projects, like the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and cutting the size of the Army and the Marine Corps are among the ways to cut the Pentagon’s budget, Hartung said. He also points to a [2019 report](#) that recommends scaling back nuclear weapons, cutting war spending, the number of private contractors and the newly created U.S. Space Force as ways to save money.

News & Opinion

Not the Time to Recycle Bad Ideas

By: [Tim Morrison](#) for the Hudson Institute // June 10, 2020

If you were hoping that the Chinese coronavirus would be an opportunity to work together to develop a bipartisan approach to making sure this can't happen again, I'm sorry to disappoint.

Putting partisanship aside in favor of serious solutions to complex problems is apparently too much for a small but vocal community on the fringes of the U.S. national security community as evidence by their continuing calls to slash defense spending, and sustainment of America's nuclear deterrent in particular. And now [a leader of the House Progressive Caucus has proposed](#) eliminating a leg of the nuclear triad – the land-based intercontinental ballistic missile – in the name of responding to the Virus.

While such bad calls are not new – they have been resisted time-and-time again by responsible leaders on both sides of the political divide – it seems a once-in-a-century global pandemic has done nothing to chasten partisanship in some quarters of Washington. The pandemic has claimed more than 100,000 Americans, almost half a million in the rest of the world. The U.S. unemployment rate is now over [14 percent](#), the worst since the Great Depression.

To respond to the economic disruption that was created by efforts to “flatten the curve”, Congress has appropriated, and the President has enacted, more than [\\$6 trillion](#) (including Federal Reserve efforts) in various capital infusions into the economy. If that number doesn't get your attention, the fact that so much borrowing is being added on top of a debt that was already [\\$22.7 trillion as of the end of the federal fiscal year for 2019](#) certainly should.

With these eye-popping numbers, it's perfectly reasonable, and long-overdue, for Washington to get serious about getting federal spending under control. But how to do that?

In May of this year, more than [50 hard Left interest groups wrote](#) to the presumptive Democrat nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, urging him to slash the nation's defense budget, including the nuclear deterrent that defends the United States and as many as 30 treaty allies, by \$200 billion per year because the nation's military has proven, in their opinion, “woefully ill-prepared to confront the growing transnational threats to human security”.

Of course even before the pandemic, [many of these same groups were arguing the same policy prescription \(drastically slashing the defense budget\) in May of 2019](#). One might give credit for consistency; but, one may also criticize playing politics with a national crisis like the Wuhan Virus pandemic. Math, like facts, is a stubborn thing. Even before spending more than \$6 trillion to confront the pandemic, the United States was spending more than \$500 billion per year to finance the debt. That's roughly the amount that would be spent on the Pentagon if the nation's leaders decided to follow the prescriptions of the extreme Left Wing interest groups.

After the pandemic, and without factoring in [another \\$3 trillion bill](#) having been passed by the House of Representatives within the past two weeks, interest payments on the debt will likely exceed today's defense budget (roughly \$738 billion). Put another way, as a country, we have essentially reached a point where cutting the entire defense budget will not be enough to balance our overall fiscal balance sheet.

So what of the extreme Left Wing's policy prescription? Let's start, for example, with prominent House Progressives. This group has long-opposed the sustainment of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, apparently unswayed by Russian and Chinese nuclear build-ups, to say nothing of the bipartisan civilian leadership of the Obama and Trump Administrations and the nation's military leaders. Their proposal has long been for the U.S. to disarm in the hope that somehow our rolling back our defenses will inspire or lead the others who are building up and targeting us.

No wonder this policy is rejected each time offered; it defies common sense and any knowledge of world history. But, in the spirit of not letting a crisis go to waste, they are trying again. Now the choice is: sustain the nuclear force that deters attack on the U.S. and its allies, specifically the land-based leg , or spend money on pandemic response. Of course this is a false choice. Modernizing the ICBM force was a key recommendation of two Presidential Administrations.

The [Minuteman III](#) was first deployed in 1970. The missiles' useful life [cannot be extended](#) any longer: it's either modernize them with the new Ground-based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) program or lose them altogether. [At \\$63 billion over 20 years](#), GBSD is a vital part of the nation's defense. Cutting the program entirely this year would amount to [.002% of the defense budget](#) for fiscal year 2021, and .0003% of projected federal spending and .0002% of spending to date on the pandemic.

No serious effort to fix the federal government's increasingly unstable budget deficits and debts would start by cutting vital military programs like the sustainment of the nuclear deterrent – the ultimate security guarantee for the United States and its allies. And we would be disarming at the same time Russia is [fielding several new ICBMs](#). The People's Republic of China is [fielding a triad](#) for the first time, and the ruling Chinese Communist Party's media outlets are calling for a [rapid build-up in its land-based missiles](#) as part of a belligerent screed expressly aimed at the United States.

As the Presidential Special Envoy for Arms Control recently stated at an [event I moderated at Hudson Institute](#), “[t]he risk of any cuts to the bipartisan consensus on modernization and the plans that we have that are underway, in the midst of a negotiation, is to inadvertently or otherwise, hand the initiative to either Beijing or Moscow, or both.” The idea that the U.S. would unilaterally disarm in the face of Russian and Chinese nuclear arms racing, and in the middle of an arms control negotiation, is wildly reckless.

Which is why it isn't a serious policy proposal, as dangerous as it would be in practice. It's a part of a recycled policy wish list rejected time and time again by those with responsibility for the security and safety of the American people. Politicians in Washington may not expect better of themselves, but Americans should expect better of Washington, even if it means they will be continually be disappointed.

Nuclear deterrence today

NATO, 8 June 20 Jessica Cox

Why should NATO Allies still care about nuclear deterrence? In the age of increasingly capable conventional munitions, cyber warfare and

autonomous robots, are nuclear weapons not just a relic of the Cold War that have now ceased to be relevant? Why are these weapons still deployed on the territory of a peaceful Europe?

These are questions I often hear from activists, publics and the press. At a time when discussions of lethal autonomous weapons, drone swarms and the weaponization of outer space make modern warfare seem like a sci-fi thriller, nuclear weapons can seem as retro as a Sony Walkman or landline telephone. And yet, nuclear-armed nations such as Russia and China are once again investing heavily to create more sophisticated and diverse nuclear arsenals, North Korea is continuing its nuclear expansion apace, and Iran is once again making headlines for its nuclear developments.

Nuclear weapons have been the foundation of NATO's collective security since its inception. For over 70 years, both the national arsenals of the NATO nuclear weapons states – the United States, the United Kingdom and France – and the US nuclear weapons forward deployed in Europe have provided deterrence for the Alliance and reassurance for Allies. NATO heads of state and government have repeatedly affirmed that NATO is a nuclear alliance and will remain so as long as nuclear weapons exist.

Quite simply, we still have nuclear weapons because nuclear deterrence is still necessary and its principles still work.

Post-Cold War reductions

At the height of the Cold War, the United States deployed approximately 7,300 nuclear weapons in Europe providing extended deterrence and security guarantees to NATO Allies. Today, the number of US nuclear weapons deployed in Europe in support of NATO has been reduced by 90 per cent since the end of the Cold War. Between 1991 and 1993 alone, the United States removed around 3,000 nuclear weapons from Europe. Between 2000 and 2010, the United States continued to reduce the number of nuclear weapons deployed in Europe and consolidated them at fewer bases. That limited posture remains the same to this day.

The enactment of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 1987, followed by the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in July 1991, and the Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT) in 2002 provided a steady drum beat of strategic nuclear weapons reductions between the United States and Russia, locking in steadily lower and lower numbers through treaty implementation.

But the most significant reduction in nuclear weapons in Europe took place in September 1991 and was not governed by an arms control treaty at all. On 27 September 1991, President George H. W. Bush outlined sweeping changes to the US nuclear force posture in response to the collapse of the Soviet Union and called on leaders in the Kremlin to reciprocate in kind. Days later, President Mikhail Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union would take similar steps to reduce, dismantle and destroy much of its nuclear non-strategic nuclear forces.

These Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) resulted in the most significant reduction of tactical – or non-strategic – nuclear weapons in the European theatre. The United States destroyed approximately 2,000 ground-launched nuclear artillery shells and short-range ballistic missiles; removed all tactical nuclear weapons on navy surface ships, attack submarines and naval aircraft; destroyed all nuclear depth bombs; de-alerted strategic bombers; and cancelled the planned modernization of some nuclear systems.

Soviet and subsequently Russian leaders pledged to eliminate all nuclear artillery, nuclear warheads for tactical missiles, and nuclear land mines as well as remove tactical nuclear weapons from ships, multipurpose submarines and naval aircraft. These weapons, along with nuclear warheads from air defense missiles, were to be put into central storage and a portion would be destroyed. Additionally, a third of Russia's sea-based tactical nuclear weapons and half of its ground-to-air nuclear missile warheads were to be eliminated, along with half of the Russian airborne tactical nuclear weapons stockpile. By 2010, Russia had consolidated its tactical nuclear weapons at "central storage facilities" in Russia; removed tactical nuclear weapons from its ground forces; and dramatically cut the tactical nuclear arsenal of the air force, missile defense troops and navy, reducing the number of non-strategic nuclear weapons by around 75 per cent.

The combined reductions of the United States and Russia were the most transformative change to the nuclear posture in Europe, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of nuclear weapons deployed and the easing of military tensions.

Unfortunately, the gains made in the mid-1990s did not translate into sustained and verifiable progress in dismantling stockpiles of non-strategic nuclear weapons. While the United States unilaterally reduced its non-strategic nuclear forces over time, there is a debate about whether or not Russia fully implemented its commitments – as these political statements and actions did not include verification or compliance mechanisms.

A renewed challenge from Russia

In recent years, Russia has chosen once again to rely on nuclear weapons deployed in the European theatre, in order to counter what it perceives as NATO's conventional superiority. As part of its overall military transformation, Russia has modernized about 80 per cent of its strategic nuclear forces since the early 2000s. The United States is only now embarking on its own 20+ year modernization program, including extending the life of the B61 gravity bombs deployed to Europe for NATO's nuclear sharing mission.

Because of this, Russia is better poised rapidly to add new strategic warheads on modern deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles and bombers, when treaty-imposed constraints from New START (2010) expire between 2021 or 2026. This is particularly significant given that there is little progress on negotiating a new arms control treaty regime for strategic systems before New START ends.

Additionally, Russia is developing new types of missile systems such as the strategic-range hypersonic glide vehicle Avangard and the theatre-range Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile, which Russia is testing and fielding on a variety of delivery platforms. It is also developing an air-launched ballistic missile, the Kinzhal, which Russia claims will have a range of about 2,000km. Hypersonic weapons fly at super-high speeds, at low altitudes and have the capability to manoeuvre during flight – a combination of capabilities that make hypersonic missiles difficult to track and nearly impossible to defend against. While the United States has begun to increase its own investments into hypersonic missile systems development, it is lagging behind Russia (and China).

In addition to hypersonics, Russia is in the process of developing "novel" nuclear systems such as a nuclear-powered nuclear cruise missile and an underwater unmanned nuclear torpedo – these can be used to intimidate, coerce and attack NATO Allies, with little warning or ability to respond. Russia's rationale for these weapons is unclear. However, it is prudent for NATO to assess the ability of its own capabilities in light of the new

Russian systems.

But perhaps the largest discrepancy between NATO and Russia is in the area of tactical or non-strategic nuclear weapons. These include systems armed with lower-yield nuclear warheads, such as air-, sea- and ground-launched cruise missiles. Russia now has a significant arsenal of missile systems that are designed to be dual-capable for either conventional or nuclear weapons delivery. These can reach the territory of all of NATO Europe either from land, sea or air. With its comparatively large arsenal of non-strategic nuclear warheads – estimated to be between 1500 and 2000 in storage depots, compared with an estimated 150 to 200 US gravity bombs stored in vaults in Europe, according to open source information – Russia poses a renewed challenge to NATO’s regional deterrence and defense activities.

Maintaining effective nuclear deterrence

Given this changing security environment – and until our competitors and potential adversaries are ready and willing to forgo nuclear weapons themselves – NATO must be able to deter nuclear threats and respond to nuclear use by Russia in order to safeguard the security of the almost one billion people who live under the NATO umbrella.

As NATO’s heads of state and government have agreed – and often reiterate – NATO’s nuclear weapons are intended to “preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression”. This includes reassuring Allies of the strong transatlantic commitment to collective security, demonstrated by NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements in which European and North American Allies share the risks and responsibilities of nuclear deterrence. It also sends a strong signal to Russia that they will not achieve their objectives by resorting to even the limited use of nuclear weapons in a conflict by showing that NATO has the capability and resolve to impose unacceptable costs greater than any intended gain and, in short, that any nuclear attack by Russia will not succeed.

NATO Allies remain firmly committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons and to promoting arms control, nonproliferation and disarmament. But NATO will also remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist. NATO will continue to ensure the effectiveness of our deterrence and defense capabilities and posture, including ensuring that our nuclear deterrent remains safe, secure and effective. In short, nuclear weapons continue to play a vital role in NATO security, to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression.

— *Jessica Cox is Director of Nuclear Policy at NATO. Prior to her NATO assignment, she served as Director for Arms Control in the U.S. National Security Council. The views expressed are her own*

What is published in NATO Review does not necessarily represent the official position or policy of member governments, or of NATO.

Is China already inside America’s hypersonic industrial base?

Defense News Online, 9 June 20 Aaron Mehta

WASHINGTON -- As the Pentagon focuses on developing new technologies such as artificial intelligence and directed energy, department officials have declared the need to ensure foreign nations are not buying their way into the defense-industrial base. But a new report warns China may already have ownership over a key focus: hypersonic weapons.

Hypersonic missiles, which are capable of going faster than five times the speed of sound, are expected to become a backbone of the U.S. military in the coming decades.

As part of its annual Federal Scorecard, data and analytics firm Govini found that tier one suppliers in the hypersonic supply chain — seven major companies that are working most closely with the Department of Defense on the technology development — has done a good job of keeping Chinese-owned companies out of the process.

But at the tier three level, where companies provide smaller but still critical components, the exposure to Chinese suppliers jumps to nearly 10 percent. And that exposure grows slightly by the time it reaches tier five suppliers, with Govini seeing signs of overlap among companies at those lower levels.

“This does not necessarily mean that Chinese parts are ending up in DoD’s hypersonics,” explained Jim Mitre, Govini’s senior vice president for strategy and analysis. “However, China may have opportunities to jeopardize the development [of] hypersonics through engagement in the supply chain, and it’s critically important for DoD and industry to ensure that’s not the case.”

That is “an area that we’re regularly working with the department on exploring and unpacking” to understand the challenges in the supply chain, Mitre added.

A series of Pentagon reports in the last two years have raised concerns about the defense-industrial base, particularly when it comes to high-end materials and design knowledge for missiles. In some cases, the only supplier for critical materials come from China, the exact country the U.S. is looking to counter by investing in hypersonic weapons.

In March, the Pentagon announced it was launching a deep dive into the hypersonic industrial base specifically to understand the vulnerabilities at the lower-tier suppliers. That study is ongoing.

Meanwhile, officials have acknowledged that smaller suppliers have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Govini also found that the U.S. is under investing compared to China in the realm of quantum technologies, with the Pentagon’s fiscal 2021 research, development, testing and evaluation budget for quantum-related programs decreasing by nearly 10 percent from the previous year. The department has requested \$3.2 billion for RDT&E funds related to hypersonic weapons in FY21.

UN agency: Iran violating all restrictions of nuclear deal

The United Nations’ atomic watchdog agency says Iran has continued to increase its stockpiles of enriched uranium and remains in violation of its deal with world powers

By: KIYOKO METZLER and DAVID RISING Associated Press // June 5, 2020, 1:42 PM

METZLER in VIENNA and Rising reported from Berlin -- Iran has continued to increase its stockpiles of enriched uranium and remains in violation of its deal with world powers, the United Nations' atomic watchdog said Friday.

The International Atomic Energy Agency reported the finding in a confidential document distributed to member countries and seen by The Associated Press. The agency said that as of May 20, [Iran](#)'s total stockpile of low-enriched uranium amounted to 1,571.6 kilograms (1.73 tons), up from 1,020.9 kilograms (1.1 tons) on Feb. 19. Iran signed the nuclear deal in 2015 with the United States, Germany, France, Britain, China and Russia. Known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, it allows [Iran](#) only to keep a stockpile of 202.8 kilograms (447 pounds).

The IAEA reported that Iran has also been continuing to enrich uranium to a purity of up to 4.5%, higher than the 3.67% allowed under the JCPOA. It is also above the pact's limitations on heavy water. The nuclear deal promised Iran economic incentives in return for the curbs on its nuclear program. President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the deal unilaterally in 2018, saying it needed to be renegotiated. Iran has since slowly violated the restrictions to try and pressure the remaining nations to increase the incentives to offset new, economy-crippling U.S. sanctions.

The ultimate goal of the JCPOA is to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb. Since the U.S. withdrawal, Iran has stockpiled enough uranium to produce a weapon, although the government in Tehran insists it has no such goal and that its atomic program is only for producing energy. According to the Washington-based Arms Control Association, Iran would need roughly 1050 kilograms (1.16 tons) of low-enriched uranium — under 5% purity — and would then need to enrich it further to weapons-grade, or more than 90% purity, to make a nuclear weapon.

With the nuclear deal in place, Iran's so-called breakout time — the period Tehran would need to build a bomb if it chose to — stood at around a year. As Iran has stepped away from the limits of the 2015 deal, it slowly has narrowed that window. However, that doesn't mean Iran would immediately rush toward building a bomb if all the materials were in place. Before agreeing to the nuclear deal, Iran enriched its uranium up to 20% purity, which is just a short technical step away from the weapons-grade level of 90%. In 2013, Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium was already more than 7,000 kilograms (7.72 tons) with higher enrichment, but it didn't pursue a bomb.

As the country has expanded its nuclear program, Iran has been open about the violations and continues to allow inspectors for the U.N. atomic agency access to facilities to monitor their operations. It remains in violation of all the main restrictions outlined by the JCPOA, which Tehran says it hopes will pressure the other nations involved to increase economic incentives to make up for hard-hitting sanctions imposed by Washington after the U.S. withdrawal.

Though Iran has been hard hit by the new coronavirus pandemic, the IAEA said it has maintained its verification and monitoring activities in the country, primarily by chartering aircraft to fly inspectors to and from Iran. It cited "exceptional cooperation" from authorities in Austria, where it is based, and Iran in facilitating the operation. The agency raised concerns, however, about access to two of three locations it identified in March as places where Iran possibly stored and/or used undeclared nuclear material or undertook nuclear-related activities without declaring them to international observers.

Activities at all three sites are thought to have been from the early 2000s. The IAEA said in its current report that it had determined that one site had undergone "extensive sanitization and leveling" in 2003 and 2004 and there would be no verification value in inspecting it. It said Iran has, for more

than four months, blocked access to the other two locations, one of which was partially demolished in 2004 and the other at which the agency observed activities “consistent with efforts to sanitize” the facility from July 2019 onward. The watchdog agency added that Iran has also “not engaged in any substantive discussions” with the IAEA to answer its question about possible undeclared nuclear material and activities for almost a year.

The Soviet Military Program that Secretly Mapped the Entire World

The U.S.S.R. covertly mapped American and European cities—down to the heights of houses and types of businesses.

By [Greg Miller](#) for National Geographic // PUBLISHED October 13, 2017

During the Cold War, the Soviet military undertook a secret mapping program that’s only recently come to light in the West. Military cartographers created hundreds of thousands of maps and filled them with detailed notes on the terrain and infrastructure of every place on Earth. It was one of the greatest mapping endeavors the world has ever seen.

Soviet maps of Afghanistan indicate the times of year certain mountain passes are free of snow and passable for travel. Maps of China include notes on local vegetation and whether water from wells in a particular area is safe to drink. The Soviets also mapped American cities in remarkable detail, including some military buildings that don’t appear on American-made maps of the same era. These maps include notes on the construction materials and load-bearing capacity of bridges—things that would be near-impossible to know without people on the ground.

Much of what’s known about this secret Soviet military project is outlined in [a new book](#), *The Red Atlas*, by John Davies, a British map enthusiast who has spent more than a decade [studying these maps](#), and Alexander Kent, a geographer at Canterbury Christ Church University. Beginning in the 1940s, the Soviets mapped the world at seven scales, ranging from a series of maps that plotted the surface of the globe in 1,100 segments to a set of city maps so detailed you can see transit stops and the outlines of famous buildings like the Pentagon (see above). It’s impossible to say how many people took part in this massive cartographic enterprise, but there were likely thousands, including surveyors, cartographers, and possibly spies.

Most of these maps were classified, their use carefully restricted to military officers. Behind the Iron Curtain, ordinary people did not have access to accurate maps. Maps for public consumption were [intentionally distorted by the government](#) and lacked any details that might benefit an enemy should they fall into the wrong hands. Davies and Kent argue that the maps were a pre-digital Wikipedia, a repository of everything the Soviets knew about a given place. Maps made by U.S. and British military and intelligence agencies during the Cold War tended to focus on specific areas of strategic interest. Soviet maps contain plenty of strategic information too—like the width and condition of roads—but they also contain details that are unusual for military maps, such as the [types of houses and businesses](#) in a given area and whether the streets were lined with greenery.

Exhaustive notes on transportation networks, power grids, and factories hint at the Soviets’ obsession with infrastructure. Davies and Kent see the maps not so much as a guide to invasion, but as a helpful resource in the course of taking over the world. “There’s an assumption that communism will prevail, and naturally the U.S.S.R. will be in charge,” Davies says. Very little is known about how the Soviet military made these maps, but it appears they used whatever information they could get their hands on. Some of it was relatively easy to come by. In the U.S., for example, they would have had access to publicly-available topographic maps made by the U.S. Geological Survey ([legend has it](#) the Soviet embassy in Washington, D.C. routinely sent someone over to check for new maps). To obtain more obscure information, they would have had to get creative.

In this map of San Diego, the added detail may have come from satellite imagery, which the Soviets had access to after the launch of their first spy satellite in 1962. In other cases, detail may have come directly from sources on the ground. According to [one account](#), the Russians augmented their maps of Sweden with details obtained by diplomats working at the Soviet embassy, who had a tendency to picnic near sites of strategic interest and strike up friendly conversations with local construction workers. One such conversation, on a beach near Stockholm in 1982, supposedly yielded information about Swedish defensive minefields—and led to the Soviet spy being deported after a Swedish counterintelligence agent lurking nearby overheard the conversation.

Exactly [how the Soviet maps came to be available](#) in the West is a touchy subject. They were never meant to leave the motherland, and they have never been formally declassified. In 2012, a retired Russian colonel was [convicted of espionage](#), stripped of his rank, and sentenced to 12 years in prison for smuggling maps out of the country. In researching the book, Kent and Davies had hoped to speak with some of former military cartographers who worked on the maps, but they never found anyone willing to talk.

As the Soviet Union broke up in the late 1980s, the maps began appearing in the catalogs of international map dealers. Telecommunications and oil companies were eager customers, buying up Soviet maps of central Asia, Africa, and other parts of the developing world for which no good alternatives existed. Aid groups and scientists working in remote regions often used them too. For anyone who lived through the Cold War there may be something chilling about seeing a familiar landscape mapped through the eyes of the enemy, with familiar landmarks labeled in unfamiliar Cyrillic script. Even so, the Soviet maps are strangely attractive and very well made, even by modern standards. “I continue to be in awe of the people who did this,” Davies says.

The vacation home of Joseph Stalin gives visitors a curious look inside the mind of one Russia’s most notorious leaders. If you’re interested in secret military maps, check out our previous posts on [Japanese military maps](#) and [maps declassified by the CIA](#). ---- Follow [All Over the Map](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Russia Puts Defensive Face on Its Nuclear Doctrine Ahead of Arms-Control Negotiations

By Patrick Tucker Technology Editor for Defense One // June 6, 2020

Moscow’s new strategic-arms decree appears to be an attempt to win advantage whether New START lives on or not.

Russia’s new strategic-arms [decree](#) adds a bit of ambiguity and defensive flavor, but its main task is positioning Moscow for a critical round of arms-control talks, experts said. On its face, the document reiterates key points [in Russia’s doctrine](#) on the use of strategic nuclear weapons, as opposed to its smaller nukes. Strategic nukes, it says, may be maintained to ensure “sovereignty, territorial integrity, deter direct aggression against Russia or allies, and in the event of aggression preclude escalation,” according to Michael Kofman, a senior research scientist at CNA, a nonprofit research and analysis organization in Arlington, Virginia.

However, Kofman notes some ambiguity in the language, particularly around the idea of using nuclear weapons during a war to bring about a resolution. “Notably, the standard formulation of ‘cease hostilities on terms favorable to Russia’ (or Russian interests), was changed to ‘conditions acceptable’ to Russia & allies, which is a more fair reading of the escalation management strategy,” Kofman [wrote](#) Thursday on his blog.

“Paragraph 5 states that Russia sees nuclear weapons exclusively as a means of deterrence, that they are to be used in extreme circumstances and as a forced measure. I think that’s not a very honest portrayal of how nuclear weapons are viewed by the Russian military,” he wrote. “But the purpose of this document is to position Russian views as defensive only...and to counter the claims of those who say Russia has an [escalate-to-de-escalate strategy](#).”

A country with such a strategy would consider using nuclear weapons — likely tactical ones — at the beginning of a conflict, aiming to press its adversary into quick negotiations. The document also adds drones to its list of threats, mirroring recent changes to Russian military doctrine generally, says Kofman. Some Russian officials have expressed concerns about high-altitude, long-endurance drones like the U.S. Global Hawk, which are not limited by WMD or deterrence agreements.

Their inclusion in the new document here “points to Russia’ recognition that it is vulnerable to such weapons, and to its desire to restrict its use,” said Sam Bendett, an adviser to the Russia Studies Program at CNA. The document is significant mostly because of its timing. The United States has [indicated indirectly](#) that it will abandon the New START Treaty, which limits the number of nuclear warheads and strategic launch platforms each country can deploy, and pursue instead a new agreement that covers new drones, missiles, and other submarines in development or production by Russia and China.

The man that President Trump has selected to lead that negotiation is [Marshall Billingslea](#), the current nominee to be undersecretary of state for arms control. But Senate Finance Committee Chairman Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-IA, has put the nomination [on hold](#) as he waits for an explanation from the White House for the firing of two inspectors general. That suggests that Billingslea, once confirmed, will have precious little time to negotiate an [incredibly ambitious](#) trilateral arms deal.

Russia may be using the delay to its advantage. “This is a Russian effort to shape the conversation in a critical year for arms control, counter what they see as malicious narratives about their nuclear doctrine, and position the country in terms of declaratory policy in the event New START expires,” said Kofman.

North Korea building up nuclear arsenal, researchers say

By [Elizabeth Shim](#) for UPI // June 9, 2020 / 8:20 AM

June 9 (UPI) -- [North Korea](#) may have as many as 35 nuclear warheads in its arsenal, up from a previous estimate, according to a Japanese think tank.

The Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, RECNA, at Nagasaki University says North Korea's weapons are included in a global total of 13,410 nuclear weapons, Japanese news agency Kyodo News reported Tuesday. North Korea's warheads lag far behind other countries. Russia is No. 1 on RECNA's list, with 6,370 nuclear warheads, followed by the United States at 5,800 and China at 320, according to the report.

Other countries keep more than 100 nuclear warheads. According to RECNA's estimates, France retains 290 warheads, followed by Britain at 195, Pakistan at 160, and India at 150. Israel has developed about 80 to 90 nuclear weapons. The number of nuclear weapons worldwide is down, RECNA says, with 470 less weapons than a year ago. North Korea has increased its nuclear arsenal, however, according to the estimates. In 2019, RECNA calculated about 20 to 30 nuclear weapons for the isolated country.

China has also added about 30 nuclear weapons since 2019, a year of high tensions with the United States, RECNA said. Top U.S. weapons expert Siegfried Hecker has previously said North Korea would never give a full declaration of its nuclear weapons. "A complete account of North Korea's nuclear weapons, materials and facilities would, in Kim [Jong Un's] view, likely be far too risky in that it would essentially provide a targeting list for U.S. military planners and seal the inevitable end of the nuclear program and possibly his regime," [Hecker wrote](#) in 2018.

The North Korean leader has previously proposed dismantling the Yongbyon nuclear complex if the United States takes reciprocal measures -- namely sanctions relief. Recent satellite [imagery analysis](#) by U.S. analyst Jacob Bogle indicates North Korea could be maintaining underground facilities near Yongbyon, in an adjacent workers' district.

US And Russia To Resume Nuclear Talks, But China Casts Cloud

By Shaun TANDON for IBT News // 06/09/20 AT 8:32 PM

Russia called Tuesday on the United States to make a "positive" proposal as the powers open talks on a major disarmament treaty, warning that US insistence on including China could scuttle efforts.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov will meet in Vienna on June 22 with US envoy Marshall Billingslea to start negotiations on New START, which expires in February. President Donald Trump has walked out on a number of international agreements but voiced a general interest in preserving New START, which obliged the United States and Russia to halve their inventories of strategic nuclear missile launchers.

But the Trump administration says that a successor to New START, a Cold War legacy negotiated under Barack Obama, should bring in China -- whose nuclear arsenal is growing but remains significantly smaller than those of Russia and the United States. Addressing the Council on Foreign Relations by videoconference, Ryabkov described the US willingness to start negotiations as "good news" but said: "The ball is on the American part of the court."

"We need to hear loudly and clearly what this administration wants, how it believes it would be possible to do something positive and not just to dismantle one arms control treaty or arrangement after another." In Beijing, foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China had "no intention of participating" in the talks and accused the United States of trying to "deflect responsibilities to others."

Billingslea, writing on Twitter, urged China to reconsider. "Achieving Great Power status requires behaving with Great Power responsibility. No more Great Wall of Secrecy on its nuclear build-up. Seat waiting for China in Vienna." Ryabkov indicated that Russia did not oppose the US invitation to China -- an international ally of Moscow despite a complicated historical relationship -- but doubted Beijing would agree.

"My answer to a direct question on whether or not we think it would be possible to bring China to the table would be a flat and straightforward no," Ryabkov said. "Now it depends on the US -- if the US believes it's worth continuing this dialogue with Russia or, for the US point of view, the Chinese participation is an absolute imperative that precludes (the) US from continuing a meaningful and forward-looking dialogue with Russia on arms control," he said.

In turn, Ryabkov said that US allies Britain and France, also nuclear powers with much smaller arsenals, should join the talks. "The logic is a very simple one -- the more we come down in numbers, the higher is the price for every single warhead payload and we cannot simply ignore capabilities of some others." Billingslea, in a speech last month at the Hudson Institute, said Trump was "not interested in agreements simply for agreements' sake."

He accused China of flaunting its growing nuclear arsenal "to intimidate the United States and our friends and allies," calling it "irresponsible, dangerous behavior." US intelligence has forecast that China is in the midst of doubling the size of its nuclear arsenal, troubling the Trump administration, which considers Beijing a global rival and resents the constraints of New START. The United States and Russia each had more than 6,000 nuclear warheads in 2019, while China had 290, according to the Washington-based Arms Control Association.

France had 300 and Britain possessed 200, with India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea maintaining smaller arsenals, according to the research group. New START expires around two weeks after Trump would leave office if he loses the election in November. Russia as well as some US Democrats have proposed simply extending New START temporarily, voicing skepticism about sealing a brand new treaty by February.

Trump has sought a warmer relationship with President Vladimir Putin but professes an "America first" approach to foreign affairs. Trump last month pulled out of the Open Skies Treaty, which allowed Russia, the United States and 32 other nations to conduct surveillance flights over one another's territory at short notice -- an arrangement that reportedly piqued Trump when a Russian spy plane flew over his Bedminster, New Jersey golf club.

He earlier pulled out of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, a key agreement from the Cold War. Trump has also rejected a multinational denuclearization agreement with Iran and pulled the United States out of the landmark Paris climate accord.

95% of China's Cruise and Ballistic Missile Inventory Would Violate INF Treaty

By: Daniel R. DePetrìs for The National Interest // June 6, 2020

When the Trump administration announced Washington's formal withdrawal from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty nearly a year ago, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo cited Russia's violation of the accord as the reason for the decision.

"Russia is solely responsible for the treaty's demise," Pompeo wrote in a statement at the time. "Dating back to at least the mid-2000s, Russia developed, produced, flight tested, and has now fielded multiple battalions of its noncompliant missile." By deploying the 9M729 ground-launched, intermediate-range cruise missile, Moscow struck at the heart of a Cold War-era agreement that prevented U.S. and Russian deployments of land-based missiles between 500 and 5,500 kilometers.

However, there was another reason why the Trump administration removed itself from the INF Treaty: China. In the decades since the INF was signed, Beijing made a concerted decision to increase the range, dynamism, and lethality of its own cruise and ballistic missile programs. China could get away with these missile defense projects because it was never a participant in the treaty, which of course meant that Beijing had the advantage of operating without constraints.

The Asian power now possesses the largest stockpile of INF Treaty-class, land-based missiles in the world, with the most recent estimate at 2,200. The Missile Defense Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies assesses that China has “the most active and diverse ballistic missile development programs in the world,” something the Pentagon has long taken notice of. And the U.S. is in a rush to establish parity with the Chinese in the Asia-Pacific.

A day after Pompeo’s statement, Defense Secretary Mark Esper expressed his intent to deploy medium and long-range land-based ballistic missiles in Asia as quickly as possible. It didn’t take long for the Pentagon to begin testing INF-class missiles either; the first test of a Tomahawk cruise missile launched from a ground-based platform took place on August 19, 2019, less than 3 weeks after Washington kissed the treaty goodbye.

The Pentagon has spent preceding months trying to play catch-up with the People’s Liberation Army, with the development, testing, and deployment of land and air-launched anti-ship missiles taking priority. The objective: to send a message to the Chinese that they will not—and cannot—retain conventional missile superiority in the Pacific. Unfortunately, there are several problems complicating Washington’s plans.

The first and most immediate is access. Is there any U.S. ally or partner in Asia willing to host the kinds of missiles that will not only anger Beijing, but likely cause China to censure the host country through diplomatic demarcates, trade restrictions, and other forms of economic coercion? The answer thus far is “no.” Australia has demonstrated no interest in hosting INF-prohibited missiles on its territory.

South Korea is not interested either—nor can Washington be confident that a post-Moon Jae in, conservative administration will be any more susceptible to U.S. overtures. The Philippines may have reversed the termination of its military training arrangement with the U.S., but stationing missiles that could threaten the Chinese mainland is in a class all to itself. Japan, Washington’s closest ally in the region, does not have any intention of ruining a relationship with Beijing that is slowly improving.

And neither would be politically popular for any Japanese government to propose. Then there is the issue of how China would react. For the U.S. to deploy long-range, land-based missiles in Asia is to set oneself on a slippery-slope, where an enhanced U.S. missile presence in the region forces the Chinese to accelerate their own programs in what the Institute for Strategic and International Studies calls an “action-reaction cycle.”

Such a chain of events would be inherently escalatory, with the two largest economic powers and military spenders engaging in a staring-contest waiting for the other to blink. This clash-of-wills is not exactly a comforting scenario when one takes into account a U.S.-China relationship already scraping the bottom of the barrel. As the old U.S. military saying goes, “the enemy gets a vote.” U.S. officials can never be fully confident that China will respond to a U.S. missile build-up the way they would like.

One thing we can be sure of is that Beijing will not relinquish a ballistic missile program it has devoted decades of building and investing in. President Donald Trump's fixation on a trilateral strategic arms control accord, where China eventually agrees to eliminate a large share of their nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems, is out of the question and will remain so regardless of how loud or insistent U.S. officials demand it.

No Chinese leader would countenance entering into an INF-like treaty and eliminating 95% of China's entire ballistic and cruise missile inventory, particularly when relations with the U.S. are in such terrible shape. All of which begs the question: when will Washington smarten up, question its underlying assumptions about China's behavior, and construct a policy in the Asia-Pacific within the bounds of reality?

Daniel R. DePetrìs is a columnist for the Washington Examiner and a contributor to the National Interest.

Pompeo and Trump can turn human-rights issues against China

By Joseph Bosco, contributor to THE HILL // 06/07/20 03:00 PM EDT

It is time for a partial late-term correction in the Trump administration's approach to China.

In his 2016 campaign, candidate Donald Trump incisively called for the termination of the decades-long U.S. policy of one-sided engagement with China. That misguided arrangement offered economic and security benefits to the communist regime in exchange for promised political reform. The world just observed the 31st anniversary of the death-knell of that hope. On June 4, 1989, China's post-Mao "Great Reformer," Deng Xiaoping, had the enthusiastic support of virtually the entire Chinese population and the encouragement of the world to take the long-awaited fateful step toward peaceful democratic evolution.

A glorious history for him and for China beckoned. Instead, in an eternal stain on his legacy and that of the Chinese Communist Party, he grievously flinched and did what generations of Chinese leaders solemnly promised they would never do: Turn the People's Liberation Army against the Chinese people. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo marked the occasion this past week by meeting with a group of activist survivors of the Tiananmen Square massacre. He mostly listened to their stories of that horrible event, then asked how the United States could "help China achieve democracy."

His department issued a statement honoring "the brave Chinese people whose peaceful calls for democracy, human rights, and a corruption-free society came to a violent end." Pompeo was severely criticized by Beijing for intervening "in China's internal affairs, attack[ing] its system, and smear[ing] its domestic and foreign policies." Similar charges have been leveled against the secretary each of the many times he has pointed out the abhorrent human rights practices of the Chinese regime.

Communist leaders lambasted Pompeo last year for calling attention to the inhumane treatment of minority Chinese Uyghurs in East Turkestan and Xinjiang Province, where a million people reportedly are confined in gulags; subject to brutality and brainwashing, they must learn to abandon their Muslim faith and love Chinese communism. Pompeo's department imposed a travel ban on Chinese officials involved in those activities. Beijing then accused the secretary of "slander" and said the camps were benign education facilities.

Recently, Pompeo returned to the Uyghur problem, saying the U.S. is still "deeply troubled" by reports that the Chinese government has "harassed, imprisoned, or arbitrarily detained family members of Uyghur Muslim activists and survivors of Xinjiang internment camps who have made their

stories public.” Last month, Pompeo called on Beijing to “immediately release” Tibet’s Panchen Lama, designated by the Dalai Lama as his successor. The Panchen Lama’s abduction as a boy 25 years ago was part of the decades-old cultural genocide inflicted on the Tibetan people by the Chinese Communist government.

Leaving no persecuted minority group behind, Pompeo’s indictment of Beijing’s “staggering religious abuses” is broad enough to include not only Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, but also non-institutionalized spiritual movements such as the Falun Gong. That peaceful meditation group has been subjected to arbitrary imprisonment, brainwashing, torture and even alleged industrial-scale organ harvesting.

For all his broadsides against China’s multifarious violations of human rights, as well as his forceful statements on Hong Kong and Taiwan, the secretary has earned the title of “wicked Pompeo” — which, given its source, he must wear as a badge of honor. Members of these persecuted groups have thanked him for giving them hope and resolve to continue their struggles for freedom. Pompeo is not the only Trump administration official to speak out forcefully on China’s human rights record. National security adviser Robert O’Brien and his deputy, Matt Pottinger, also have made public statements (Pottinger’s, in Mandarin) that Beijing finds objectionable.

Yet, Pompeo clearly has been the administration’s point man on human rights issues generally, and specifically on China, while the president focused on cultivating what he hoped would be a productive personal relationship with President Xi Jinping on trade and other issues. For a time, that twin-track approach seemed to be tenable: Trump and Xi maintained the illusion for almost three years that they were carrying out a fundamentally cooperative relationship. That seems to have come to a crashing end with the full-fledged arrival of the coronavirus pandemic.

The new sense is that personal cordiality may coexist with labeling China a “revisionist power,” but it doesn’t wipe out the underlying animosity that the People’s Republic of China harbors toward the United States and the menace it presents to the world. To confront the growing Chinese threat, the president should play the West’s own trump card, the one he used effectively to bring Kim Jong Un to the nuclear negotiating table (until Xi pulled Kim back to heel) — human rights and the potential for regime change. In three major speeches in 2017 and 2018, Trump delivered withering accounts of the humanitarian nightmare that is North Korea.

His bottom-line message can be encapsulated in three words: unfit to govern. He triggered Kim’s worst fear, one shared by Xi’s increasingly totalitarian Chinese state — that their people will learn the truth about them. Secretary Pompeo is no Don Quixote in pinstripes, tilting at human rights windmills. Given his extensive military and intelligence backgrounds, he knows as well as anyone that regime legitimacy is the soft underbelly of China’s powerful communist system. Exposing its multifarious human rights depredations evokes shame in decent, honorable Chinese people and necessarily diminishes the regime’s assiduously cultivated image of respectability.

President Reagan didn’t offend Russian and East European populations when he called the Soviet Union an “evil empire.” He fortified and inspired them. President Trump would do the same for the Chinese if he said the new cold war was foisted upon the world by the other “evil empire” — which is new only in its imperial reach, not in its inherently malevolent nature. Neither catastrophic war nor continued futile engagement offer the solution to the world’s ongoing China problem. As with the earlier titanic struggle against Soviet communism, the answer must be democratic change pushed by the Chinese people and supported morally and informationally by the international community. The only cure for the virus of Chinese communism is the vaccine of democracy.

Russia's new nuclear submarine is not a game changer

by Tom Rogan, Writer for the Washington Examiner // June 11, 2020 02:12 PM

Will Russia's new Khabarovsk submarine pose a new challenge to NATO? Yes. Will it pose a game-changing challenge? No.

I note this in light of the Khabarovsk's upcoming sea trials. Originally scheduled for the end of June, the trials have been delayed to an as-yet-undetermined date. Considering the submarine's central role in Vladimir Putin's strategic weapons policy, however, it will be deployed as soon as is feasible. Evincing as much, Russian officials have been gleeful in their announcements as to the submarine's looming activity.

What does this mean for NATO and America?

The excellent submarine warfare analyst H.I. Sutton suggests that "this is likely to be the defining submarine of the 2020s because it represents a novel and difficult adversary." Sutton points out that the Khabarovsk will be armed with Russia's Poseidon/Kanyon nuclear armed and powered unmanned torpedo system. That torpedo system is designed for the destruction of American cities and naval bases during wartime.

I'm less concerned.

While the Khabarovsk is more impressive than the other submarines in Russia's fleet, it won't alter the balance of power. First off, the Khabarovsk shares the basic hull design and acoustic signatures as Russia's Borei-class ballistic missile submarines. While the Borei-class has advanced the Russian strategic threat beyond late Soviet-era capabilities, it remains inferior to American, British, and French submarine forces.

The Borei's acoustic signature has been fixed by the U.S. Navy, and its class can be shadowed while the submarines are underway. The same will apply to the Khabarovsk as soon as it begins its sea trials proximate to the Barents Sea. Nor is the Khabarovsk's employment of the Poseidon nuclear system a critical challenge. That system is designed to undermine NATO's strategic nuclear posture by operating in between full-scale nuclear war and conventional conflict. Fortunately, the United States has improved its ability to deal with this threat.

That's primarily due to the Trump administration's development of nuclear counterforces, including submarine-launched weapons, which can match Russia in the limited nuclear warfare domain. That said, more could be done to establish deterrence here. President Trump (or, should he win, President Joe Biden) should make clear that any Russian nuclear strike on the American mainland (whether targeting a city or naval base) will result in escalated nuclear retaliation against Russian mainland targets.

Putin knows that he would lose a full-scale nuclear war with America, so establishing clear deterrence-escalation red lines is crucial for the U.S. There's one final point to note here. Russia is being clever with its intense resource focus on undersea warfare. Recent years have seen the Russian Navy significantly improve its operational tempo and range of action undersea. This includes Moscow's practiced ability to disrupt communication cables and to surge ballistic missile submarines into the Atlantic Ocean at short notice.

The U.S. should learn from this example.

While the U.S. Navy retains undersea supremacy for the moment, the admiralty's procurement focus remains far too rigid. Were the Navy's higher ranks in possession of more original thinkers along the lines of John Paul Jones and Horatio Nelson, they would have dramatically scaled back aircraft carrier operations. In their place, they would be investing far greater resources in newer and more undersea sensor and combat platforms, both manned and unmanned. Sadly, it's likely to take a war with China and a ballistic missile-smashed carrier flight deck for them to wake up. Until then, the top line is clear: America retains the undersea advantage for the meantime, but it may not last.

CONGRESSIONAL

By Susan Cornwell

SASC

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

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

Specifics on Nuclear Modernization (taken from Executive Summary)

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

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

SASC Complete Markup of Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act

Thursday, June 11, 2020

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

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

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

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

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

Highlights:

Authorized Funding

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

Caring for Our All-Volunteer Force and Their Families

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

Accelerating Implementation of the National Defense Strategy

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

can compete effectively with China and Russia. Critically, the NDAA prioritizes the Indo-Pacific theater by establishing the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) to focus resources on credibility gaps in the region and enhancing transparency and oversight. Throughout the bill, alliances and partnerships are strengthened and enhanced.

Maintaining or Regaining our Military Superiority

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

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

Senate confirms nation's first African American service chief

By [Rebecca Kheel](#) - 06/09/20 02:58 PM EDT

The Senate has confirmed the U.S. military’s first African American service chief.

In a unanimous 98-0 vote presided over by Vice President Pence, a rare occasion, the Senate voted to confirm Gen. Charles “C.Q.” Brown as the Air Force’s next chief of staff. In addition to being the first African American military service chief, Brown will be the first African American to sit on the Joint Chiefs of Staff since [Colin Powell](#) was chairman from 1989 to 1993. The historic confirmation comes as the nation is gripped by protests over racial injustice that were sparked by the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died when a police officer who has since been charged with second-degree murder knelt on his neck for more than eight minutes.

In a video last week, Brown spoke starkly about his feelings on Floyd’s death and being an African American service member. "As the commander of Pacific Air Forces, a senior leader in our Air Force and an African American, many of you may be wondering what I'm thinking about the current events surrounding the tragic death of George Floyd," Brown said. "I'm thinking about how my nomination provides some hope, but also comes with a heavy burden. I can't fix centuries of racism in our country, nor can I fix decades of discrimination that may have impacted members of our Air Force," added Brown, who also spoke about navigating “two worlds.”

[President Trump](#), who has come under criticism for threatening to deploy active-duty troops to quell the protests, celebrated Brown's confirmation Tuesday before the Senate even started voting. "My decision to appoint @usairforce General Charles Brown as the USA's first-ever African American military service chief has now been approved by the Senate," Trump tweeted about a half hour before the vote. "A historic day for America! Excited to work even more closely with Gen. Brown, who is a Patriot and Great Leader!"

Brown, who has been the commander of Pacific Air Forces since July 2018, will take over for current Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein, who is expected to retire later this summer. The Air Force said Tuesday that Brown's swearing-in ceremony will be held Aug. 6. Trump nominated Brown in March, but his confirmation was delayed first by Senate scheduling uncertainty amid the coronavirus pandemic and then, as [reported by Defense News](#), by an informal hold Sen. [Dan Sullivan](#) (R-Alaska) placed on the nomination over questions about the Air Force's KC-46 aerial refueling tanker.

Prior to leading Pacific Air Forces, Brown was the deputy commander of U.S. Central Command. His résumé also includes time as the commander of U.S. Air Forces Central Command in 2015 and 2016 during the height of the air campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. He has also served multiple tours across Europe, Asia and the Middle East as an F-16 fighter jet pilot, racking up more than 2,900 flying hours.

Lead Dems back bill to ban live nuclear tests

By: [Joe Gould](#) for Defense News // 1 day ago

WASHINGTON — The Senate's top Democrat, Sen. Chuck Schumer, is co-sponsoring legislation meant to prevent the Trump administration from restarting explosive nuclear weapons testing.

The Preserving Leadership Against Nuclear Explosives Testing, or PLANET, Act, announced Thursday, would bar any funds from being used for such tests. It follows a [Washington Post report](#) of high-level discussions around the possibility of doing a "rapid test" — potentially America's first live nuclear test since 1992. The bill is led by [Sen. Ed Markey](#), D-Mass., and a longtime arms control advocate on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

While a key administration official [has said](#) tests could begin within months if ordered by the president for technical or geopolitical reasons, critics say it could incentivize Russia and China to openly test with little valuable data to show for U.S. tests. The bill had no backing from Republicans, but its 14 Democratic co-sponsors include Schumer, who is Senate minority leader, and several other members who could be instrumental in attaching it to upcoming appropriations legislation or the National Defense Authorization Act:

Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Vice Chairman Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and three members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. For decades, the United States has relied on simulations and nonexplosive testing to assess the health and capabilities of the nuclear arsenal, and in the near term, the data gathered by such a test would be minimal, [Drew Walter](#), who is performing the duties of deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear matters, said at an event last month.

Critics argue it's not worth the risks to public health or geopolitically advantageous. "Congress must send the President the same message the directors of our national laboratories have sent the President: we know more about the U.S. nuclear stockpile in the absence of testing than we knew in the half-century of testing," Markey said in a statement. "That is why, before it is too late, Congress must use its power of the purse to deny President Trump from sparking a global return to testing the most powerful weapon ever created by man.

North Korea is an international pariah for its defiance of international norms — largely through its illicit nuclear weapons tests. We must not join them." According to a [bill summary](#), it would also allow for stockpile stewardship activities, such as certifying the safety, security and reliability of the U.S. nuclear stockpile, so long as those activities are consistent with the "zero-yield" scope of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

There is no legal block on live testing, as America has not formally ratified the CNTBT, which fell just short of the votes needed in the Senate in 1999. Like the U.S., China has signed onto the CTBT but not ratified it. Russia has ratified it, but the U.S. has publicly questioned whether Moscow is fulfilling its promise not to do testing. (Public data has not substantiated those claims.) Aaron Mehta contributed to this report.

Congressional Republicans to Unveil Largest Iran Sanctions Plan in History

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

[Adam Kredo](#) for the WFB // June 8, 2020 5:00 AM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For the first time, the RSC and its allies are calling for a complete halt of U.S. aid in Lebanon, potentially paving the way for a showdown with typically hawkish Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Earlier this year, Pompeo [told the Free Beacon](#) his administration still views U.S. aid to

Lebanon's armed forces as beneficial. Both Johnson and Wilson said there is no valid reason to continue awarding Lebanon with taxpayer aid as Hezbollah systematically takes control of the country.

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

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

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

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AROUND THE WORLD



RUSSIA:

Moscow Clarifies Its Nuclear Deterrence Policy

By: [Pavel Felgenhauer](#) for Eurasia Daily Monitor (Source: USNI) // June 4, 2020 05:07 PM Age: 24 mins

President Vladimir Putin issued a decree (ukaz) that signed into law a new strategic document: “The Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy on Nuclear Deterrence (“Osnovi Gosudarstvennoy Politiki Rossyskoy Federatsii v Oblasty Yadernogo Sderdzivanya”).

The adopted planning text describes the reasons Russia requires a robust nuclear deterrence capability, the possible threats it hopes to avoid by threatening to use nuclear weapons against unfriendly foreign states and their alliances (namely, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—NATO), and the possible scenarios for using its nuclear arsenal. Unlike the United States, which regularly publishes a “Nuclear Posture Review” (“NPR”), the “Foundations on Nuclear Deterrence” has been publicly issued for the first time, though similar documents were apparently put together previously—the last one reportedly in 2010—but remained classified ([Kommersant](#), June 3).

Present-day Russia has long ago abandoned the Soviet public stance of not using nuclear weapons first. According to Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, “The ‘Foundations’ document only lists the circumstances under which nukes may be used, but Russia will never initiate such use” ([Militarynews.ru](#), June 3). Crucially, however, for Moscow an adversary “initiating the use of nukes” necessitating a Russian response does not necessarily have to mean an enemy carrying out an actual first nuclear strike.

The “Foundations” document insists Russian nuclear deterrence capabilities are defensive weapons of last resolve intended to deter aggression, but the array of threats that require nuclear deterrence is wide and, to a large extent, vague. It includes not only the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their potential delivery systems but also the deployment of missile defenses (MD) “by the adversary” in space or in neighboring countries, or the deployment of conventional forces on land or sea that could threaten Russia.

Potential adversary actions that may trigger a direct nuclear response are listed as: attacks using WMD on Russia or its allies; the launch of ballistic missiles potentially carrying WMD targeting Russia or its allies (possibly even single missile launches); a purely conventional “aggression” that may threaten Russian statehood; “coercion by the adversary of critically important state and military installations that may negate the launch of [Russia’s] nuclear forces in reply” (apparently meaning, for instance, a disabling hack of Russian command and communication systems or the dreaded “decapitation” attack using different possible means that may put out of action Putin or his top generals) ([Pravo.gov.ru](#), June 2).

In any case, the reasons to use nuclear warheads are widespread and open to interpretation, effectively giving the Kremlin the legal right to ratchet up the threat whenever it pleases, keeping its adversaries constantly on edge. Unlike the US “NPR,” the Russian equivalent is just several pages long and does not contain any technical data about weapons systems or other factual details. The nature and details of a possible Russian nuclear response are deliberately left secret, including under what scenario Russia would launch a massive strike involving all its land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and its long-range cruise and submarine-based ballistic nuclear missiles, or when a limited nuclear strike may be warranted.

In Article 15, “Foundations” specifically insists, “The ambiguity for a potential adversary of the scope, time and place of the possible use of nuclear deterrence capabilities” is the prerequisite for successful nuclear deterrence (Pravo.gov.ru, June 2). The Russian nuclear strategy document does not specify any countries as potential adversaries, but the US and its allies are clearly envisaged as the “probable foe” (veroyatniy protivnik).

Nuclear expert General (ret.) Vladimir Dvorkin, who took part in nuclear arms control treaty negotiations that ended the Cold War, told journalists the publication of “Foundations” could be a signal sent to President Donald Trump to “force him to agree to the extension of the 2012 New START treaty.” New START expires in February 2021 but can be extended for five years by a simple declaration from US and Russian leaders, without any protracted Congressional ratification process (Militarynews.ru, June 2).

Trump has recently announced the US is withdrawing from the 1992 Treaty on Open Skies after accusing Russia of violations (see EDM, May 28). Moreover, the Trump administration is reportedly entertaining the possibility of resuming underground nuclear tests, banned since 1992. Russia and China have been accused of secretly running low-yield nuclear tests. Russia has signed and ratified the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), unlike the US and China, which both signed but had not ratified it.

Moscow has strongly denounced and threatened retaliation if the US withdraws from Open Skies and resumes nuclear tests (Vesti, May 23). Unilateral action undermining the CTBT and the Open Skies treaty would, in fact, be universally condemned, including by many US allies. At the same time, many members of the Russian military and nuclear industry (Rosatom) have long lobbied to resume testing; therefore, Washington taking the responsibility for breaking the ban is seen as beneficial to Moscow. New START is different. Russia wants an extension, though the conditions the US is putting forward (mostly, involving China in the agreement) are seen as unacceptable (Militarynews.ru, May 12).

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian has expressed “respect and understanding” of the “Foundations nuclear posture document, with which “Russia defends its national interests and security.” Zhao used the occasion to once again denounce “unilateral [US] actions and hegemony” (RIA Novosti, June 3). As the US-China confrontation escalates over many issues, both sides are seeking out allies.

Trump is apparently ready to make some “nuclear deal with Moscow” and has invited Putin to Washington sometime in the fall of 2020 for a G7 meeting. Russia has been excluded since 2014, when a (then) G8 meeting in St. Petersburg was canceled in response to the Russian annexation of Crimea. The latest Trump-proposed expanded G7 meeting apparently also could involve South Korea and Australia as additional participants.

In Moscow, Trump’s G7 proposal is seen, in essence, as an anti-Chinese gathering and a duplicitous attempt by Washington to undermine the Beijing-Moscow axis without giving Russia anything of substance in return. Trump’s reelection is problematic, he cannot give Putin much of what the latter wants anyway (Kommersant, June 1). While politely refusing the floated invitation, Moscow insists it is only interested in an immediate full

and unconditional restoration within a G8, which Trump cannot deliver without the agreement of the grouping's other members. The US leader can prolong the New START treaty unilaterally at any time before its expiration, and such a move would certainly be appreciated in Moscow. But that may not be enough to push Putin into accepting the G7 invite without, for example, the Chinese leader also present.

Comment: It is pretty much write on. Like General Dvorkin, Felgenhauer also sees this as an effort to force the U.S. extend New START.

What do Russian and U.S. tactical nuclear arsenals look like today?

By: Nikolai Litovkin For Russia Beyond, [Science & Tech](#) // June 06 2020

Moscow, following in Washington's footsteps, is bringing back equipment capable of deploying tactical nuclear weapons - the kind that isn't subject to any existing international arms treaties.

Tactical nuclear weapons are meant to be used in battles on frontlines and a dozen kilometers beyond it. They are much smaller than strategic ones, yet remain one of the deadliest means of war ever created. "Both the Soviet Union and the United States experimented with nuclear armaments," says professor Vadim Kozyulin of the Academy of Military Science. "Each country researched the possibility of adding a low-yield nuclear charge to rifle saws, anti-infantry and anti-tank mines, as well as tank projectiles and various artillery shells."

According to Kozyulin, such weapons have still never been used in a combat situation, as the radioactive fallout and contamination of the surrounding area would simply end the assault by killing your entire attack troops together with the enemy. "One of the key differences between tactical and strategic weapons lies in the fact that the former isn't regulated by any international treaty. For instance, nuclear warheads for intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarines and nuclear bombers are capped at 1,550 units and 700 carriers in Russia and the United States," the expert adds.

"As for how many 'smaller' nuclear warheads each country can have, that part is not covered." The world's powers still can't come to an agreement on the matter, moreover, both are presently also trying to legally lower the threshold for their use. Simply speaking, it's how high the threat level must be before a low-yield tactical nuclear weapon can be deployed in a regional conflict.

Russian and U.S. tactical armaments

"The American arsenal could have up to 20,000 tactical warheads, while Russia has no more than 2,000," says Vladimir Dvorkin, a retired General-Major and former head of the 4th Central Research Institute at the Ministry of Defense. According to him, in the early 1990s, the Russian arsenal consisted of warheads and air bombs for the 'Oka', 'Tochka' and 'Luna' missiles. Aside from those, Russia also had hundreds of warheads for anti-ship and submarine missiles, as well as anti-air and anti-missile defense ones, nuclear mines and large-caliber artillery shells.

"We started to unilaterally decommission them when the arms race had ended," he says, adding that we might see countries once again growing their nuclear arsenal in the near future - a direct outcome of the new U.S. military doctrine. "The document also talks of the role of low-yield nuclear charges for use in local conflicts. Americans are claiming that this is being done as a deterrent, to bolster defenses against the use of tactical nuclear warheads by other actors," the analyst added.

According to Kozyulin, at present, the U.S. is modernising its BGM-109 Tomahawk cruise missile - one that can be used to carry a warhead. The threat to Russia lies in the fact that the warheads are stationed at the new American base in the town of Redzikowo, in northern Poland, where the U.S. has set up its national missile defense complex. "Following claims of reducing the nuclear threshold, as well as the appearance of these missile complexes near our borders, Russia has begun returning its large caliber 2S4 'Tyulpan' artillery complexes, for use with 240-mm shells, and 203-mm 2S7 'Pion' howitzers," Kozyulin says.

"Before the breakup of the USSR, they were based in the western part of the country, intended for repelling a NATO offensive by pummelling it with nuclear mines." The expert adds that Russia's defense ministry is also considering other options in the case of a rising threat from attacks using 'Iskander-M' tactical nuclear warheads. "The military can also repurpose the 'Kalibr' sea-based cruise missiles, as well as the 'Kinzhal' anti-aircraft ones, for use with similar nuclear warheads. We'll see how the situation develops, but our command does have the capabilities, and they're currently being discussed," Kozyulin says.

===== Guest Editor's Comments =====

Guest Editor's Comment: Litovkin, a retired Colonel and hardliner, has been involved in their information operations before. This is complete propaganda. I am amazed that Dvorkin is saying things like this. He has been the most moderate Russian general. Now he is now more extreme than most extreme Russian generals. About the only thing that is accurate in this is the talk about **introducing new nuclear artillery**. There have been several Russian press reports about this year. The interesting claims that the U.S. could have 20,000 tactical nuclear weapons while Russia has dismantled all but 2,000! Sounds classical Russian disinformation that **inverts reality**, and grounds for suspecting Russia still has 20-30,000 tactical nuclear weapons.—Mark & Peter

Russia beefs up forces to fortify defense of Western boundary

Russia's General Staff views NATO drills in Barents Sea as provocation

In early June, high level of military activity of the US and its NATO allies was reported near Russian borders

From: Russia Military News TASS // 5 Jun, 04:42 2020

MOSCOW, June 5. /TASS/. The guard tank army of Russia's Western Military District was reinforced to protect the country on the Western strategic direction, the military district told journalists Friday.

In late May, Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu said that the Western strategic direction remains under the highest threat for Russia's military security, adding that, in accordance with the 2019-2025 plan of action, Russia conducts a complex of measures to neutralize the emerging threats. "The Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Sevastopol Red Banner Brigade named after the 60th anniversary of the USSR was included in the Guards Red Banner Tank Army of the Western Military District to perform tasks on ensuring the defense of the Russian Federation in the Western strategic direction," the district's press service said, adding that the motorized brigade has been deployed in the Novomoskovsky Administrative District of Moscow.

"It is armed with modern weapons and military and specialized vehicles, such as T-90A tanks, BTR-82A armored carriers, BMP-3 combat vehicles, and 9A34 Strela-10 and 2S6M Tunguska air defense systems," the press service said. In early June, head of the Main Directorate of the Russian

Armed Forces' General Staff Sergei Rudskoi noted that Russian Ministry of Defense consistently registered high level of military activity of the US and its NATO allies near Russian borders, adding that the alliance also ramped up its exercises that bear a distinct anti-Russian character.

Russia's Mighty Fifth-Generation Submarine: Meet the Laika-Class

Russia's forthcoming Laika, or Husky-class will no doubt be a terror in the deep.

by [Caleb Larson](#) for The national Interest // June 8, 2020

Russia has officially started work on their newest submarine, the [Project 545 Laika](#), or Husky-class.

Laika is a catch-all name for various breeds of hunting or pack dogs in Russia, somewhat similar to the Husky breed. The class was “revealed” during a Russian television broadcast, and was seen in the background of a display showing several new military projects. The [Husky-class](#) seems to be somewhat similar to the Akula-class of submarines, especially the Husky-class' sail which is quite low-profile, though somewhat more lengthened than that of the Akulas.

According to the Russian state-owned [TASS news agency](#), the Husky-class will “feature a modular configuration and a single integrated combat control system with artificial intelligence,” though what this means exactly is anybody's guess. Probably a high degree of automation. Despite the longer sail, the Laika's will still have room inside the hull for launching ballistic missiles. Tass quoted a source from the St. Petersburg-based Malakhit Marine Engineering Bureau where the Laika's are to be designed as saying that “[Tsirkon hypersonic missiles](#) will be among its strike weapons.”

The Tsirkon (sometimes alternatively written as Zircon or Zirkon) submarine-launch missile was [recently test-fired](#). Though details are scant, the missile is believed to be capable of flying at hypersonic speeds of Mach 6 or greater, and its range is over one thousand kilometers or over six hundred miles. According to a provisional [cutaway illustration](#), the Husky-class will probably have four missile tubes that can hold four missiles each, possibly a combination of land-attack and anti-ship missiles.

Additionally, the class may have as many as eight missile tubes and a small sail-mounted short-range surface to air missile system. The bow sonar array will offer a wide “viewing” range. Combined with port and starboard flank sonar arrays, and a retractable towed sonar array, the Husky-class will benefit from good visibility underwater. Nuclear propulsion is also to be assumed, giving the single-screw submarine virtually unlimited range.

Interestingly, the lower tail member is rather short, a possible indication that that class may be intended for use in littoral waters nearer to shore than larger ballistic missile submarines, as a smaller bottom control surface would be better protected from damage than a full-sized blue water tail assembly. The bow-mounted hydroplanes are likely retractable. There have been indications that the Project 545 Laika will have a number of composite materials throughout, including the hull surface, control surfaces, as well as the propeller shaft and the propeller itself, though this is very difficult to verify.

Conclusion

In any case, Russia is off to a building frenzy. Unlike the [United States Navy](#) or Royal Navy, Russia favors a diversity of submarine designs. While inefficient from a construction standpoint, having a wide variety of submarines could allow for a wider range of missions to be achieved. Stay tuned for more.

Caleb Larson is a defense writer with The National Interest. He holds a Master of Public Policy and covers U.S. and Russian security, European defense issues, and German politics and culture.

Russia: China won't be pressured to join talks

New START deal to expire this month

BY LAUREN MEIER THE WASHINGTON TIMES

One of the Kremlin's top diplomats confirmed Tuesday that U.S. and Russian diplomats will meet later this month on the future of the expiring New START arms control deal, but poured cold water on the Trump administration's hopes of forcing China to join the bilateral pact.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told a Council on Foreign Relations virtual briefing Tuesday that it was "good news" that he and U.S. counterpart Marshall Billingslea, President Trump's special envoy to the arms talks, will meet in Vienna for talks on the 10-year New S T A R T pact, which expires if the two sides can't reach a deal by February. He later told Russia's TASS news agency that the talks, aimed at salvaging one of the last remaining pillars of the U.S.-Russian arms control treaty structure, will help "make this process get off the ground and map out a certain way forward."

But he also made clear there are significant differences in the U.S. and Russian hopes for the talks, and said the two sides should agree on a five-year extension of the current deal — which Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin could do on their own — rather than risk have the accord fall apart altogether. Mr. Ryabkov also made clear Moscow is in no mood to join a U.S. plan to force China to participate in an expanded New START deal. Mr. Billingslea told The Washington Times in an interview last month that Russia must "help bring China to the table" to discuss limits on Beijing's smaller but rapidly growing nuclear arsenal.

"China also invited" to the Vienna talks, Mr. Billingslea tweeted this week. "Will China show and negotiate in good faith?" Chinese government officials have repeatedly said Beijing has no interest in joining three-way talks because their nuclear stockpile is far smaller than those of the U.S. and Russia. And Mr. Ryabkov said his government is in no mood to pressure Beijing to change its mind.

"My answer to a direct question on whether or not we think it would be possible to bring China to the table would be a flat and straightforward no," he told the Council on Foreign Relations by videoconference from Moscow. The Russian minister argued Tuesday that "the easiest way forward to buy time would be to extend the existing treaty, as ratified in 2010, in both capitals and then use [the] five years of this treaty extension to ... find probably a better way to address all sorts of issues, including those associated with new military technologies."

He said the Kremlin had its own worries about recent U.S. moves; "We have many concerns about what is going on in the American build-up. This is American missile defenses becoming more and more global." New START, negotiated during the Obama administration, limits the number of

deployable American and Russian nuclear weapons to 1,550. The accord also reduced by half the number of strategic nuclear missile launchers each side may have and set up a new inspection and verification regime to prevent cheating.

The weapons include at least 10 types of missiles, from longrange to short-range ballistic and cruise missiles. China also is close to deploying ultra-highspeed hypersonic missiles capable of striking U.S. targets with maneuvering warheads in less than 30 minutes. Critics of China have argued that Beijing has been engaged in an extensive expansion of strategic nuclear forces that remains cloaked in secrecy by the ruling Communist Party and the military.

But Mr. Ryabkov said Tuesday that Russia does not “see any Chinese readiness” to participate in trilateral arms negotiations, putting the onus on the Trump administration to decide how it wants to proceed. China has said it might be open to even broader arms talks that also include nuclear-armed U.S. allies such as Britain and France, and Mr. Ryabkov appeared to endorse the notion.

Moving forward, he said, it will be “of extraordinary importance” for the U.S. to bring some of its European allies to the negotiating table, “irrespective of how much their national nuclear capabilities matter compared to those of U.S. and Russia.

Russia welcomes prospect of American troop pullback from Germany

[germany/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2006.12.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://www.associatedpress.com/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2006.12.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

From: The Associated Press // 11 hours ago

MOSCOW — Russia’s Foreign Ministry on Thursday welcomed President Donald Trump’s reported plan to withdraw more than a quarter of [U.S. troops from Germany](#), saying it would help bolster security in Europe.

Trump has reportedly signed off on a plan to cut the number of troops stationed in Germany from 34,500 to no more than 25,000. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that “we would welcome any steps by Washington to scale down its military presence in Europe.” “Such steps would undoubtedly help reduce confrontational potential and ease military and political tensions in the Euro-Atlantic region,” Zakharova said at a briefing, adding that the large U.S. military presence in Germany is a “vestige of the Cold War.”

Zakharova challenged the U.S. to also take its tactical nuclear weapons home from Germany. German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer told reporters earlier this week that Berlin hadn’t yet been informed of any U.S. troops pullout. She warned that if the U.S. goes ahead the move would do [more harm to NATO](#) as a whole than to Germany’s own defense. Relations between Russia and the West are at post-Cold War lows following the 2014 Russian annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula, Moscow’s alleged meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and other issues.

Moscow has described the deployment of NATO forces near Russian borders as a top security threat. Zakharova strongly warned Washington against redeploying some of the troops from Germany to Poland, saying it would further exacerbate tensions and undermine prospects of dialogue between Russia and NATO



CHINA:

Beijing is pushing a new 'front line' in the South China Sea

By Ben Westcott and Brad Lendon, CNN // Jun 7, 2020 Updated 4 min ago

Hong Kong (CNN)Chinese and Malaysian vessels were locked in a high-stakes standoff for more than one month earlier this year, near the island of Borneo [in the South China Sea](#).

The Malaysian-authorized drill ship, the West Capella, was looking for resources in waters also claimed by Beijing, when a Chinese survey vessel, accompanied by coast guard ships, sailed into the area and began conducting scans, according to satellite images analyzed by [the Asia Maritime Transparency Institute \(AMTI\)](#). Malaysia deployed naval vessels to the area, which were later [backed by US warships](#) that had been on joint exercises in the South China Sea.

Beijing claimed it was conducting "normal activities in waters under Chinese jurisdiction," but for years Chinese vessels have been accused of hounding countries who try to explore for resources in waters that China claims as its own. Now, experts say the Chinese ships are adopting increasingly forceful tactics, which risks sparking new conflicts with major regional powers such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

Greg Polling, director of the AMTI, said the countries are more important than ever as Chinese ships expand their reach in the region, mostly due to the advanced construction of Beijing's artificial islands in the South China Sea. "(The islands) provide forward basing for Chinese ships, effectively turning Malaysia and Indonesia into front line states," Polling said. "On any given day, there about dozen coast guard ships buzzing around the Spratly Islands, and about a hundred fishing boats, ready to go." An Indonesian air force pilot prepares for taking off in an F-16 at an air base in Pekanbaru, Riau on January 7, to deploy near the Natuna Islands.

Nine-dash line

The South China Sea is one of the most hotly contested regions in the world, with competing claims from China, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan and Indonesia. Beijing's territorial claims, known as the nine-dash line -- owing to the markings printed on Chinese maps of the region -- are by far the largest and encompass almost the entirety of the sea, from Hainan Island down to the top of Indonesia. China's claims have no basis under international law and were found to be invalid in a 2016 international court ruling.

Despite this, from about 2015 the Chinese government began to bolster its territorial ambitions by building artificial islands on reefs and shoals in the South China Sea, and then militarizing them with aircraft strips, harbors and radar facilities. "These (islands) are bristling with radar and surveillance capabilities, they see everything that goes on in the South China Sea," Polling said. "In the past, China didn't know where you were drilling. Now

they certainly do." Experts say Beijing has created an armada of coast guard and Chinese fishing vessels that can be deployed in the South China Sea to harass other claimant's ships or sail in politically sensitive areas.

Growing aggression

The confrontation over the Malaysian drill ship wasn't the first act of aggression by the Chinese government in the region in 2020. The year began with a standoff in the Natuna Islands on the far southern end of the South China Sea, territory claimed by China and Indonesia. Vessels from both countries were involved in the standoff, which began when Chinese fishing vessels started to operate inside Indonesia's exclusive economic zone.

Eventually, Indonesia deployed F-16 fighters and naval ships to the islands and President Joko Widodo personally flew to the area, in an unusual show of strength from the country. In April, a Chinese maritime surveillance vessel rammed and sank a Vietnamese fishing boat near [the disputed Paracel Islands](#) in the South China Sea. The act prompted Vietnam to send a diplomatic note to the United Nations restating its sovereignty over its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang responded by saying China would take "all measures necessary" to safeguard Beijing's interests in the region. "I want to stress this: attempts by any country to negate in any means China's sovereignty, rights and interests in the South China Sea and to reinforce its own illegal claim are bound to be fruitless," Geng said.

Insecurity

Beijing has a long history of harassing other countries' vessels in the South China Sea, mostly from Vietnam and the Philippines and also occasionally from Malaysia and Indonesia. In the past, Chinese diplomats have helped soothed aggrieved parties, but experts say the fallout from the coronavirus and the rise of so-called "wolf warrior" diplomacy in Beijing have removed any circuit breaker in the relationship between China and its regional rivals.

"What has changed is that they've really taken the glove off of the fist diplomatically. The statements are brash and unhelpful," said Polling. Experts said Beijing's growing forcefulness in the region is partly driven by the global coronavirus pandemic, which has dealt a heavy blow to China's rapid economic growth and damaged the country's international reputation. At the meeting of its parliament in May, the Chinese government didn't set a target for annual GDP growth for the first time in years, a sign that it is concerned about falling economic performance.

At the same time, tensions are rising with the United States and Europe over Beijing's role in containing the initial outbreak and whether it gave the world enough time to respond to the pandemic, which has killed more than 380,000 people. Concerned about appearing like its grip on power is slipping, the ruling Communist Party is doubling down on its rhetoric and on its nationalistic agenda, which includes control of the South China Sea, experts said.

Beijing is keen to foster a narrative that the US is retreating as a global power to solidify its hold on the region, said Ian Storey, senior fellow at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. "It will want to show Southeast Asian claimants that American military power is on the decline and its commitment to the region is waning," Storey said. "(It will want to show that) the economic problems that China is facing will not impact its policy on the South China Sea."

So far, Malaysia and Indonesia have tried to avoid letting South China Sea dominate their relationship with China, but with Beijing marking its territory in the region, the days of quiet diplomacy might not last forever. "At what level of aggression does it become impossible to ignore? ... At what point do they add their voice to the criticism that you've been getting for years and years from Hanoi and Manila?" AMTI's Polling said.

Free-for-all

Facing an entrenched Chinese presence on their doorstep, now might seem like the time for Southeast Asian nations to band together and face down Beijing's presence in the region. But Storey said with regional powers preoccupied with coronavirus as well as their own economic and political crises, any hope of unity in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was unlikely.

"No matter how hard China pushes I don't think we're going to see the ASEAN members coalesce and present that strong united front against China," he said. "I think going forward in the next six months, towards the end of 2020, we can expect China to double down on its assertive behavior in the South China Sea." Malaysia has long worked to balance the benefits of a close relationship with China with running its own independent foreign policy, AMTI's Polling said, which is why previous clashes with Chinese vessels in Malaysian waters were kept out of the media as much as possible.

Indonesia has in the past opened fire on Chinese fishing vessels that failed to leave its waters, and President Widodo's tough behavior in January showed he will not sit by while Beijing moves into the Natuna Islands. But experts say China won't be easily deterred. "Beijing believes it can wear down Indonesian opposition; and eventually Indonesia, much like Malaysia, will realize that it has little choice but to accommodate China's presence," Foreign Policy Research Institute senior fellow Felix Chang [wrote in January](#).

Still, there is risk too for the Chinese government. The United States is already increasing its freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, holding half as many in the first five months of 2020 as it did in the whole of last year. [Coronavirus may be giving Beijing an opening in the South China Sea](#) Washington is also working to directly support Southeast Asian nations in the South China Sea. The Malaysian Navy received its first batch of surveillance drones from the US in May.

And, during the West Capella's operations, US Navy warships performed what the US Navy called "presence operations" near the drill ship while it was being monitored by the Chinese vessels. "The US supports the efforts of our allies and partners in the lawful pursuit of their economic interests," Vice Adm. Bill Merz, commander of the US 7th Fleet, said in a statement at the time. Speaking in a public lecture in May, James Holmes, a professor at the US Naval War College and former Navy officer, said that as Beijing pushes harder in the South China Sea, the US may look like the better bet for a steady friend.

"I think China has actually seriously overplayed its hand by being so bullying and by being so aggressive," Holmes said. "That starts driving together allies that are worried about Chinese aggression ... The more China pushes the more coalition partners are likely to unite and push back." Any push back could cost Beijing economically. China has close trade ties with many of its regional neighbors, such as the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia, and needs them for parts of its international agenda such as its [much trumpeted Belt and Road Initiative](#) -- the country's interlinking web of regional trade deals and infrastructure projects.

Chinese expansion: The view from Vietnam

Many fear that Vietnam could be the next target of a hostile takeover by China

By Anthony D. Salzman for The WT // 9 June, 2020

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam -- Looking up from a traditional Vietnamese wood fishing boat onto a naval frigate would be like a pedestrian staring upward at a five-story windowless building. So it's easy to see how Vietnamese fishing vessels can be swamped or overrun by Chinese warships that intrude into Vietnam's territorial waters almost daily. China says that the rickety wooden vessels Hanoi uses to assert claims over key waterways harass its warships patrolling the South China Sea, which blends indistinguishably with the waters of Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries, in Beijing's view.

But Vietnam rarely publicizes its maritime dispute with China for fear that the admission of constant naval incursions into its waters would compromise its sovereignty or lead to a crisis threatening its very existence. China's current power grab in Hong Kong that virtually erases the ex-British colony's self-governing status scares many Southeast Asian countries and nowhere are fears more palpable than in Vietnam, where there is genuine concern that they could be the next target of a hostile takeover. The naval encroachments that last year led to China's partial occupation of the Spratly Islands long claimed by Vietnam and other Asian nations might just be the start of intensified Chinese pressures challenging the independence of its seemingly vulnerable southern neighbor.

Vietnam has recently modernized its navy with the acquisition of six Kilo-class submarines from Russia and a dozen Metal Shark fast patrol boats supplied by the U.S. Navy, which has held joint exercises with the Vietnamese maritime defense forces. But the submarines lack the air scrubbing systems for prolonged submersion and the budding surface fleet even with missiles and electronic systems fitted by India hardly poses a deterrent to China's navy of 716 warships, possibly the world's largest. Other arms of mass destruction that China could use against Vietnam are so low-tech that they are often overlooked.

China could shut off Vietnam's water supply by simply damming the Mekong River or cut off main sources of food to Vietnam's 96 million people. China also exercises growing financial leverage through tourism, and a system of soft loans by which China's ICBC bank provides 100% financing to any business activity in which the main beneficial owner is a Chinese government linked company.

It may be difficult to know

Chinese warplanes enter Taiwan Strait after US flyover

- Taiwanese military says it detected a group of Su-30 fighters and sent jets to intercept them
- PLA show of strength follows US transport plane's flight over the island

By: [Lawrence Chung](#) for The South China Morning Post // Published: 6:30pm, 9 Jun, 2020 - Updated: 11:15pm, 9 Jun, 2020

A group of Chinese warplanes flew into the Taiwan Strait and briefly approached Taiwan, just hours after a US transport plane passed over the island on Tuesday.

Taiwan scrambled its warplanes to warn off the People's Liberation Army fighter jets which crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait on Tuesday morning, the island's defence ministry said in a statement. "The military detected multiple numbers of Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets flying southwest into Taiwan briefly this morning," it said, adding the air force immediately scrambled jets to shadow, intercept and disperse them through radio warnings.

"The military has full surveillance and control of all activities in the sea and air that surround Taiwan, and the public can rest assured of our capability to uphold security for our national territory." The incursion came just several hours after a US C-40A transport plane made a rare flight into Taiwan over the southwest coast early in the morning. The US plane took off from the US airbase in Okinawa, flying over Taiwan's Keelung, New Taipei, Taipei, Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Miaoli, Taichung, Changhua, Chiayi, Tainan and into the Taiwan Strait towards the Bashi Channel, according to AirNav, which provides air traffic control information.

Taiwanese military spokesman Shih Shun-wen confirmed that the US plane had flown across Taiwan. "The military has full control of the activities around Taiwan and the present condition is normal," Shih said. China warns US of 'strong response' regarding Taiwan, saying island's independence is 'dead end'; In a separate statement, the ministry said the plane did not land on Taiwan, dismissing some local news media speculations that the US plane was on a special mission.

The fly-bys come at a time when the PLA is stepping up drills aimed at the self-ruled Taiwan. Last Wednesday, China's state broadcaster CCTV reported that the PLA 73rd Group Army had conducted live-fire and landing drills, showing amphibious tanks storming beaches in a coordinated attack under rough sea conditions. On May 14, the PLA started a two-and-a-half month exercise at Jingtang in the northern province of Hebei, which observers interpreted as a piece of sabre-rattling aimed at Taiwan and the US.

Beijing considers Taiwan a wayward province that must be returned to the mainland fold by force if necessary and has tried in vain to force President Tsai Ing-wen, of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party to accept the one-China principle. It has also warned Washington against supplying arms for Taiwan and is infuriated by the firm support for the island from the administration of US President Donald Trump. Also on Tuesday, Taiwan announced that the island's annual Han Kuang war games would start on July 13.

"The drills will involve the three forces and will be held in the sea, air and Taiwan proper as well as its offshore islands for five days and four nights between July 13 and July 17," Major General Lin Wen-huang said in Taipei. Lin said a live-fire anti-landing drill would be held in Taichung on the west coast of the island on July 16 and would be open to the media. The annual Wan An air raid drills will take place two days earlier across Taiwan, to test Taiwan's combat strength and preparedness against missile strikes.



NORTH KOREA:

North Korea lashes out, will cut ties with South

Impatience reflects stalled diplomacy

BY GUY TAYLOR THE WASHINGTON TIMES

North Korea lashed out despite South Korea's calls for new talks Tuesday, saying it was freezing all communication channels and vowing to treat Seoul as an "enemy" in what analysts say may be the opening of a belligerent wave of provocations from Pyongyang.

The assertiveness, a blow to the detente policy pursued by South Korean President Moon Jae-in, may be tied to the rise of North Korean leader Kim Jongun's younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, who has been increasingly visible in Pyongyang since Mr. Kim's roughly month-long disappearance from public view in April amid a suspected health scare. The North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Tuesday's decision to sever all communications with Seoul was made by Kim Yo Jong in coordination with former North Korean spy chief Kim Yong Chol, 72, a notoriously anti-Seoul hardliner in the Pyongyang hierarchy.

Kim Yo Jong in recent days has threatened to permanently shut a liaison office established with Seoul and to shutter a joint factory park in the border town of Kaesong, symbols of reconciliation between the two countries. South Korean officials say the North refused to answer a daily call on the countries' joint military hotline this week for the first time in two years. Some experts say Kim Yo Jong, 32, is being given more power should her overweight, heart disease-prone older brother fall seriously ill or die suddenly.

"It seems like Kim Jong-un is placing some of the key levers of power in Kim Yo Jong's hands," David Maxwell, a retired U.S. Special Forces colonel and North Korea expert with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said in comments circulated to reporters this week. "Maybe she is being groomed for eventual leadership." The regime has clearly lost patience in recent weeks, claiming Seoul has failed — after nearly two years of U.S.-North Korea denuclearization talks — to revive lucrative inter-Korean economic projects and to persuade the Trump administration to ease crippling sanctions on Pyongyang.

Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim have not met in person since a brief visit by the U.S. leader to the Korean demilitarized zone nearly a year ago, and few expect a major diplomatic breakthrough before the U.S. elections in November. The United Nations' special rapporteur on human rights in North Korea warned Tuesday that "widespread food shortages and malnutrition" in North Korea has been exacerbated by economic sanctions.

However, Tuesday's KCNA statement said the decision to freeze all cross-border communications was a response to what it said was the Moon government's failure to halt South Korean activists from floating anti-Pyongyang leaflets into the North. "The South Korean authorities connived at the hostile acts against [North Korea] by the riff-raff, while trying to dodge heavy responsibility with nasty excuses," said the statement, which specifically quoted Kim Yo Jong as referring to the leaflet activists as "human scum" and "mongrel dogs."

The comments came despite recent overtures by South Korean officials, who have said recently that they hoped a peaceful inter-Korean diplomatic summit could be held with the North soon, even amid ongoing regional concerns over the coronavirus pandemic. Tuesday's KCNA statement ignored Seoul's overtures, focusing instead on conservative South Korean activists — including many North Korean defectors in the South — who have for years floated balloons into the North with leaflets criticizing the Kim regime's nuclear ambitions and human rights abuses.

The leaflet issue has been seized upon by the regime in the past as a pretext for expressing anger and discontentment over other matters. “The North Koreans have been trying to find something they can use to express their dissatisfaction and distrust against South Korea,” Kim Dong-yub, an analyst from Seoul’s Institute for Far Eastern Studies, told The Associated Press. “They’ve now got the leafletting issue, so I don’t think we can simply resolve [tensions] even if we address issues related to the leafletting.”

He added that Tuesday’s KCNA statement appeared also aimed at strengthening internal unity in Pyongyang and signaling the North’s resolve not to make concessions in any possible future nuclear talks.

Lauren Meier contributed to this story, which is based in part on wire service reports

Kim Jong Un Raises Pressure on South Korea to Split With Trump

By: Jon Herskovitz, Kanga Kong and Jeong-Ho Lee for Bloomberg News // 3 hrs ago

(Bloomberg) -- Both North Korea and left-leaning supporters of South Korean President Moon Jae-in want him to restore economic ties broken by security tensions. But pleasing them would mean angering U.S. President Donald Trump.

On Tuesday, North Korea said it was closing down communication links set up two years ago between Moon and Kim Jong Un, jeopardizing the South Korean leader’s 2017 campaign promise to move the heavily armed rivals toward a permanent peace. It’s bad timing for Moon: His ruling bloc secured a historic supermajority in National Assembly elections in April, boosting calls within his Democratic Party to mend ties with North Korea.

The problem for Moon is that he doesn’t have much he can offer North Korea without prompting a blowup from the Trump administration, which has repeatedly rejected South Korea’s calls for sanctions relief. The U.S. has refused to relax United Nations penalties and other measures against the regime without greater commitments on arms reduction from Kim. [Woo Won-shik](#), a senior lawmaker and a former Democratic Party floor leader, said Tuesday there was an “urgent need” to revive inter-Korean cooperation, arguing that failure to act now could further isolate North Korea and bring about a return to the brinkmanship of three years ago.

Kim earlier this year said he would soon debut a “new strategic weapon” -- part of a bid to pressure Trump, who faces an election in November, back to the negotiating table. “There are many inter-Korean projects that can proceed without breaching the existing UN sanctions regime,” Woo said. The latest dust-up -- triggered by South Korean activists who sent anti-Pyongyang messages in balloons across the border -- comes ahead of the 20th anniversary of the first meeting between top leaders of the divided Koreas.

The summit beginning on June 13, 2000, was the biggest moment of then-President Kim Dae-jung’s reconciliation effort that led to stepped up trade and joint projects and helped earn the South Korean leader the Nobel Peace Prize. While that “Sunshine Policy” helped cool tensions, it was also criticized for providing Pyongyang’s leaders with cash needed to build up its nuclear weapons program. Smaller measures that might allow only a trickle of foreign currency back into cash-starved North Korea also risk disappointing Kim Jong Un and Moon’s allies, who see their current strength in parliament as their best chance to secure lasting change.

The South Korean government plans to cancel the licenses of two groups that sent balloons with leaflets across the border and ask prosecutors whether they can bring charges on suspicion of violating an inter-Korean exchange law, the Unification Ministry said Wednesday. Leaflets have flown across the border for years and been allowed as free speech. North Korea's relations with Moon haven't been the same since Trump walked out of a summit with Kim in February 2019 in Hanoi.

The North Korean leader was pushing a plan backed by Seoul to give up his antiquated Yongbyon nuclear facility in exchange for sanctions relief -- an offer that came nowhere near the Trump administration's demand for the "final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea." "It is a sense of betrayal and disappointment," said Rachel Minyoung Lee, a former analyst for the U.S. government specializing in North Korea.

"Kim Jong Un feels South Korea has misled him into believing that Yongbyon facilities were going to be enough for a deal with Trump in Hanoi." After that, North Korea has effectively ignored Moon's requests for talks, shunned his offers for aid and test-launched new ballistic missiles capable of carrying a nuclear payload to all parts of South Korea, where about 28,500 U.S. military personnel are stationed.

North Korea didn't answer South Korea's calls made on the military line Tuesday for the first time since the inter-Korean communication link was restored in 2018, defense ministry spokeswoman Choi Hyun-soo told a briefing in Seoul. "Inter-Korean communication lines are a basic means for communication and should be kept in line with inter-Korean agreements," South Korea's Unification Ministry said in a text message to reporters.

A State Department spokesperson said the U.S. urges North Korea to return to diplomacy and cooperation. "The United States has always supported progress in inter-Korean relations, and we are disappointed in the DPRK's recent actions," the spokesperson said, referring to North Korea by its formal name.

Kim Jong Un may follow up his move to cut communications links with more missile tests, but making sure to avoid the wrath of Trump. The American president has brushed off shorter-range tests and credited his own diplomacy for stopping Kim from further tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of hitting the U.S. mainland. "Provocations like missile launches will follow, but nothing as serious as an ICBM test," said Cho Han-bum, a senior research fellow at the Korea Institute for National Unification, a state-run think tank.

Cho added that North Korea also didn't want to push Moon too far: "The South is well aware that ending the inter-Korean relations is not something that the North wants." Moon's government said in late May said that it wanted to try to again ease travel restrictions and inter-Korean exchanges. A similar attempt in 2018 led Trump to bluntly tell Seoul that it couldn't do anything regarding sanctions "[without our approval](#)."

Alliance at Risk

Members of the Moon administration have hinted that Seoul could act unilaterally to resuscitate inter-Korean cooperation, but that would come with the enormous risk of cleaving Seoul from its alliance with Washington, said Soo Kim, a Rand Corp. policy analyst who specializes in Korean Peninsula issues. "President Moon can promise the North Koreans the earth, but realistically, he remains constrained in the way of practical measures South Korea can take -- if Seoul were to be conscious of and concerned about its relations with the U.S.," she said.

South Korean proposals blocked by the Trump administration included resuming operations at a joint factory park in the North Korean border city of Kaesong and a separate resort at North Korea's Mount Kumgang. Both were opened in the spirit of the Sunshine Policy and later shut due to political turmoil. While South Korea was able to win a UN sanctions waiver that led to the ceremonial sending of trains across the border about two years ago, its humanitarian assistance has dried up under Trump's maximum pressure campaign. South Korea has sent more \$3 billion of aid since 1995, but little of it has come under the Moon government, which sent just \$12 million in 2017 and 2018, [government data](#) shows.

'Bent Over Backwards'

Trade between the two nations has dropped to virtually zero from [\\$2.7 billion](#) in 2015, or about 10% of North Korea's economy. The regime took a further hit this year when it sealed off its borders in January at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, which slammed the brakes on other trade with countries like China. Kim Jong Un believes he doesn't have much of anything to lose by increasing pressure on Moon, according to Duyeon Kim, a senior adviser for Northeast Asia and Nuclear Policy at the International Crisis Group.

"North Korea is raising the ante, trying to further punish, scare, and force Seoul to work harder to meet Pyongyang's demands," Kim said. "Kim Jong Un feels he bent over backwards for Moon, but believes Seoul has not reciprocated, has betrayed North Korea and the Korean race, and has no influence over Washington to deliver on its promises."

(Updates with South Korea seeking to shut groups sending leaflets)

North Korea Vows to Boost Nuclear Program, Saying U.S. Diplomacy Failed

In a statement marking the second anniversary of a historic summit meeting between Kim Jong-un and President Trump, the North said its hopes had faded into a "nightmare."
By Choe Sang-Hun for the NY Times // June 11, 2020

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea on Friday said that two years of diplomacy with President Trump had "faded away into a dark nightmare," and vowed to increase its nuclear weapons capabilities.

"Even a slim ray of optimism for peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula has faded away into a dark nightmare," the country's foreign minister, Ri Son-gwon, said in a statement on Friday marking the second anniversary of a historic summit meeting between Mr. Trump and the North's leader, Kim Jong-un. When Mr. Kim and Mr. Trump met in Singapore on June 12, 2018, they signed a vaguely worded agreement to improve ties between their nations and work toward "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

But bilateral ties have since deteriorated, especially after the two leaders' second meeting, held in Vietnam in February 2019, ended without agreement on how to dismantle the North's nuclear weapons program and when to ease sanctions against the North. Although Washington continues to make "nonsensical remarks that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is still a secure goal of the United States," North Korea's strategic goal is "to build up a more reliable force to cope with the long-term military threats from the U.S.," Mr. Ri said on Friday.

He suggested that the North's goal involved expanding its nuclear weapons program, noting that Mr. Kim gave such an instruction during a meeting of his Central Military Commission in May. When Mr. Kim convened his country's top military-governing body last month, he outlined "new policies for further increasing" its nuclear capabilities and promoted top weapons development officials.

Since Mr. Kim returned home empty-handed from his second summit with Mr. Trump, North Korea has repeatedly expressed its frustrations, saying that it had lost faith in Washington and that it was prepared for a prolonged standoff with the United States. Since taking over his country following the death of his father and predecessor, Kim Jong-il, in 2011, Mr. Kim has accelerated his country's nuclear weapons and missile programs.

North Korea has conducted the last four of its six underground nuclear tests under his rule. It also conducted three intercontinental ballistic missile tests in 2017. Mr. Kim then switched to diplomacy with Mr. Trump, after declaring a moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests. North Korea has also destroyed part of its underground nuclear weapons tests site and returned the remains of American soldiers killed during the 1950-53 Korean War, as well as releasing three Americans held hostage.

But those gestures were not enough for Mr. Trump to strike a new deal with Mr. Kim in Vietnam. During the talks, Washington asked North Korea to start dismantling its nuclear weapons and fissile materials before sanctions would be eased, but North Korea insisted they be lifted earlier. "In retrospect," Mr. Ri said on Friday, all Washington has been doing was "accumulating its political achievements."

"Never again will we provide the U.S. chief executive with another package to be used for achievements without receiving any returns," he said. In May of last year, North Korea broke an 18-month hiatus in weapons tests, conducting 18 tests of mostly short-range ballistic missiles and rockets since. In December, it conducted two ground tests at its missile engine test site to bolster what it called its "nuclear deterrent." Later that month, Mr. Kim said that his country no longer felt bound by its self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests, and threatened to unveil a new strategic weapon.

North Korea lashes out, says US will be overshadowed by China

By [Tal Axelrod](#) - 06/04/20 10:22 AM EDT

North Korea lashed out at the U.S. on Thursday, asserting that its ally China was quickly overshadowing the U.S. amid an ongoing spat between Washington and Beijing.

[In a statement](#) published by state media, Pyongyang excoriated Secretary of State [Mike Pompeo](#) for criticizing China in an interview on Sunday. During [the interview](#), Pompeo accused Beijing of being "intent upon the destruction of Western ideas, Western democracies, Western values." "It is not the first time that he spouted nonsense about China over the issues of Hong Kong, Taiwan, human rights and trade disputes, but what cannot be overlooked is that he viciously slandered the leadership of the Communist Party of China over socialism,"

North Korea's ruling Workers' Party said. "Pompeo, who has been deeply engrossed in espionage and plot-breeding against other countries, said that the Communist Party today is different from what it was a decade ago, which shows he acknowledges that socialism led by the Communist Party grows stronger day by day and he is anxious about the plight of the US which is doomed to ruin."

The broadside comes as [President Trump](#) and leaders in Beijing engage in a bitter back-and-forth over a number of topics, including whether the U.S. or China is to blame for the coronavirus and a new Chinese law that could curtail free speech in Hong Kong. It also follows halting attempts by

Trump to reach out to North Korea's leader [Kim Jong Un](#) to try to reach a nuclear deal. In the statement, North Korea also underscored protests that have spread across the U.S. since the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died in police custody in Minneapolis.

Trump has threatened to use the military to quell the demonstrations. "This is the present reality of the crumbling US where demonstrators enraged by extreme racism throng even to the White House and it is American-style freedom and democracy to stigmatize the demonstrators as leftists and threaten to break up demonstration by setting even the dogs on them," Pyongyang said. The statement also panned Seoul after defectors from the North released anti-North Korean leaflets across the border, a move Pyongyang has long slammed as a propaganda tactic.

"What matters is that those human scum hardly worth their value as human beings had the temerity to fault our supreme leadership and cite 'a nuclear issue,' " Kim Yo Jong, a North Korean spokeswoman and Kim's sister, said [in a statement](#) run by state media, adding that Pyongyang could cancel an agreement to run a joint liaison office with the South and cease hostile military actions at the border.



SOUTH KOREA:

Explainer: Pyongyang calling - What we know about the hotlines to North Korea

By: [Josh Smith](#) for Reuters News Wire // June 9, 2020 / 3:08 AM / 2 days ago

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea has said it is cutting communication hotlines with South Korea, a tactic the isolated country has used repeatedly during periods of rising tension.

At least 49 hotlines have been established between the two Koreas to arrange diplomatic talks, deconflict military operations, coordinate air and sea traffic, hold humanitarian discussions, and cooperate on economic issues. Most of all, the South sees the lines as an important way to prevent misunderstandings in the event of a crisis. Sometimes the lines fall into disuse when relations sour, as they have when multilateral talks stalled over North Korea's nuclear weapons programme and strict international sanctions imposed on it.

Lines of communication were last cut in 2016 and restored in 2018, when North Korean leader Kim Jong Un launched a diplomatic offensive after two years of intensive ballistic missile and nuclear tests, and a heated war of words with U.S. President Donald Trump. When North Korea has stopped communicating, South Korean officials still typically try to call every day at the same time, even if there is no answer.

South Korean officials have sometimes used a bullhorn to shout messages across the border at the Joint Security Area (JSA) in Panmunjom, the only spot along the heavily fortified demilitarized zone (DMZ) where troops from both sides stand face to face. In January 2018, when North and South Korea arranged the first official talks in more than two years, liaison officials spoke using desktop telephone consoles, each the size of a small refrigerator. That hotline dates to the 1970s, though newer systems were installed in 2009.

All of the hotlines operated by the South's Unification Ministry, which handles civilian inter-Korean affairs, use similar equipment, according to the ministry. The system features a computer screen, disk drives, and USB ports, as well as two colour-coded telephone handsets. A red phone is for incoming calls from North Korea and South Korea uses a green phone to make outgoing calls to the North.

No other numbers can be called - the phones only connect to a counterpart on the other side. The two sides also use fax machines to send documents. Photos of the equipment used by the South Korean military show a series of small, olive-drab desktop phones labelled "two-sided inter-Korean hotline." It is not known what the equipment looks like on the North's side. The spurt of inter-Korean talks that followed those January phone calls led to the opening of more hotlines, including - for the first time - a direct connection between the offices of South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

In 2019, South Korea's prime minister revealed that the presidential hotline had never been used, and local media report it has not been used since. The two Koreas also opened a liaison office in Kaesong, North Korea, where officials from both sides worked daily. In January, that office was "temporarily" closed because of coronavirus worries, though the two sides had continued to hold daily phone calls from Seoul and Pyongyang. Reporting by Josh Smith. Additional reporting by Sangmi Cha. Editing by Gerry Doyle



IRAN:

Iran urges Russia, China to resist U.S. push to extend arms embargo

From Reuters News Wire // June 10, 2020 / 6:10 AM / Updated 33 minutes ago

DUBAI (Reuters) - Iran on Wednesday called on Russia and China to resist a push by Washington to extend a U.N.-imposed arms embargo due to expire in October under Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with six powers.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has been taking a harder line with the United Nations to extend and strengthen the embargo on Iran, warning that its lifting would let Tehran acquire weapons that could fuel conflicts in the Middle East. "Americans are already angry, upset, and wanting to take this issue to the Security Council. We want four permanent members of the (U.N. Security) Council to stand up to America," Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised speech.

"Particularly, we expect Russia and China to resist this U.S. plot. America will not succeed ... and we will increase our defence capabilities as we have been doing so even under sanctions." Tehran and its rival Saudi Arabia, a close U.S. ally, have been involved in proxy wars and political confrontations in the region for decades, from Iraq and Syria to Bahrain and Yemen. Council veto-powers Russia and China have already signalled they are against re-imposing an arms embargo on Iran.

If the U.N. Security Council does not extend the embargo, Washington has threatened to trigger a so-called snapback of all U.N. sanctions on Iran, including the arms embargo, using a process outlined in the nuclear deal. However, Russia and China, both parties to the deal, have already started making the case at the United Nations against Washington's claim that it can trigger a return of all sanctions on Iran at the Security Council.

The United States withdrew from the deal in 2018, arguing it was flawed to Tehran's advantage, and has reimposed sanctions crippling Iran's economy. Under the deal, Iran agreed to halt its sensitive nuclear work in exchange for sanctions relief. Iran has gradually rolled back its commitments under the accord since the United States quit. The nuclear deal allows for a return of sanctions on Iran, including the arms embargo, if Tehran violates the deal.

Writing by Parisa Hafezi, Editing by William Maclean



IRAQ:

NSTR



INDIA:

NSTR



PAKISTAN:

Why Pakistan Risked Everything To Build Nuclear Weapons

By: Kyle Mizokami for [The National Interest](#) // June 7, 2020

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

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

Pakistan's nuclear program goes back to the 1950s, during the early days of its rivalry with India. President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto [famously said](#) in 1965, "If India builds the bomb, we will eat grass or leaves, even go hungry, but we will get one of our own." The program became a higher priority after the country's 1971 defeat at the hands of India, which caused East Pakistan to break away and become Bangladesh. Experts believe the humiliating loss of territory, [much more](#) than reports that India was pursuing nuclear weapons, accelerated the Pakistani nuclear program. India tested its first bomb, codenamed "Smiling Buddha," in May 1974, putting the subcontinent on the road to nuclearization.

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

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

Benazir Bhutto later claimed that Pakistan's bombs were stored disassembled until 1998, when India tested six bombs in a span of three days.

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

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

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

Pakistani nuclear weapons are under control of the military's Strategic Plans Division, and are primarily stored in Punjab Province, far from the northwest frontier and the Taliban. Ten thousand Pakistani troops and intelligence personnel from the SPD guard the weapons. Pakistan claims that the weapons are only armed by the appropriate code at the last moment, preventing a "rogue nuke" scenario.

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

Pakistan currently has a nuclear "triad" of nuclear delivery systems based on land, in the air and at sea. Islamabad is believed to have modified American-built F-16A fighters and possibly French-made Mirage fighters to deliver nuclear bombs by 1995. Since the fighters would have to penetrate India's air defense network to deliver their payloads against cities and other targets, Pakistani aircraft would likely be deliver tactical nuclear weapons against battlefield targets.

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

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

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

Kyle Mizokami is a defense and national-security writer based in San Francisco who has appeared in the Diplomat, Foreign Policy, War is Boring and the Daily Beast. In 2009, he cofounded the defense and security blog Japan Security Watch. You can follow him on Twitter: [@KyleMizokami](#). This article first appeared two years ago and is being republished due to reader interest.



UNITED KINGDOM:

NSTR



FRANCE:

NSTR



Germany:

Germany: American troop reduction could harm NATO security

By: [David Rising, The Associated Press](#) and [Zeke Miller, The Associated Press](#) for the Military Times // 1 hour ago

BERLIN — Germany’s defense minister suggested Monday that U.S. President Donald Trump’s reported plans to withdraw more than a quarter of American troops out of Germany could weaken not only the NATO alliance but the U.S. itself.

Trump is said to have signed off on a plan to [reduce the total of troops stationed in Germany](#) from 34,500 to no more than 25,000, according to reports by The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal, but German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer told reporters that Berlin hasn’t yet been informed of any such move. A White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters, confirmed to The Associated Press that there are plans to move troops, saying some could go to Poland while others could go elsewhere.

The decision is part of the president’s and Department of Defense efforts to review combatant commands around the globe, the official said. If the U.S. goes ahead, Kramp-Karrenbauer suggested the move would do more harm to NATO as a whole than to Germany’s own defense. “The fact is that the presence of U.S. soldiers in Germany serves the entire NATO alliance security, including America’s own security,” she said. “That is the basis on which we work together.”

In Brussels, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg sidestepped a question on the decision, saying that in general “over the last few years we have actually seen an increase in the U.S. presence” in Europe. “What I can say is that we are constantly consulting with the United States, with other

NATO allies on the military posture and presence in Europe,” he said. The Trump administration has been urging Germany to spend more on its defense to meet the NATO goal of spending [2 percent of gross domestic product on defense](#), and American officials in the past had raised the possibility of moving troops out as a veiled threat.

As such, the government’s coordinator for trans-Atlantic relations, Peter Beyer, said if the plan is confirmed it wouldn’t be a surprise, but that it was irritating to first learn of the possibility through media reports. “The German-American relationship could be severely affected by such a decision of the U.S. president,” Beyer told the dpa news agency. “It’s not just about 9,500 soldiers, but also about their families, so about 20,000 Americans. This would break down trans-Atlantic bridges.”

The days are long gone when hundreds of thousands of American troops were stationed in Germany as a bulwark against the possibility of a Soviet invasion. Today, the country is much more a hub for wider American military operations. Facilities include Ramstein Air Base, critical for operations in the Middle East and Africa and headquarters to the U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Africa; the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, which has saved the lives of countless Americans wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan; and the headquarters of both U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command in Stuttgart.

Germany is also home to the headquarters of U.S. Army Europe in Wiesbaden, an F-16 fighter base in Spangdahlem, and the Grafenwoehr Training Area, the largest NATO training facility in Europe. “If this is confirmed, you have to ask yourself what impact this will have on NATO and the security architecture in Europe,” Beyer said. Germany has been increasing its defense spending and the issue of troops had lain dormant for many months.

It wasn’t immediately clear why it was being brought up again, but Trump’s decision came shortly after Chancellor Angela Merkel said that she wouldn’t attend a Group of Seven summit in person in the U.S. if the president decided to go ahead with it. Shortly after the chancellor’s announcement, Trump said he was postponing the summit. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas acknowledged over the weekend that current ties with Washington were “complicated.”

He voiced concerns in an interview with Bild newspaper that the U.S. presidential election campaign could further polarize Washington and stoke populist politics. “Then co-existence within the country doesn’t just become harder, it also fuels conflicts on the international level,” he was quoted as saying. “That’s the last thing we need.”

Zeke Miller reported from Washington. Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed to this report.



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North Korea building up nuclear arsenal, researchers say

By: [Elizabeth Shim](#) for the UPI News Bureau // June 9, 2020 / 8:20 AM

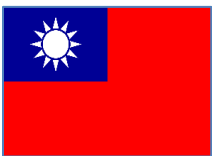
June 9 (UPI) -- [North Korea](#) may have as many as 35 nuclear warheads in its arsenal, up from a previous estimate, according to a Japanese think tank.

The Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, RECNA, at Nagasaki University says North Korea's weapons are included in a global total of 13,410 nuclear weapons, Japanese news agency Kyodo News reported Tuesday. North Korea's warheads lag far behind other countries. **Russia is No. 1** on RECNA's list, with 6,370 nuclear warheads, followed by the **United States** at 5,800 and **China** at 320, according to the report.

Other countries keep more than 100 nuclear warheads. According to RECNA's estimates, **France** retains 290 warheads, followed by **Britain at 195**, Pakistan at 160, and India at 150. **Israel** has developed about 80 to 90 nuclear weapons. The number of nuclear weapons worldwide is down, RECNA says, with 470 less weapons than a year ago. **North Korea** has increased its nuclear arsenal, however, according to the estimates. In 2019, RECNA calculated about 20 to 30 nuclear weapons for the isolated country.

China has also added about 30 nuclear weapons since 2019, a year of high tensions with the United States, RECNA said. Top U.S. weapons expert Siegfried Hecker has previously said North Korea would never give a full declaration of its nuclear weapons. "A complete account of North Korea's nuclear weapons, materials and facilities would, in Kim [Jong Un's] view, likely be far too risky in that it would essentially provide a targeting list for U.S. military planners and seal the inevitable end of the nuclear program and possibly his regime," [Hecker wrote](#) in 2018.

The North Korean leader has previously proposed dismantling the Yongbyon nuclear complex if the United States takes reciprocal measures -- namely sanctions relief. Recent satellite [imagery analysis](#) by U.S. analyst **Jacob Bogle** indicates North Korea could be maintaining underground facilities near Yongbyon, in an adjacent workers' district.



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