

WASHINGTON ICBM CONTRACTORS (ICons) GROUP



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May DC ICons:

Virtual on 26 May from 1100-1200 (EDT) with Mr. Drew Walters, currently performing the duties of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Matters.

ADMINISTRATION/PROGRAM SPECIFICS

Malmstrom Defenders recognize National Police Week

341st Missile Wing Public Affairs, 11 May 20 Senior Airman Jacob M. Thompson

MALMSTROM AIR FORCE BASE, Mont. -- The 341st Security Forces Group will be recognizing National Police Week May 10-16.

"This week pays special recognition to those law enforcement officers nationwide who have lost their lives in the line of duty for the safety and protection of others," said Master Sgt. Gerard Ellis, 841st Missile Security Forces Squadron operations NCO in charge.

National Police week has been recognized since 1962, when President John F. Kennedy proclaimed Police Week as a national recognition week.

"Security forces Airmen play various rolls in law enforcement, safety of the public and security of national resources," said Ellis. "It is definitely befitting that Malmstrom defenders are recognized and if possible participate the week's events."

Typically, Police Week at Malmstrom has various events held during the week to pay tribute to fallen law enforcement members. With the current uncertainty with COVID-19 causing a disruption to normal routine, Police Week will be altered from previous iterations of the event.

"Police week will look different this year, because typically police week is designed with a function every day to bring people together and memorialize," said Master Sgt. William Blado, 341st Missile Security Operations Squadron tactical response force flight chief. "With social distancing still in effect, it goes against the very purpose of Peace Officers Memorial Day and National Police Week, but we have still found ways to commemorate this important week."

Defenders will be taking part in a 24-hour ruck march, as well as concluding the week with a retreat ceremony.

"The ruck march is being conducted to honor fallen peace officers," said Blado. "We will also be collecting canned food for donation to resupply pantries diminished due to COVID-19."

Although the usual activities of police week won't go on, it is important to recognize Law Enforcement personnel and the critical part they have in preserving our country's freedom.

"It is only right that we remember, honor, and celebrate those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice in these lines of duty," Blado said

Report to Congress on Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons.

The following is the May 4, 2020 Congressional Research Service report, Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons.

From: the USNI by the CRS // May 7, 2020 9:15 AM

From the report

Recent debates about U.S. nuclear weapons have questioned what role weapons with shorter ranges and lower yields can play in addressing emerging threats in Europe and Asia. These weapons, often referred to as nonstrategic nuclear weapons, have not been limited by past U.S.-Russian arms control agreements. Some analysts argue such limits would be of value, particularly in addressing Russia's greater numbers of these types of weapons. Others have argued that the United States should expand its deployments of these weapons, in both Europe and Asia, to address new risks of war conducted under a nuclear shadow. The Trump Administration addressed these questions in the Nuclear Posture Review released in February 2018, and determined that the United States should acquire two new types of nuclear weapons: a new low-yield warhead for submarine-launched ballistic missiles and a new sea-launched cruise missile.

During the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union both deployed nonstrategic nuclear weapons for use in the field during a conflict. While there are several ways to distinguish between strategic and nonstrategic nuclear weapons, most analysts consider nonstrategic weapons to be shorter-range delivery systems with lower-yield warheads that might attack troops or facilities on the battlefield. They have included nuclear mines; artillery; short-, medium-, and long-range ballistic missiles; cruise missiles; and gravity bombs. In contrast with the longer-range "strategic" nuclear weapons, these weapons had a lower profile in policy debates and arms control negotiations, possibly because they did not pose a direct threat to the continental United States. At the end of the 1980s, each nation still had thousands of these weapons deployed with their troops in the field, aboard naval vessels, and on aircraft.

In 1991, the United States and Soviet Union both withdrew from deployment most and eliminated from their arsenals many of their nonstrategic nuclear weapons. The United States now has approximately 500 nonstrategic nuclear weapons, with around 200 deployed with aircraft in Europe and the remaining stored in the United States. Estimates vary, but experts believe Russia still has between 1,000 and 6,000 warheads for nonstrategic nuclear weapons in its arsenal. The Bush Administration quietly redeployed some U.S. weapons deployed in Europe, while the Obama Administration retired older sea-launched cruise missiles. Russia, however seems to have increased its reliance on nuclear weapons in its national security concept.

Analysts have identified a number of issues with the continued deployment of U.S. and Russian nonstrategic nuclear weapons. In the past, these have included questions about the safety and security of Russia's weapons and the possibility that some might be lost, stolen, or sold to another nation or group. These issues still include questions about the role of these weapons in U.S. and Russian security policy; questions about the role that these weapons play in NATO policy and whether there is a continuing need for the United States to deploy them at bases overseas; questions about the implications of the disparity in numbers between U.S. and Russian nonstrategic nuclear weapons; and questions about the relationship between nonstrategic nuclear weapons and U.S. nonproliferation policy.

Some argue that these weapons do not create any problems and the United States should not alter its policy. Others argue that the United States should expand its deployments of these weapons in response to challenges from Russia, China, and North Korea. Some believe the United States should reduce its reliance on these weapons and encourage Russia to do the same. Many have suggested that the United States and Russia expand efforts to cooperate on ensuring the safe and secure storage and elimination of these weapons; others have suggested that they negotiate an arms

control treaty that would limit these weapons and allow for increased transparency in monitoring their deployment and elimination. The 116th Congress may review some of these proposals.

News & Opinion

New Nuclear Threats to the U.S.: Better to Deter Them or Play Dead?

by [Peter Huessy](#) for the Gatestone Institute // May 14, 2020 at 4:00 am

- *At present, exactly zero percent of America's nuclear platforms are modernized.*
- *Worse, when, in 2017, General Hyten... warned of the Russian threat, a common counter-narrative in the U.S. arms control community – and shared by some members of Congress -- was that simply by proposing to modernize a then-rusting nuclear deterrent, the United States was "leading an arms race."*
- *Even these critics, however, had to know that it takes years to research, develop, test, and then build highly complex nuclear forces, so that no new U.S. nuclear deployments would even be able to start until 2029.*
- *Russia has already completed 87% of its arms race while the US is just putting on its track shoes. The door to an arms race was opened long ago -- but by Russia, not the United States.*
- *Without nuclear modernization, unfortunately, the United States cannot keep a credible nuclear deterrent against its nuclear armed enemies - not only Russia but also China, whose nuclear arsenal is scheduled to double in the next decade, according to the Defense Intelligence Agency.*

Now that 184 countries are grappling with the medical and economic convulsions of China's CCP coronavirus that seems to have originated in a bio-warfare laboratory in Wuhan, what other catastrophes might be headed our way, especially ones we have been forewarned about? What if America's adversaries might start to believe that because the US has a Covid-19 crisis on its hands, the nation might be distracted and vulnerable, so that now might be a good time to strike?

If such adversaries think the US does not have a strong deterrent, does that make it an even more tempting target? Last month, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu [said](#) that by the end of 2020, Russia will have modernized 87% of its nuclear arsenal, up from its current 82%. Many Americans might shrug it off and say that the Russians are simply being their normal selves, just like the Soviets, year after year, building and modernizing their nuclear weapons.

Many Americans might also assume that the United States would be keeping up to make sure that the Russians were not about to get the nuclear drop on the US, right? ----- Not quite. The United States, in fact, remains considerably [behind the Russians](#). For nearly three decades after the end of the Cold War, a euphoric United States stopped taking nuclear deterrence seriously. The current administration, therefore, inherited a nuclear deterrent 40-50 years old. Its submarines had first been [deployed in 1981](#), its B-52 bomber [cruise missiles in 1982](#), and its Minuteman land-based [missiles in 1970](#).

At present, exactly zero percent of America's nuclear platforms are modernized.

This dangerous "[procurement holiday](#)" dates back to the end of the Cold War in 1991, when leaders in the West presumably imagined that modernized systems would no longer be needed. The problem is, presidents and Congresses have been warned. The US has known for some time that the [Russians are fully modernizing](#) their nuclear weapons. The US has also been aware that the Russians were increasing the role of nuclear weapons in their security strategy, and had also adopted a policy of "[escalate to win](#)."

In this strategy, the Russians would use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons early in a crisis, based on the assumption that in face of such threats, the United States would stand down. Several years ago, for example, the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, the senior U.S. military officer responsible for nuclear strategy, General John Hyten, [told Congress](#) that by 2020, the Russians would have fully modernized at least 70% of their nuclear arsenal.

Hyten not only [warned](#) about the Russia's new "escalate to win" policy; he also took stock of the fact that while the United States had decided -- belatedly -- to modernize its nuclear forces, it was still nearly 15 years away from fielding its first modernized nuclear platform. Regrettably, not everyone in Congress and the nuclear disarmament community listened. For many in politics, after all, it was assumed that the U.S. would "reset" relations with Russia and nuclear threats were happily diminishing toward a "[global zero](#)."

Worse, when, in 2017, General Hyten, (now Vice Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff), [warned of the Russian threat](#), a common counter-narrative in the U.S. arms control community -- and shared by some members of Congress -- was that simply by proposing to modernize a then-rusting nuclear deterrent, the United States was "leading an arms race." Even these critics, however, had to know that it takes years to research, develop, test, and then build highly complex nuclear forces, so that no new U.S. nuclear deployments would even be able to start until 2029.

An ideological attachment to the arms control catechism of the day, particularly among the advocates of "global zero," trumped any common-sense support of the potential necessity, even to use as a deterrent, for U.S. nuclear modernization. Instead, what many disarmers [proposed](#) was the elimination of more than half of U.S. nuclear armed submarines, and 100% of America's land-based nuclear missiles and air-launched nuclear cruise missiles -- all eliminated unilaterally, without the Russians reducing anything

In 2018, nuclear critics in the Democratic party, now in the House majority, called for the unilateral "[roll back](#)" of the entire ICBM leg of the US nuclear Triad (land, sea and air) to curtail a supposedly "[overly aggressive nuclear strategy](#)" by the Trump administration. The proposal appears intended to prevent a presumed "[expansion](#)" of the US nuclear arsenal. Ironically, the Trump administration's nuclear modernization effort at that time was nearly identical to the Obama administration's effort: keeping America's nuclear forces strictly within the New START Treaty limits.

The Trump administration's policy at the time did not seek to expand the U.S. arsenal by even a single nuclear warhead. Even today, however, despite Russia's confirmation that its nuclear forces are nearly fully modernized, and that the new U.S. modernization effort may not be putting new forces in the field until 2029, the same nuclear critics still do not seem to understand the strategy of deterrence: if you look disarmed and easy to overrun, you are inviting aggression, but if you do not look easy to overrun, people might think twice before attacking you.

Former President Ronald Reagan called it, "Peace through strength". It was how, in large part, by building up the US nuclear arsenal and promising subsequently to build robust missile defenses, he induced the Soviet Union, unable to keep up, to collapse. Even so, one unilateral disarmer

inexplicably [wondered recently](#) if the current U.S. planned nuclear modernization effort might somehow open "the door to an expensive nuclear arms race".

This critic may be unaware that Russia has already completed 87% of its arms race while the US is just putting on its track shoes. The door to an arms race was opened long ago -- but by Russia, not the United States. Sputnik News [reports](#):

- *"Russia's nuclear forces have received or are in the process of receiving a series of new weapons in recent years, including the RS-28 Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile, the Avangard hypersonic boost-glide vehicle, and the Kinzhal air-launched hypersonic cruise missile. The maritime leg of the country's nuclear triad has seen the deployment of the new Borei class of strategic missile submarines equipped with R-30 Bulava ballistic missiles. Russia has also upgraded its fleet of Tu-95MS 'Bear' and Tu-160 'White Swan' bombers, increasing their range and capabilities and equipping them with new cruise missiles."*

The current U.S. administration is fully aware of the Russian challenge and has robustly funded a U.S. nuclear deterrent. The modernization plan was approved by Congress -- although there is a worrisome emerging decline in the margin of support. Without nuclear modernization, unfortunately, the United States cannot keep a credible nuclear deterrent against its nuclear armed enemies -- not only Russia but also China, whose nuclear arsenal is [scheduled to double](#) in the next decade, according to the **Defense Intelligence Agency**.

It is widely anticipated that the scope of U.S. nuclear deterrent modernization might be a debate topic this election year. Some members of the House and Senate, [may again push unilaterally](#) to reduce much of America's nuclear arsenal to a level even as low as 20% of Russia's current deployed nuclear arsenal. U.S. lawmakers may also again [push to require](#) that Congress must first approve any presidential decision to use nuclear weapons, thereby making a timely U.S. response to a surprise enemy nuclear attack virtually impossible.

Still other members of Congress may push to pass a [new legal requirement](#) that the United States pledge not to use nuclear weapons, even if the country was attacked and suffered millions of casualties from enemy biological, chemical, or cyber weapons. Is this, then, the right time for the U.S. to stop nuclear modernization or hamstringing its nuclear deterrent strategy? History illustrates how deadly being unprepared to face real threats can be, as in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the terrorist attacks of 9-11 or the coronavirus pandemic.

However serious these events were, most people probably know how much worse the outcome would be if an adversary initiated the use of nuclear weapons against the United States. By now, the U.S. should know that its nuclear-armed adversaries are serious about using nuclear weapons -- either straightforwardly or for coercive leverage -- if they think they can get away it and avoid painful retaliation.

The only sensible plan, therefore, is for the United States to maintain a nuclear deterrent second to none, to deter not only the threat of nuclear weapons but their straightforward employment, should it come to that. In the election this November, Americans face a choice -- whether to continue with the planned modernization of America's nuclear forces, or yet again to kick nuclear modernization down the road and again pretend that nuclear threats -- that are potentially existential to the United States -- do not in fact exist.

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Weapons, Opportunity Costs, COVID19 and Avoiding Nuclear War

National Interest, 11 May 20 Steven Pifer

The Department of Defense has begun to ratchet up spending to recapitalize the U.S. strategic nuclear triad and its supporting infrastructure, as several programs move from research and development into the procurement phase. The projected Pentagon expenditures are at least \$167 billion from 2021-2025. This amount does not include the large nuclear warhead sustainment and modernization costs funded by the Department of Energy, projected to cost \$81 billion over the next five years.

Nuclear forces require modernization, but that will entail opportunity costs. In a budget environment that offers little prospect of greater defense spending, especially in the COVID19 era, more money for nuclear forces will mean less funding for conventional capabilities.

That has potentially negative consequences for the security of the United States and its allies. While nuclear forces provide day-to-day deterrence, the Pentagon leadership spends most of its time thinking about how to employ conventional forces to manage security challenges around the world. The renewed focus on great power competition further elevates the importance of conventional forces. It is important to get the balance between nuclear and conventional forces right, particularly as the most likely path to use of nuclear arms would be an escalation of a conventional conflict. Having robust conventional forces to prevail in or deter a conventional conflict in the first place could avert a nuclear crisis or worse.

Nuclear Weapons and Budgets

For the foreseeable future, the United States will continue to rely on nuclear deterrence for its security and that of its allies (whether we should be comfortable with that prospect is another question). Many U.S. nuclear weapons systems are aging, and replacing them will cost money, lots of money. The Pentagon's five-year plan for its nuclear weapons programs proposes \$29 billion in fiscal year 2021, rising to \$38 billion in fiscal year 2025, as programs move from research and development to procurement. The plan envisages a total of \$167 billion over five years. And that total may be understated; weapons costs increase not just as they move to the procurement phase, but as cost overruns and other issues drive the costs up compared to earlier projections.

The Pentagon knew that the procurement "bow wave" of nuclear weapons spending would hit in the 2020s and that funding it would pose a challenge. In October 2015, the principal deputy undersecretary of defense said "We're looking at that big bow wave and wondering how the heck we're going to pay for it and probably thanking our stars that we won't be here to have to answer the question."

The Pentagon's funding request for fiscal year 2021 includes \$4.4 billion for the new Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine that will replace Ohio-class submarines, which will begin to be retired at the end of the decade; \$1.2 billion for the life extension program for the Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM); \$1.5 billion for the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) to replace the Minuteman III ICBM; \$2.8 billion for the B-21 stealth bomber that will replace the B-1 and B-2 bombers; \$500 million for the Long-Range Standoff Missile that will arm B-52 and B-21 bombers; and \$7 billion for nuclear command, control and communications systems.

The Pentagon funds primarily go to delivery and command and control systems for nuclear weapons. The National Nuclear Security Administration

at the Department of Energy bears the costs of the warheads themselves. It seeks \$15.6 billion for five nuclear warhead life-extension and other infrastructure programs in fiscal year 2021, the first year of a five-year plan totaling \$81 billion. The fiscal year 2021 request is nearly \$3 billion more than the agency had earlier planned to ask, which suggests these programs are encountering significant cost growth.

Some look at these figures and the overall defense budget (the Pentagon wants a total of \$740 billion for fiscal year 2021) and calculate that the cost of building and operating U.S. nuclear forces will amount to “only” 6-7 percent of the defense budget. That may be true, but how relevant is that figure?

By one estimate, the cost of building and operating the F-35 fighter program for the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy and U.S. Marines over the program’s lifetime will be \$1 trillion. Amortized over 50 years, that amounts to \$20 billion per year or “only” 2.7 percent of the Defense Department’s fiscal year 2021 budget request. The problem is that these percentages and lots of other “small” percentages add up. When one includes all of the programs, plus personnel and readiness costs as well as everything else that the Pentagon wants, the percentages will total to more than 100 percent of the figure that Congress is prepared to appropriate for defense.

Opportunity Costs

The defense budget is unlikely to grow. Opportunity costs represent the things the Pentagon has to give up or forgo in order to fund its nuclear weapons programs. The military services gave an indication of these costs with their “unfunded priorities lists,” which this year total \$18 billion. These show what the services would like to buy if they had additional funds, and that includes a lot of conventional weapons.

The Air Force, for example, would like to procure an additional twelve F-35 fighters as well as fund advance procurement for an additional twelve F-35s in fiscal year 2022. It would also like to buy three more tanker aircraft than budgeted.

The Army is reorienting from counter-insurgency operations in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq to facing off against major peer competitors, that is, Russia and China. Its wish list includes more long-range precision fires (artillery and short-range surface-to-surface missiles), a new combat vehicle, helicopters and more air and missile defense systems.

The Navy would like to add five F-35s to its aircraft buy, but its bigger desire is more attack submarines and warships, given its target of building up to a fleet of 355 ships. The Navy termed a second Virginia-class attack submarine its top unfunded priority in fiscal year 2021. It has set a requirement for 66 attack submarines and currently has about 50. However, as older Los Angeles-class submarines retire, that number could fall to 42. Forgoing construction of a Virginia-class submarine does not help to close that gap.

Moreover, the total number of Navy ships, now 293, will decline in the near term, widening the gap to get to 355. The Navy’s five-year shipbuilding program cut five of twelve planned Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, and cost considerations have led the Navy to decide to retire ten older Burke-class destroyers rather than extend their service life for an additional ten years. This comes when China is rapidly expanding its navy, and Russian attack submarines are returning on a more regular cycle to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Navy has said that funding the first Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine forced a cut-back in the number of other ships in its fiscal 2021 shipbuilding request. The decision not to fund a second Virginia-class attack submarine appears to stem directly from the unexpected \$3 billion plus-up in funding for the National Nuclear Security Administration's fiscal year 2021 programs.

These are the opportunity costs of more nuclear weapons: fewer dollars for aircraft, ships, attack submarines and ground combat equipment for conventional deterrence and defense.

Nuclear War and Deterring Conventional Conflict

The principal driving factor behind the size of U.S. nuclear forces comes from Russian nuclear forces and doctrine. Diverse and effective U.S. nuclear forces that can deter a Russian nuclear attack should suffice to deter a nuclear attack by any third country. In contrast to the Cold War, the U.S. military no longer seems to worry much about a “bolt from the blue”—a sudden Soviet or Russian first strike involving a massive number of nuclear weapons designed to destroy the bulk of U.S. strategic forces before they could launch. That is because, under any conceivable scenario, sufficient U.S. strategic forces—principally on ballistic missile submarines at sea—would survive to inflict a devastating retaliatory response.

The most likely scenario for nuclear use between the United States and Russia is a regional conflict fought at the conventional level in which one side begins to lose and decides to escalate by employing a small number of low-yield nuclear weapons, seeking to reverse battlefield losses and signal the strength of its resolve. Questions thus have arisen about whether Russia has an “escalate-to-deescalate” doctrine and whether the 2018 U.S. nuclear posture review lowers the threshold for use of nuclear weapons.

If the United States and its allies have sufficiently robust conventional forces, they can prevail in a regional conflict at the conventional level and push any decision about first use of nuclear weapons onto the other side (Russia, or perhaps China or North Korea depending on the scenario). The other side would have to weigh carefully the likelihood that its first use of nuclear weapons would trigger a nuclear response, opening the decidedly grim prospect of further nuclear escalation and of things spinning out of control. The other side's leader might calculate that he/she could control the escalation, but that gamble would come with no guarantee. It would appear a poor bet given the enormous consequences if things go wrong. Happily, the test has never been run.

This is why the opportunity costs of nuclear weapons programs matter. If those programs strip too much funding from conventional forces, they weaken the ability of the United States and its allies to prevail in a conventional conflict—or to deter that conflict in the first place—and increase the possibility that the United States might have to employ nuclear weapons to avert defeat.

For the United States and NATO members, that could mean reemphasis on an aspect of NATO's Cold War defense policy. In the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, NATO allies faced Soviet and Warsaw Pact conventional forces that had large numerical advantages, and NATO leaders had doubts about their ability to defeat a Soviet/Warsaw Pact attack at the conventional level. NATO policy thus explicitly envisaged that, if direct defense with conventional means failed, the Alliance could deliberately escalate to nuclear weapons. That left many senior NATO political and military officials uneasy. Among other things, it raised uncomfortable questions about the willingness of an American president to risk Chicago for Bonn.

Russia found itself in a similar situation at the end of the 1990s. With a collapsing economy following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Russian government had to cut defense spending dramatically. As its conventional capabilities atrophied, Moscow adopted a doctrine envisaging first use of nuclear weapons to compensate. (In the past fifteen years, as Russia's defense spending has increased, a significant amount has gone to modernizing conventional forces.)

The United States and NATO still retain the option of first use of nuclear weapons. If the U.S. president and NATO leaders were to consider resorting to that option, they then would be the ones to have to consider the dicey bet that the other side would not respond with nuclear arms or that, if it did, nuclear escalation somehow could be controlled.

Assuring NATO allies that the United States was prepared to risk Chicago for Bonn consumed a huge amount of time and fair amount of resources during the Cold War. At one point, the U.S. military deployed more than 7000 nuclear weapons in Europe to back up that assurance. Had NATO had sufficiently strong conventional forces, the Alliance would have been able to push that risky decision regarding nuclear first use onto Moscow—or even have been able to take comfort that the allies' conventional power would suffice to deter a Soviet/Warsaw Pact attack.

In modernizing, maintaining and operating a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent, the United States should avoid underfunding conventional forces in ways that increase the prospect of conventional defeat and/or that might tempt an adversary to launch a conventional attack. If Washington gets the balance wildly out of sync, it increases the possibility that the president might face the decision of whether to use nuclear weapons first—knowing that first use would open a Pandora's box of incalculable and potentially catastrophic consequences.

Getting the Balance Right in the COVID19 Era

This means that the Department of Defense and Congress should take a hard look at the balance. The Pentagon presumably has weighed the trade-offs, though it is not a unitary actor. "Nuclear weapons are our top priority" has been the view of the leadership. The trade-offs have been easier to manage in the past several years, when nuclear programs were in the research and development phase, and defense budgets in the first three years of the Trump administration grew. As nuclear programs move into the more expensive procurement phase and the fiscal year 2021 budget shows little increase, the challenge of getting the balance right between nuclear and conventional spending has become more acute. It is not apparent that the Pentagon has weighed the opportunity costs over the next ten-fifteen years under less optimistic budget scenarios.

As for Congress, which ultimately sets and approves the budget, no evidence suggests that the legislative branch has closely considered the nuclear vs. conventional trade-offs.

All that was before COVID19. The response to the virus and dealing with the economic disruption it has caused have generated a multi-trillion-dollar budget deficit in 2020 and likely will push up deficits in at least 2021. It would be wise now to consider the impact of COVID19.

Having added trillions of dollars to the federal deficit, and facing an array of pressing health and social needs, will Congress be prepared to continue to devote some 50 percent of discretionary funding to the Department of Defense's requirements? Quite possibly not. If defense budgets get cut, the Pentagon will face a choice: shift funds from nuclear to conventional force programs, or accept shrinkage of U.S. conventional force capabilities

and—as the United States did in the 1950s and early 1960s—rely on nuclear deterrence to address a broader range of contingencies. In the latter case, that would mean accepting, at least implicitly, a greater prospect that the president would have to face the question of first use of nuclear weapons, i.e., a conventional conflict in which the United States was losing.

This is not to suggest that the U.S. military should forgo the strategic triad. Trident II SLBMs onboard ballistic missile submarines at sea remain the most survivable leg of the strategic deterrent. The bomber/air-breathing leg offers flexibility and can carry out conventional missions. The ICBM leg provides a hedge against a breakthrough in anti-submarine warfare. Moreover, if in a crisis or a conventional conflict, the Russian military were to develop the capability to attack U.S. ballistic missile submarines at sea, the Kremlin leadership might well calculate that it could do so without risking a nuclear response. Attacking U.S. ICBMs, on the other hand, would necessitate pouring hundreds of nuclear warheads into the center of America. A Russian leader presumably would not be so foolish as to think there would be no nuclear retaliation.

While sustaining the ICBM leg, one can question whether maintaining 400 deployed ICBMs, as the current plan envisages, is necessary. Reducing that number for the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) would achieve budget savings, albeit later in the production run. Another question is whether some way might be found to extend the service life of some portion of the current Minuteman III force that would allow delaying the GBSD program, which is projected to cost \$100 billion, by ten-fifteen years and postponing those costs—freeing up funds in the near term for conventional force requirements.

Another issue concerns the Long-Range Standoff Missile (LRSO) and its cost, estimated at some \$20 billion when including the nuclear warheads. The B-21 bomber will incorporate stealth and advanced electronic warfare capabilities allowing it to operate against and penetrate sophisticated air defenses. The LRSO, to be deployed beginning in 2030, is intended to replace older air-launched cruise missiles carried by the B-52 bomber and could later equip the B-21 if it loses its ability to penetrate.

An alternative plan would convert B-52s in 2030 to conventional-only missions and delay the LRSO to a future point if/when it appeared that the B-21's ability to penetrate could come into question. By 2030, the Air Force should have a significant number of B-21s (the B-21 is scheduled to make its first flight in 2021 and enter service in 2025). With at least 100 planned, the Air Force should have a sufficient number of B-21s for the 300 nuclear weapons it appears to maintain at airfields where nuclear-capable bombers are currently based.

These kinds of ideas would free up billions of dollars in the 2020s that could be reallocated to conventional weapons systems. Delaying the GBSD and LRSO and their associated warhead programs by just one year (fiscal year 2021) would make available some \$3 billion—enough money for a Virginia-class attack submarine. Delaying those programs for ten-fifteen years would make tens of billions of dollars available for the military's conventional force needs.

All things being equal, it is smarter and more efficient to choose to make decisions to curtail or delay major programs rather than to continue them until the money runs out and forces program termination. As it examines the administration's proposed fiscal year 2021 defense budget, Congress should carefully consider the trade-offs and press the Pentagon to articulate how it weighed the trade-offs between nuclear and conventional forces. In the end, Congress should understand whether it is funding the force that is most likely to deter not just a nuclear attack, but to deter a conventional conflict that could entail the most likely path to nuclear war.

New START Treaty Looks Dead in the Water

By Patrick Tucker Technology Editor for Defense One // May 12, 2020

Unless Trump leads, observers say hopes for renewing the arms control deal with Russia, or a bigger one with China, will expire next year.

Last week, the new U.S. envoy on arms control reiterated the Trump administration's stance on New START: China should join the strategic arms treaty between the U.S. and Russia, or Washington may allow it to lapse next year. The former outcome, in theory, would increase the stability of relations between major nuclear powers. But some experts say the administration is gambling with a key arms-control agreement to pursue a goal it has no chance of obtaining, thus pushing the globe to a new nuclear arms race.

The New START treaty limits U.S. and Russian deployed strategic nuclear weapons and launch platforms and requires each side to allow inspections of its stockpile. It doesn't restrict the development of new missiles, and it doesn't cover China. Early in the Trump administration, officials began to suggest that they might not renew the treaty, signed by President Barack Obama in 2009. In a recent interview with the Washington Times, Marshall Billingslea, who last week was nominated to be undersecretary of state for arms control and currently serves as a special presidential envoy for arms control.

He said the deal "does nothing for the United States with respect to our concerns regarding China, and it does nothing for the United States with respect to our concerns regarding what Russia has been doing, which are a series of destabilizing activities outside of — and not constrained by — the treaty." Tim Morrison, senior fellow at Hudson Institute and former Trump White House official in charge of U.S. arms control policy, welcomed the stance. "

This is what a negotiation is all about: getting the other party or parties to give up something they don't want to give up in order to get a deal that benefits both parties. The starting position shouldn't be 'What does China want?' or 'what does Putin want?' The starting position must always be 'What is in America's national security interest?' If you don't agree, give me a call; I have an Edsel I can sell you for a great price," he told Defense One.

A former senior State Department official who spoke to Defense One in January said that it takes more than a special envoy or undersecretary to make something like a comprehensive trilateral arms control agreement work, especially between three competitive nuclear powers. "I think it will mean the president saying, 'I want to do this.' And it will mean him saying to his cabinet — Pompeo, Esper, the chairman [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff], etc. — 'We need to get this done.' So there has to be the high-level guidance."

The former State official cited the April 2009 meeting between Obama met with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, which produced a "clear joint statement with guidance to both interagencies in Washington and Moscow to move out and get the negotiations done. That was really the tool by which we were able to bring together a very powerful team to negotiate the New START treaty." Obama took a very hands-on approach to crafting and negotiating a deal, and pushed lower cabinet members to contribute.

That sort of attention from the Oval Office is necessary to get something like a major arms control deal negotiated, the former official said. Also, in 2009, there was some appetite for an agreement on both sides. In 2020, by contrast, Russia has said that it isn't interested in broadening New START to include things like hypersonic weapons and China isn't interested at all in meeting the Trump administration on its terms.

Trump is currently burdened by the coronavirus fight, fixated on reelection, and seems to devote more energy to a host of perceived grievances and vendettas than to arms control. All of that means that getting a three-way agreement now is going to be very difficult. "It's the leadership vacuum that worries me, [leadership] of the interagency. It's not going to be this negotiator riding in on a white horse that's going to save the day.

It's got to be top-level leadership, starting with the president and his cabinet secretaries working with the Russians to give high-level guidance," said the former official. The former official said that allies are open to a three-way arms control deal, in theory. But they also suspect that the Trump administration may be intentionally setting conditions to keep negotiations from even starting, "like the notion that you would force China early to the negotiating table before it's really ready and then when China doesn't want to start talking, say, well, we can't possibly extend New START.

That's been a worry among the allies, that there are some potential poison pills that the administration has put in place that could really spell the end of nuclear arms control as we've known it." One arms-control proponent agreed. -- "Billingslea made clear in the interview [with The Washington Times] his disdain for New START, misguided belief that Russia and China can be pressured to the negotiating table, including apparently via an arms race, and wildly unrealistic expectations for a new trilateral agreement," said Kingston Reif, director of disarmament and threat reduction policy at the Arms Control Association.

"Even if the administration had a realistic plan for negotiating a first-of-its-kind trilateral arms control deal, there isn't enough time to negotiate such an accord before New START expires next February." The obvious choice, Reif said, is to extend New START. "Doing so would preserve the many security benefits the treaty provides and buy additional time to attempt to negotiate a more far-reaching deal that includes additional types of nuclear weapons and nuclear-armed states not covered by New START," he said. Unless the goal is to "run out the clock" on New START — in which case the administration is doing just fine.

Bulging deficits may threaten prized Pentagon arms projects

By: Robert Burns, The Associated Press for the Military Times

WASHINGTON — The government's \$3 trillion effort to rescue the economy from the coronavirus crisis is stirring worry at the Pentagon.

Bulging federal deficits may force a reversal of years of big defense spending gains and threaten prized projects like the rebuilding of the nation's arsenal of nuclear weapons. Defense Secretary Mark Esper says the sudden burst of deficit spending to prop up a damaged economy is bringing the Pentagon closer to a point where it will have to shed older weapons faster and tighten its belt. "It has accelerated this day of reckoning," Esper said in an Associated Press interview.

It also sets up confrontations with Congress over how that reckoning will be achieved. Past efforts to eliminate older weapons and to make other cost-saving moves like closing under-used military bases met resistance. This being a presidential election year, much of this struggle may slip to

2021. If presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden wins, the pace of defense cuts could speed up, if he follows the traditional Democratic path to put less emphasis on defense buildups.

After Congress passed four programs to sustain the economy through the virus shock, the budget deficit — the gap between what the government spends and what it collects in taxes — will hit a record \$3.7 trillion this year, according to the Congressional Budget Office. By the time the budget year ends in September, the government's debt — its accumulated annual deficits — will equal 101% of the U.S. gross domestic product.

Rep. Ken Calvert of California, the ranking Republican on the House Appropriations defense subcommittee, says defense budgets were strained even before this year's unplanned burst of deficit spending. "There's no question that budgetary pressure will only increase now for all segments of our federal budget, including defense," Calvert said. For military leaders, the money crunch poses an economic threat that could undermine what they see as spending crucial to U.S. security.

One prominent example is the Trump administration's plan — inherited from the Obama administration — to pour hundreds of billions of dollars into replacing every major element of the nuclear weapons complex, from some of the warheads designed and built by the Energy Department to the bombers, submarines and land-based missiles that would deliver the warheads in combat.

Until now there has been a consensus in Congress supporting this nuclear modernization program, which includes replacing the aged communications systems that command and control nuclear weapons. Some House Democrats sought last year to block funding for the next-generation intercontinental ballistic missile, to replace the Minuteman 3, but they gave in and the project survived. Nuclear modernization is a fat target for budget cutters.

Mackenzie Eaglen, a defense specialist at the American Enterprise Institute, foresees the possibility of calls by some in Congress to reduce the planned fleet of Columbia-class nuclear ballistic missile submarines from 12 to perhaps nine. The Navy has estimated the total cost of this program at about \$110 billion, with each boat costing \$6.6 billion. The Navy several years ago accepted a two-year delay in the Columbia program, and according to a Congressional Research Service report last month, the first sub is now scheduled to enter service in 2031 and the number of subs in the fleet will drop to 10 for most of the 2030s as the current fleet of Ohio-class subs is retired.

Esper says nuclear modernization, at a price approaching \$1 trillion, is too important to put off, even in an economic crisis. "We're not going to risk the strategic deterrent," he told a Pentagon news conference May 5, referring to the overall nuclear arsenal, whose stated purpose is to deter a nuclear attack on the U.S. or its allies. "My inclination is not to risk any of the modernization programs. It's to go back and pull out more of the legacy programs."

But others, including supporters of nuclear modernization, say it's an obvious target for reductions. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated the first 10 years of the modernization plan will cost nearly \$500 billion, and that over a 30-year span the total would hit \$1.2 trillion, including the cost of sustaining the current force. In all, the administration's proposed nuclear weapons budget for 2021 would approach \$46 billion.

“There’s going to be a temptation to cut crucial programs like this because of the trillions and trillions of dollars that are being borrowed for the coronavirus stimulus,” said Fred Fleitz, president of the Center for Security Policy. He supports fully rebuilding the nuclear weapons complex. If Esper succeeds in shielding nuclear modernization, he likely will have to overcome obstacles to accelerating the elimination of older weapons programs, all of which have political constituencies.

Even the oldest of the Air Force’s aircraft have their strong defenders on Capitol Hill. For example, Sen. Martha McSally, an Arizona Republican and former Air Force pilot, has already reminded Air Force leaders she will fight reductions in A-10 Warthog planes. She said the Pentagon’s 2021 budget proposal would “prematurely phase out” 44 of those planes, which are used for supporting ground troops and first entered service in the 1970s.

Among other candidates for a faster phasing out or retirement are the B-1 non-nuclear bomber and the Air Force’s MQ-9 Reaper attack drone. The Reaper is vulnerable to modern air defenses. Other candidates are the Army’s Bradley Fighting Vehicle, which may give way to a new-generation combat vehicle, and some older Navy warships. In the face of these pressures, many in Congress are already brushing off the idea that the coronavirus crisis should force a spending slowdown.

Sen. Roger Wicker, a Mississippi Republican whose state is home to a major shipbuilding facility at Pascagoula, advocates for a \$20 billion boost to the Pentagon budget. “In terms of the \$3 trillion we’ve spent on our economy, it strikes me it’s a relative bargain to try to come up with \$20 billion, only \$20 billion, to get us back where we need to be where the top military leaders in our country tell us will keep us safe,” Wicker said at a hearing last week.

Report to Congress on Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons, (CRS Rpt Attached 45pgs)

From: the USNI by the CRS // May 7, 2020 9:15 AM

From the report

Recent debates about U.S. nuclear weapons have questioned what role weapons with shorter ranges and lower yields can play in addressing emerging threats in Europe and Asia. These weapons, often referred to as nonstrategic nuclear weapons, have not been limited by past U.S.-Russian arms control agreements. Some analysts argue such limits would be of value, particularly in addressing Russia’s greater numbers of these types of weapons. Others have argued that the United States should expand its deployments of these weapons, in both Europe and Asia, to address new risks of war conducted under a nuclear shadow. The Trump Administration addressed these questions in the Nuclear Posture Review released in February 2018, and determined that the United States should acquire two new types of nuclear weapons: a new low-yield warhead for submarine-launched ballistic missiles and a new sea-launched cruise missile.

During the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union both deployed nonstrategic nuclear weapons for use in the field during a conflict. While there are several ways to distinguish between strategic and nonstrategic nuclear weapons, most analysts consider nonstrategic weapons to be shorter-range delivery systems with lower-yield warheads that might attack troops or facilities on the battlefield. They have included nuclear mines; artillery; short-, medium-, and long-range ballistic missiles; cruise missiles; and gravity bombs. In contrast with the longer-range “strategic” nuclear weapons, these weapons had a lower profile in policy debates and arms control negotiations, possibly because they did not pose a direct threat to the

continental United States. At the end of the 1980s, each nation still had thousands of these weapons deployed with their troops in the field, aboard naval vessels, and on aircraft.

In 1991, the United States and Soviet Union both withdrew from deployment most and eliminated from their arsenals many of their nonstrategic nuclear weapons. The United States now has approximately 500 nonstrategic nuclear weapons, with around 200 deployed with aircraft in Europe and the remaining stored in the United States. Estimates vary, but experts believe Russia still has between 1,000 and 6,000 warheads for nonstrategic nuclear weapons in its arsenal. The Bush Administration quietly redeployed some U.S. weapons deployed in Europe, while the Obama Administration retired older sea-launched cruise missiles. Russia, however seems to have increased its reliance on nuclear weapons in its national security concept.

Analysts have identified a number of issues with the continued deployment of U.S. and Russian nonstrategic nuclear weapons. In the past, these have included questions about the safety and security of Russia's weapons and the possibility that some might be lost, stolen, or sold to another nation or group. These issues still include questions about the role of these weapons in U.S. and Russian security policy; questions about the role that these weapons play in NATO policy and whether there is a continuing need for the United States to deploy them at bases overseas; questions about the implications of the disparity in numbers between U.S. and Russian nonstrategic nuclear weapons; and questions about the relationship between nonstrategic nuclear weapons and U.S. nonproliferation policy.

Some argue that these weapons do not create any problems and the United States should not alter its policy. Others argue that the United States should expand its deployments of these weapons in response to challenges from Russia, China, and North Korea. Some believe the United States should reduce its reliance on these weapons and encourage Russia to do the same. Many have suggested that the United States and Russia expand efforts to cooperate on ensuring the safe and secure storage and elimination of these weapons; others have suggested that they negotiate an arms control treaty that would limit these weapons and allow for increased transparency in monitoring their deployment and elimination. The 116th Congress may review some of these proposals.

Chinese military action plausible as its leaders feel backed into a corner

by [Joel Gehrke](#) Washington Examiner // May 14, 2020 12:00 AM

China's anger at [taking](#) international [blame](#) for the coronavirus pandemic has raised the likelihood that Beijing will order a rare assault against a smaller neighbor, U.S. observers worry.

"They're doing things they haven't done before," Sen. Cory Gardner, a Colorado Republican who chairs the Foreign Relations [subcommittee](#) for East Asia and the Pacific, told the Washington Examiner. Any confrontation involving Chinese communist military forces and neighboring states would make a very rare break with precedent, as Beijing has avoided significant conflict for more than three decades.

Yet Chinese diplomats have [launched an unusual](#) disinformation campaign to [deny responsibility](#) for the pandemic, while U.S. officials have accused China already of ["exploiting the distraction"](#) of the public health crisis to consolidate control of vital shipping lanes. "Could China take some kind of

aggressive action with Vietnam, as sort of a test or a flex of both their military as well as the global reaction and check the water temperature, so to speak, of global reaction?” Gardner asked rhetorically.

Such an operation could seem attractive in Beijing, according to U.S. analysts, as a way to strike a triumphant nationalist pose at a time when many Western officials and some [mainland Chinese dissidents](#) have [cited](#) the Chinese Communist Party’s [mishandling](#) of the outbreak as a sign of the regime’s systemic flaws. The global backlash is reminiscent of the years following the 1989 crackdown in Tiananmen Square, with the key difference being that China was “very weak” in that time frame, as a former U.S. Pacific Command adviser noted.

“They find themselves now in a similar period where they're much stronger, where the rest of the world has these economic ties, and where they have a People's Liberation Army that could contest the first island chain and some of their sovereignty claims,” said Eric Sayers, a senior analyst at the Center for a New American Security. “Contest the first island chain” refers to a potential attack against the major islands closest to mainland China, including Taiwan and islands over which China claims sovereignty.

“That's where I think the real danger lies, is in a PRC that feels itself a bit more backed into a corner, unsure about what the future holds, looking to be more opportunistic as they always have — whether that's in the South China Sea, or with some of its other diplomatic relationships,” Sayers continued, using the acronym for the People’s Republic of China. China has avoided military conflict in recent decades while pursuing a strategy of expanding economic relationships in order to deliver a higher quality of life to the Chinese people.

The pandemic has disrupted that plan in the very year in which Xi Jinping, the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, [hoped](#) to preside over the regime’s triumph over poverty. Instead, the pandemic has driven China’s unemployment rate to an [estimated 20%](#), with little help available for struggling or unemployed workers. “Unlike in other economies, mainland China has not implemented a broad-based wage protection scheme,” HSBC chief China economist Qu Hongbin [observed](#) recently.

“This means that most of the furloughed workers in mainland China have no source of income.” And some Chinese officials believe that President Trump’s team wants to damage China’s economy in order to [undermine](#) the Chinese Communist Party’s standing with the broader populace. “The party's legitimacy is tied to their ability to deliver economically,” the American Enterprise Institute’s Zack Cooper told the Washington Examiner. “I do think that they feel worried.”

That compound of internal and external pressures, along with Beijing’s decision to launch Russian-style disinformation campaigns alleging that the U.S. military started the outbreak, has brought other hostilities into the realm of plausibility. “I could imagine the Chinese making a move in the South China Sea. I could imagine them making a move, say, against the Vietnamese or the Malaysians,” the Heritage Foundation’s Dean Cheng said in an interview. “That is a very disturbing possibility.”

An operation targeting Vietnamese positions in the Spratly Islands could appeal to Chinese strategists for multiple reasons, Cheng suggested. Vietnam doesn’t have a treaty alliance with the United States, making it less likely that Trump would intervene. And, at a time when U.S. officials hope that companies will move key supply chains out of China, even such a small-scale conflict might cause Indo-Pacific governments to think twice about following the U.S. lead.

China Touts New Submarine-Launched Nukes In Quest For More Survivable Deterrence

By: [Sebastien Roblin](#) Contributor to FORBES 15 May 2020

China's program to develop a third-generation submarine-launched missile called the Ju Lang 3 ("Giant Wave") capable of strategic nuclear attacks on the continental U.S has been nominated for a National Award for Excellence in Innovation [according](#) to the South China Morning Post.

The nomination may reflect the success of the project, believed to have test-fired JL-3 missiles [four times](#) between [November 2018](#) and [December 2019](#). However, the award also may be intended for external messaging, coming on the heels of an [op-ed](#) by the editor of the ultra-nationalistic Global Times advocating that China should more than triple its arsenal to a thousand nuclear weapons.

The JL-3 is aimed at improving the survivability and flexibility of China's nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (or SSBNs) by allowing them to attack targets in the continental United States while submerged near the relative safety of China's coastline. That's because the JL-3's claimed 7,450-mile-range could be two-thirds greater than the JL-2 missile currently in service. Submarines are considered the most survivable nuclear deterrence platform because their combination of stealth and mobility means at least some are likely to survive a surprise attack, ensuring a city-destroying nuclear retaliatory strike.

That may be especially important for China, which is estimate to have only around one-quarter of the 1,200 actively deployed strategic nuclear weapons possessed by the United States, and officially adheres to a "No First-Use" policy. But China's SSBN force faces significant geographic and technical constraints, and does not yet [perform continuous nuclear deterrence patrols](#).

China's four [Type 094 Jin-class SSBNs](#), based on Hainan island in the South China Sea, can carry up to twelve 13-meter-long JL-2 missiles with a range of 4,500 miles. Two additional improved Type 094A submarines with sixteen launch tubes each [reportedly](#) joined the force in 2020. The PLAN also operates a [conventionally-powered Type 032 submarine](#) with two missile tubes for testing.

Each JL-2 missile can be armed with either a single megaton-yield warhead 67 times more powerful than the Little Boy bomb dropped on Hiroshima—or three to eight smaller nukes (MIRVs) that can each strike different targets. But to enter striking distance of the continental United States, the Jin-class submarines would have to slip past a cordon of U.S. military bases in the Pacific dubbed the First Island Chain—exposing the subs to detection and attack by [P-8 patrol planes](#), [attack submarines](#), surface warships, and other [undersea reconnaissance capabilities](#).

Furthermore, the Type 094 has been assessed as being [over two orders of magnitude noisier](#) than top U.S. and Russian submarines, meaning it may be particularly susceptible to sonar detection. The acoustic flaws are due in part to the Jin-class's boxy dorsal "hump" housing the lengthy missiles, unlike the streamlined hulls of the American [Ohio-class](#) and Russian [Borei-class](#) SSBNs. But submarines armed with JL-3s could launch nuclear strikes while close to China's coastline, meaning they would be protected from opposing anti-submarine assets by land-based aircraft and missile batteries, as well as by friendly PLA Navy submarines and surface warships.

New Missiles for a New Submarine

According to an [article](#) from SINA New Agency (translated [here](#)), the JL-3's improved range is achieved in part by using lighter-weight solid-fuel rocket boosters made of domestic high-grade carbon fiber. The missile, claimed to be similar to France's M51 submarine-launched missiles deployed on [Triumphant-class](#) submarines, is expected to be larger in diameter and capable of carrying up to ten MIRVs.

Another article [claims](#) the JL-3 may be capable of an evasive trajectory and feature a reduced radar cross-section, "penetration aids" intended to make the missiles more likely to evade the U.S.'s [strategic missile defense system](#). The JL-3 isn't expected to enter operational service [sooner than 2025](#), and it may be reserved for the forthcoming Type 096 Tang-class SSBN currently under development, [claimed](#) to be capable of carrying 24 ballistic missiles.

Indeed, China is also reportedly developing an improved JL-2A missile for Type 094 with a range in between that of the JL-2 and JL-3, which may enable strikes on the West Coast of the United States while in coastal waters. The JL-3, and other major Chinese nuclear weapon systems like the DF-41 intercontinental-range ballistic missile and forthcoming [H-20 stealth bomber](#), began development years earlier, so claims that the missile tests are a result of recent U.S.-China tensions are debatable.

However, the more overtly hostile rhetoric between Beijing and Washington and the [broader global trend](#) towards investing in [new strategic nuclear weapons](#) may give steam to hardliners advocating greater size and prominence for China's nuclear forces.

U.S.-China Nuclear Arms Deal Could Be Possible in Future Despite Coronavirus War of Words

Newsweek Online, 14 May 20 James Walker

A nuclear arms control treaty between the U.S. and China could still be possible in the near future despite the countries ongoing "war of words" over the coronavirus pandemic, former arms control officials have said.

President Donald Trump's former Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Andrea L. Thompson told Newsweek that Washington and Beijing still had "an opportunity" to work out a future arms control deal, regardless of mounting tensions about COVID-19's origins.

She also warned that diplomatic talks between the U.S. and China "need to happen," and cautioned Beijing officials against standing behind a "closed door" on the world stage.

"Despite the war of words, and despite the cyber-attacks and economic espionage and a whole range of issues, I think there is an opportunity to have discussions perhaps at the technical level," Thompson told Newsweek. "I think that diplomacy takes time and you need to start somewhere and that needs to happen. China cannot continue to stand behind that closed door."

Thompson's remarks come a week after the Obama-era arms control secretary Rose Gottemoeller said a future nuclear treaty between the U.S. and China was "possible" despite sparring over the novel coronavirus.

Speaking to Newsweek, Gottemoeller said: "I do think, despite it all, it is possible. Because I do think that presidents feel a special responsibility to take action in this particular area, no matter what's going on in the larger arena.

"These weapons can blow us to smithereens, and so presidents take that fact seriously."

The chief negotiator of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) also noted that Ronald Reagan and the former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev reached a deal on nuclear arms when the then-U.S. president was calling the Soviet Union an "evil empire."

However, neither of the former arms control officials were optimistic about the chances of China signing up to the New START between the U.S. and Russia before its February extension deadline.

The New START was enacted in February 2011 as an update to the original START signed in the early 1990s. Under the treaty, restrictions apply to the number of nuclear warheads and bombs deployed by the U.S. and Russia. Caps also apply to ballistic missiles, submarine-launched missiles and heavy bombers.

Russia is interested in renewing the agreement before it lapses on February 5, 2021, but the Trump administration is reportedly eager to pull China into the deal before signing up to an extension.

Marshall Billingslea, the newly appointed special presidential envoy for arms control, told the Washington Times last Thursday that New START "does nothing for the United States with respect to our concerns regarding China."

Foreign Policy also reported in April that it had obtained documents showing that American officials wanted China to be involved in the New START.

"The President's been clear that he wants China at the table. My personal view is that China's not going to come to the table before February of next year," Thompson told Newsweek. "There's no incentive for them to come to the table. Their number of warheads versus what the US and Russia have are very different amounts."

The former arms control under secretary added that the New START would not be extended if the administration "tied" renewal to China signing up to the deal.

Thompson's Obama-era counterpart Gottemoeller also said it was impossible to get China on board with arms control deal in time for its extension.

"It's not possible in my view, and the reason is a practical one. That is, China's nuclear arsenal is much smaller than that of the United States and Russia," the ex-NATO deputy secretary-general said. "We have 1,550 warheads deployed on our strategic missiles, and we have thousands of more warheads in storage in reserve. And in the case of China, they have under 500 warheads total."

Newsweek has contacted the State Department for comment. This article will be updated with any response.

China Threatens ‘Non-Peaceful Measures’ to Keep Taiwan out of W.H.O.

By: Frances Martel for BBN // 13 May 2020-7:12

China’s state-run Global Times newspaper warned on Wednesday that, should pressure on the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) to include Taiwan become successful, the Communist Party may be forced to solve “the Taiwan question once and for all via non-peaceful means.”

The Global Times blamed the “people of the mainland,” meaning the People’s Republic of China, for the potential violence, asserting Chinese people are increasingly supportive of invading and colonizing Taiwan. Taiwan is a sovereign nation off the coast of Communist China. The Communist Party considers the island a renegade province despite the lack of any history in which Taiwan was ruled by Beijing.

Taiwan is currently a democracy with a long history of free and fair elections and functional state institutions like a lawmaking body, a military, and extensive education and health care infrastructures. Despite its status as an independent country, the W.H.O. does not acknowledge its sovereignty in response to Communist Party pressure. The agency used to invite Taiwan to the World Health Assembly, its annual meeting, but stopped in 2016 after the Taiwanese people elected President Tsai Ing-wen, who has vocally challenged Beijing’s illegal attempts to control much of the South China Sea region.

Calls are currently mounting for the W.H.O. to reverse this policy and invite Taiwan to this month’s World Health Assembly in light of the fact that Taiwan has almost completely contained the ongoing Chinese coronavirus pandemic. Taiwan has not documented a domestically transmitted case of Chinese coronavirus in one month. Taiwan has also protested that the W.H.O. ignored warnings from its government as early as December of a potentially contagious disease spreading in China.

In response to these calls, the Global Times, published by the government of China, threatened violence. “The reason why China firmly prohibits separatist Taiwan authority from participating in the World Health Assembly (WHA) as an observer is due to the fact such authority has abandoned the one-China principle,” the Global Times asserted, “and no matter how the U.S. politicians and their allies exploit the issue to encourage Taiwan separatism, the only consequence that may ensue is the mainland [China] considering ending this senseless game by solving the Taiwan question once and for all via non-peaceful means.”

The “One-China principle” is China’s term for the belief that Taiwan is a province of China. The “One-China policy” is a diplomatic term for a rule stating that a nation can maintain diplomatic ties with Taipei or Beijing, but not both. The state propaganda outlet used its usual stable of Chinese government “experts” to declare that Tsai Ing-wen’s government has a “horrible” reputation among Chinese people and that they will be eager to invade and destroy it.

The newspaper articles that “the only possible consequence” of including Taiwan in the World Health Assembly would be a bloody invasion of Taiwan – or “that the people of the mainland lose their faith in peaceful reunification, and more people would urge mainland decision-makers to solve the Taiwan question via non-peaceful means.” The Global Times also published an editorial on Tuesday – the article threatening “non-

peaceful” resolution of the W.H.O. issue was presented as an objective news article – claiming that the Communist Party would “strike back at whatever cost” if Washington takes “real actions” to support Taiwan’s plea to be included in global public health consultations. It continued:

The Chinese mainland’s [China’s] ability to resolve the Taiwan question via military means is becoming mature. Its comprehensive strength to cope with changes surrounding the question is also increasing. This is the foremost change in the situation vis-à-vis the Taiwan Straits. It is Beijing that tightly steers the wheel of the Taiwan Straits. “Taiwan’s so-called independent diplomacy has met its demise,” the editorial concludes.

The article also advises communists that “it is unrealistic to expect China to win in each round” of geopolitical conflict, belying some lack of confidence in its ability to keep Taiwan out of the World Health Assembly. The “non-peaceful means” threat is the latest in a series of increasingly dramatic language used by the Communist Party against Taiwan, as well as other regions that seek to liberate themselves from the Communist Party such as Tibet and Xinjiang, or East Turkestan.

In October, dictator Xi Jinping personally warned that any attempt by Taiwanese officials to behave as a sovereign state would result in “their bodies smashed and bones ground to powder.” “Anyone who attempts to split any region from China will perish, with their bodies smashed and bones ground to powder,” Xi reportedly said. “Anyone attempting separatist activities in any part of China will be crushed and any external force backing such attempts will be deemed by the Chinese people as pipe-dreaming.”

Xi has yet to deliver on that promise, despite Taiwan holding a free and fair election in January resulting in Tsai’s decisive reelection. Taiwan’s government has demanded its rightful place in the W.H.O. for years, but officials have recently made the argument more loudly, noting that their successful response to the Chinese coronavirus pandemic proves the value of counting on Taiwan as a member of the agency. Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested in April that the W.H.O. turned down 70 percent of its requests for meetings regarding the outbreak.

Officials also noted that Taiwan sent the W.H.O. a message in December warning that it had identified a new respiratory illness and began isolating patients, suggesting a contagious disease. A month later, W.H.O. claimed that the Chinese coronavirus was not transmissible from person to person, which is false. The German newspaper Der Spiegel published a report this weekend indicating Xi Jinping personally requested that W.H.O. chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who is not a medical doctor, hide the fact that the virus was contagious from the public and delay the announcement of a pandemic.

Tedros has responded to criticism of his treatment of Taiwan by claiming that Taipei launched a campaign of racial slurs against him, offering no evidence of any such action. A growing number of W.H.O. member states are requesting that Tedros invite Taiwan to the World Health Assembly, including 13 member states that recognize Taiwan as a nation as well as some that do not, like America, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

The W.H.O. responded to those requests by falsely claiming Tedros does not have the power to invite Taiwan to observe the event, which will be held virtually this year thanks to the pandemic the Chinese Communist Party created. “In fact, the W.H.O. Director-General does have the discretionary power to invite observers to the W.H.A. [World Health Assembly],” Taiwan Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Joanne Ou told reporters this week, responding to the claim.

China's ambiguous missile strategy is risky

The problematic approach involves weapons systems that could be either nuclear or conventional.
P.W. Singer and Ma Xiu for Popular Science // May 11, 2020

Over the last two decades, the People's Liberation Army has dedicated massive resources toward developing missiles that have both nuclear and conventional capabilities—vehicles that can be armed with different types of warheads.

The goal is to put China's adversaries, especially the U.S. military's bases and ships, at a new kind of long-range risk. These include variants of the DF-26, the DF-21, and possibly the DF-17 hypersonic glide vehicle. The PLA's rationale for pursuing this conventional-meets-nuclear strategy appears to be a combination of the cost savings that a dual-use weapon represents and a belief that what is known as "strategic ambiguity" improves China's deterrence against strikes on its conventional missile force.

The thinking is that any adversaries pondering attacking China's conventional force in a crisis or conflict would be worried that they might inadvertently hit nuclear weapons and thus catastrophically escalate the situation. The risk with this strategy is that such ambiguity substantially increases the danger of an accidental nuclear exchange due to mistaken assumptions. As Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists explains, if China were to fire a conventionally armed dual-use missile, but the target country was unable to differentiate whether its payload was nuclear or conventional, it may incorrectly assume it is under nuclear attack and respond with an in-kind strike back against China.

Similarly, the very scenario China sets up for ambiguity could come true: In wartime an adversary may intend to strike what it believes to be the PLA's conventional missiles, but inadvertently hit its nuclear force. This could then lead China to believe its actual nuclear deterrent capability was the intended target. To date, however, the general assumption has been that while this practice is potentially destabilizing, the PLA was at least separating its nuclear and conventional forces into distinct and geographically discrete brigades.

This offered some hope that other countries could still tell the difference between China's nuclear and conventional forces. This could be set to change, though, with a discovery dating from 2017 of how China's new DF-26 missile is being deployed. The DF-26 missile is what is known as an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM), which has a capability of traveling roughly 4,000 kilometers (2,490 miles).

This type was eschewed by the US and Russia for the last three decades under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces-INF treaty, until Russia violated it and the Trump administration then withdrew from it in 2019. Importantly, the DF-26 is dual-use, able to carry a 1,200-1,800 kg nuclear or conventional payload. As James Acton, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, writes in the 2020 report *Is it a Nuke?*:

[The DF-26] missile could be integrated into the Rocket Force in two ways, and it is not yet apparent which approach China is adopting. One option would be to retain the Rocket Force's existing structure and create separate conventional and nuclear DF-26 brigades. However, this approach would not leverage the weapon's "change the warhead, not the missile" feature. Consequently, it seems possible that China will posture individual DF-26 brigades for both nuclear and conventional operations, making it more difficult to characterize DF-26 missiles.

Indeed, open-source evidence indicates that, in the case of at least one PLARF brigade, they appear to already be doing exactly that. A CCTV article from 2017 about a PLA Rocket Force launch brigade (the 646 Brigade out of Korla) reports that it is equipped with a new type of intermediate-range SSM (a likely reference to the DF-26). The article also makes clear that this brigade “simultaneously possesses both nuclear and conventional strike capabilities.”

Brigade Political Commissar Zhou Lusheng says in the report: “Our mission is the two major operations, the two major deterrents [a reference to both nuclear and conventional capabilities]... A nuclear-conventional dual-use brigade must train to simultaneously possess two different operational postures... meaning that personnel of such a brigade have a higher workload.” And Battalion Commander Zhang Lei echoes this idea: “We must study both nuclear and conventional, meaning one man must be proficient in two billets.”

The article even describes a drill in which the brigade practices firing a precision missile, then rapidly switches over to a nuclear posture for a counter-strike mission, thus “showing that this new type of brigade truly possesses both nuclear and conventional capabilities.” Given that the DF-26 is intended to target strategic areas (it is popularly referred to as the “Guam Express” for its likely targeting of US military bases on that island), some clarity about its payload and intended effect should ideally be a priority for Chinese planners wishing to communicate its differentiation between conventional and nuclear roles.

Instead, the multiple statements and reports indicate that the PLARF is moving in the opposite direction: a mixing of its nuclear and conventional forces within single brigades. In light of the PLARF’s apparent plans to substantially increase its DF-26 force, this strategy is incredibly risky. By mixing these units, China may hope to aid its deterrence capabilities. But it is also raising the possibility of a miscalculation in a crisis or even conventional conflict leading to a nuclear exchange. In short, the revelations seem to show China deliberately increasing the risk of confusion and mistakes in precisely the arena where the so-called “fog of war” would be most dangerous.

China needs more nuclear warheads: Global Times editor

Yew Lun Tian Reuters Published // May 8, 2020 7:00AM EDT

BEIJING, May 8 (Reuters) - China should expand its stock of nuclear warheads to 1,000 soon, Global Times editor-in-chief Hu Xijin said on Friday, even as U.S. President Donald Trump repeats his call for China to join an arms control treaty.

The Global Times is published by the People’s Daily, the official newspaper of China’s ruling Communist Party. The party has been known to float ideas and guide public sentiments via the Global Times, which tends to take a nationalistic stance on issues involving other countries. Tensions between United States and China, already high from an ongoing trade war, have increased in recent months amid a war of words over the origins of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We love peace and promise not to use nuclear weapons first, but we need a bigger nuclear arsenal to suppress U.S. strategic ambition and impulse against China," Hu wrote in a Weibo post. Hu added that this stockpile should include "at least 100 DF-41 strategic missiles", a latest class of intercontinental missiles capable of striking continental United States, according to defense experts. He wrote, "Don't think that nuclear warheads are useless during peacetime. We are using them everyone, silently, to shape the attitudes of American elites towards us."

Hu's post on Weibo - a Twitter-like social media in China - came after White House said Trump called for "effective arms control" that includes China and Russia during a telephone call on Thursday with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. Trump has long sought for China to be included in a renewal of the New START nuclear arms treaty that expires in February 2021, but Beijing has steadfastly rejected such calls.

"Major powers have the foremost responsibility and obligation in the area of nuclear arms control. China has always adhered to the policy of not being the first country to use nuclear," said China foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying on Friday. An internal Chinese report warns that Beijing faces a rising wave of hostility in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak that could tip relations with the United States into armed confrontation in the worst-case scenario, according to a Reuters report this week.

(Reporting by Yew Lun Tian Editing by Frances Kerry)

Kim's Reappearance in North Korea Reignites Nuclear and Missile Fears

By: Scott Snyder for the World Politics Review // Monday, May 11, 2020

When North Korean leader Kim Jong Un mysteriously disappeared from public view for three weeks last month, triggering widespread rumors about his health, many international observers speculated about what could come next.

His possible demise might lead to a contested succession that sparked domestic instability and the proliferation of North Korea's stockpiles of nuclear weapons and fissile material. Kim's reemergence on May 2, at the opening of a fertilizer plant in the city of Sunchon, has taken succession concerns off the table for now. But it is time to worry once again about North Korea's development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programs under Kim's continued rule.

During a marathon New Year's Eve speech at the fifth party plenum of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea last December, Kim threatened to unveil a "new strategic weapon" and floated the possibility of returning to tests of long-range ballistic missiles, which Pyongyang has refrained from since November 2017. His aggressive speech marked a deadline that Kim had set in April 2019 for the U.S. to agree to substantial concessions in its negotiations with North Korea, primarily the lifting of economic sanctions.

But a single day of working-level talks in Stockholm last October broke down without any progress. In November, Deputy Secretary of State Steven Biegun, who was then serving as the Trump administration's special envoy for negotiations with North Korea, publicly called Kim's end-of-year deadline an "artificial" one that the North Koreans had "set upon themselves." He invited Pyongyang to return to negotiations.

In his speech at the party plenum, Kim essentially refused Biegun's offer, prioritizing economic self-reliance in the absence of prospects for easing tough international sanctions. He added that North Korea would pursue military modernization to counter the perceived "hostile policy" of the U.S., which Kim sees as unlikely to change despite his warm personal relationship with Trump. For now, the coronavirus pandemic and the upcoming U.S. presidential election have forced Kim and Trump to prioritize domestic matters, mitigating the near-term likelihood of conflict.

But North Korea has also ramped up its testing of conventional military weapons in recent months, and it is likely to continue developing its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Pyongyang tested a variety of short-range missile systems on at least five occasions in April, and March was the busiest single month for North Korean missile launches in the country's history. Recent tests included a short-range ballistic missile similar in size to the U.S. MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System, with a range of roughly 250 miles, and large-scale multiple rocket launchers.

When deployed, these systems would add to the North's extensive artillery capabilities and ensure that U.S. and South Korean command centers south of Seoul remain vulnerable to a conventional attack. North Korea's short-range testing of ballistic missiles violates United Nations Security Council resolutions, but Trump has dismissed concerns over these tests in the past, implying he may only respond more firmly to a longer-range missile test capable of striking the U.S.

The testing of large multiple rocket launchers aligns with North Korea's aim to extend its strike range deep enough into South Korea to target the consolidated U.S. base at Camp Humphreys, 40 miles south of Seoul, and the South Korean F-35 fighter jets stationed at Cheongju Air Base, in central South Korea. Pyongyang's recent tests also appear focused on improving its ability to precisely and simultaneously deliver multiple projectiles to many different targets.

Kim's reappearance only underscores that Pyongyang is on track to continue expanding its military, making it an even bigger source of instability. The recent tests are also significant for their focus on short-range solid fuel missiles, which have potential applications for the future development of solid fuel medium-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles, as well as a submarine-launched ballistic missile.

Solid fuel missiles can be stored more safely and launched more quickly, with less advance warning, than North Korea's current liquid fuel versions. As a result, Pyongyang could be tempted to soon move to testing of longer-range solid fuel missiles. Kim's visit to the Suncheon fertilizer plant reflected his plans for dual military and economic development, as outlined at last December's party plenum.

He visited the construction site for the plant in January, shortly after his plenum speech, and it was telling that his first public appearance this month after being out of sight for weeks was to attend the plant's opening ceremony. It signified North Korea's renewed commitment to independent economic development. Fertilizer is an important agricultural input, and May is generally the beginning of the planting season in North Korea.

More ominously, the visit is a significant sign of support for North Korea's nuclear program. A recent report by Margaret Croy of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute showed that North Korea's phosphatic fertilizer production process allows the potential dual-use extraction of uranium. Kim's appearance at the new plant will strengthen North Korea's chemical industry and boost agricultural productivity, while adding a possible additional pathway for expansion of fuel production for its nuclear arsenal.

It ultimately represents North Korea returning to its policy of simultaneous military and economic development, known as byungjin, which Kim originally adopted in 2013, shortly after coming to power. He had signaled in 2018 that he would make economic development the nation's top priority, but now appears to have reversed course. Despite North Korea's continued advances in its weapons systems, the coronavirus pandemic keeps the immediate risk of a military confrontation with the U.S. and its allies in the region at bay.

But the public health crisis has also turned the focus of leaders in Pyongyang and Washington inward, reducing the likelihood of a diplomatic breakthrough. North Korea continues to officially report no cases of the virus, but there are uncorroborated reports of virus-caused deaths in the country, including in the military. The top U.S. military commander in South Korea, Robert Abrams, stated last month that the North Korean military was on “lockdown” for 30 days in February and early March due to COVID-19, and only resumed its activities afterward.

The pandemic has negatively affected force readiness of the U.S. and South Korean militaries, too. The early spread of COVID-19 to South Korea resulted in the postponement of the spring military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea that North Korea has routinely objected to. The trajectory of North Korea’s nuclear and economic development is clear, and with it the chances of more negotiations with the U.S. on denuclearization.

Kim has yet to test his promised “new strategic weapon,” but if he does, it appears less likely to be a game changer than further affirmation that leader-level diplomacy has run its course and that the nuclear gap between the United States and North Korea remains unbridgeable. Kim’s reappearance only underscores that Pyongyang is on track to continue expanding its military, making it an even bigger source of instability.

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World nuclear arms spending hit \$73 billion last year – half of it by US

The Guardian Online (UK), 13 May 20 Julian Borger

WASHINGTON -- The world’s nuclear-armed nations spent a record \$73bn on their weapons last year, with the US spending almost as much as the eight other states combined, according to a new report.

The new spending figures, reflecting the highest expenditure on nuclear arms since the height of the cold war, have been estimated by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Ican), which argues that the coronavirus pandemic underlines the wastefulness of the nuclear arms race.

The nine nuclear weapons states spent a total of \$72.9bn in 2019, a 10% increase on the year before. Of that, \$35.4bn was spent by the Trump administration, which accelerated the modernization of the US arsenal in its first three years while cutting expenditure on pandemic prevention.

“It’s clear now more than ever that nuclear weapons do not provide security for the world in the midst of a global pandemic, and not even for the nine countries that have nuclear weapons, particularly when there are documented deficits of healthcare supplies and exhausted medical professionals,” Alicia Sanders-Zakre, the lead author of the report, said.

The report comes at a time when arms control is at a low ebb, with the last major treaty limiting US and Russian strategic nuclear weapons, New Start, due to expire in nine months with no agreement so far to extend it.

Russia, which has announced the development of an array of new weapons – including nuclear-powered, long-distance cruise missiles, underwater long-distance nuclear torpedoes and a new heavy intercontinental ballistic missile – spent \$8.5bn on its arsenal in 2019, according to Ican’s estimates. China, which has a much smaller nuclear force than the US and Russia but is seeking to expand, spent \$10.4bn.

Those expenditures were far overshadowed by the US nuclear weapons budget, which is part of a major upgrade also involving new weapons, including a low-yield submarine-launched missile, which has already been deployed.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the cost of the US program over the coming decade will be \$500bn, an increase of nearly \$100bn, about 23%, over projections from the end of the Obama administration.

Congressional Democrats failed in an attempt to curb the administration’s nuclear ambitions, but Kingston Reif, the director for disarmament and threat reduction policy at the Arms Control Association, said budgetary constraints in a coronavirus-induced recession, could succeed where political opposition failed.

“There’s going to be significant pressure on federal spending moving forward, including defense spending,” Reif said. “So, the cost and opportunity cost of maintaining and modernizing the arsenal, which were already punishing, will become even more so.”

Renewing US Extended Deterrence Commitments Against North Korea

38North.org, 13 May 20 Shane Smith

As COVID-19 upends millions of lives as well as traditional notions of security and the global economy, North Korea offers a stark reminder that the United States and its allies must still tend to military threats. [1] Pyongyang set a single-month record of nine missile launches this spring and declared it is now “more zealous for our important planned projects aimed to repay the U.S. with actual horror and unrest for the sufferings it has inflicted upon our people.” This was undoubtedly a reminder of Kim Jong Un’s New Year’s promise to soon unveil a “new strategic weapon” and his willingness to use it.

Does this portend a return to provocations and hostility reminiscent of 2017? There are good reasons to be concerned. Kim has called for “shocking” and “offensive” measures in charting a “new path” with the United States and South Korea. The return to missile tests, exercises and vitriol could be just the beginning. Similarly concerning are reports of political, economic and COVID-related uncertainty inside North Korea, given its purported history of lashing out in tough times to bolster domestic support for the Kim regime.

Understandably, extended deterrence issues have not received priority attention since denuclearization talks began in 2018. As prospects for those talks now appear grim, US and allied leaders may soon face decisions about how to revitalize a deterrence posture that has been largely dormant for two years. If and when they do, they will confront new challenges and old ones that have arguably worsened over time. Below, I take stock of those challenges and explore options for strengthening deterrence for a new era.

The Threat Grows On

Kim was cryptic about what the “new strategic weapon” might be in his New Year’s address. But it is widely believed North Korea is working on a solid-fueled, mobile intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that can deliver thermonuclear warheads anywhere on the globe. The Commander of US Northern Command hinted at such concerns when he recently testified before Congress. North Korea, he said, “may be prepared to flight test an even more capable ICBM design that could enhance Kim’s ability to threaten our homeland during a crisis or conflict.”

Indeed, a newly published United Nations report finds North Korea has not halted its nuclear or ballistic missile programs. Some estimates suggest it could now have enough fissile material to build between 50 and 100 weapons. And, while North Korea watchers look for signs of an upgraded ICBM, it has tested new types of regional missiles that can strike targets in South Korea and Japan with increasing accuracy and reliability as well as a new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM).

Previous threats and exercises involving preemptive nuclear strikes on ports and airfields in neighboring countries suggest these new capabilities may be for purposes beyond retaliation. All signs point to an emerging strategy to enable limited nuclear first strikes against regional targets, while using a “new strategic weapon” to prevent full US retaliation by holding US cities at risk. Such a strategy aligns with many statements from North Korea’s leaders suggesting they may believe nuclear weapons can be used to compel adversaries, not just deter them, and even help unify the peninsula one day, by force, if necessary.[2] It is difficult to imagine the Kim regime ever concluding that it could actually launch a nuclear attack and survive, but the types of weapons Pyongyang is building, the way it exercises and its public pronouncements about using them make it hard to dismiss that possibility out of hand.

Extended Deterrence: Four Questions of Credibility

These developments put into sharp relief several questions about US extended deterrence. First, does North Korea believe the United States is willing to run nuclear risks to protect an ally (e.g., trade Seattle to save Seoul)? Signaling political resolve to take on such risk is no easy task, and presumably is becoming more difficult and costly for the United States. Perceptions of US resolve may have been damaged in recent years due in part to US President Donald Trump’s treatment of alliances as transactional arrangements rather than manifestations of core US national interests worth fighting to defend. This is especially poignant in South Korea’s case, given multiple reports that President Trump has questioned the value of the alliance and US forces stationed there.

Second, how does North Korea’s growing threat to Japan impact perceptions of US commitments to South Korea? More than once, North Korea has made clear that Japan is first on its nuclear target list. Leaders in North Korea might believe the United States would waver if confronted with the prospect of trading one ally in Tokyo to save another ally in Seoul. Or they might conclude that threats to Japan would lead Tokyo to deny US access to bases located on its territory for the defense of South Korea. Any daylight between the three countries surely emboldens North Korea, which is likely encouraged by the current state of trilateral relations and the open antagonism between Japan and South Korea.

Third, does North Korea believe the US-ROK alliance is credibly postured to fight and win a limited war under the nuclear shadow? North Korea may believe that holding hostage US and allied cities buys it an opportunity to wage conflict at lower levels. Its effort to deploy increasingly accurate and operationally flexible regional missiles, and the way it exercises them, suggest its leaders might even believe they can launch limited nuclear

strikes without triggering an overwhelming allied response. Convincing North Korea that the alliance is willing and able to defeat aggression at any level of conflict must be a priority.

A fourth question stems primarily from developments off the peninsula: How does US-China competition shape North Korean perceptions of US commitments to South Korea? China remains North Korea's most important patron and ally, whose military modernization and buildup is widely recognized. The 2018 US National Defense Strategy Commission concluded that the regional military balance has shifted to a point that the United States could suffer "unacceptably high" costs in a war with China that it "might struggle to win, or perhaps lose." North Korean leaders might believe the United States would be unwilling or unable to defend South Korea if there is a credible threat of Chinese intervention. To date, there is little evidence the US-ROK alliance is developing combined measures to preclude such thinking.

Renewing US Commitments: Options and Opportunity

Should tensions with North Korea grow, US and allied leaders will face difficult tasks. Tending to the requirements of extended deterrence will be among the top priorities. The preceding section presented four areas where deficits may exist: perceptions of US resolve; trilateral cohesion; ability to fight a limited war under the nuclear shadow; and deterring/countering Chinese intervention.

Below is an exploration of options to fill potential gaps. It is important to keep in mind, however, there will likely be very different views in South Korea of what should be done and much will depend on which political party is in charge. The Moon administration has tended toward a softer deterrence posture to advance diplomatic relations with North Korea and China. Historically, liberal governments like the current one have been more wary of the alliance and invested in options that preserve freedom of action. The opposition party has pledged a harder line on North Korea and China. In the past, conservative governments have emphasized efforts to highlight the alliance's combined deterrence posture and sought robust and tangible US commitments.

While only one of many tools, US nuclear weapons have long been a powerful instrument for signaling vital national interests and the resolve to defend them. Nuclear signals can provide high-profile expressions of political commitment to both accept and inflict terrible costs on behalf of an ally. There are three broad approaches for how leaders in Washington, as well as Seoul, might think about leveraging US nuclear forces in the future.

- **Status Quo Plus:** The most modest approach would not involve major changes to existing arrangements. The United States would continue to rely on contiguous US (CONUS)-based capabilities, including the strategic deployment of bombers, to signal US commitment. The 2017 bomber overflight missions in which ROK and Japanese fighters provided tactical escort was a particularly strong show of unity. Building on, even routinizing, combined exercises of this kind could demonstrate both US resolve and alliance cohesion.

Other recent developments also provide new signaling opportunities. Earlier this year, the United States deployed a low-yield warhead option for its SLBMs. While characterized as a response to Russian doctrine and forces, this new capability could play a deterrence role against North Korea. It adds flexibility to US deterrence forces and offers potentially more credible response options in a narrow but critical set of scenarios. For instance, the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review calls for holding at risk North Korea's leadership and missile force. Having a prompt, accurate and penetrating low-yield option against those types of targets in limited attack scenarios likely conveys more credibility than relying on much higher-yield weapons

or much slower delivery systems. A visit to Guam by a US ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) carrying the new warhead would signal its presence and potential utility in the region. Inviting ROK and/or Japanese delegations to tour the boat could highlight common purpose among allies.

US leaders might also consider opportunities afforded by the recent change in regional strategic bomber operations. No longer will bombers be based in Guam. Rather, CONUS-based bomber groups will now utilize a broader array of locations to increase resiliency and operational flexibility. Conducting an early demonstration of the ability to deploy and operate from multiple locations would signal sustained US commitment and ability to fight more effectively in a limited nuclear conflict. There also are opportunities to demonstrate alliance cohesion. An official statement about the change said, “We will maximize all opportunities to train alongside our allies and partners, to build interoperability, and bolster our collective ability to be operationally unpredictable.” Perhaps that could involve joint exercises and investments in airfields, including on allied territory.

Lastly, the United States maintains mature high-level dialogues with South Korea and Japan that advance a common understanding of deterrence requirements, the role of US nuclear weapons and the value of policy coordination. Establishing a formal bilateral or trilateral operational-level nuclear crisis planning mechanism to support policy decisions could be an important next step to strengthen these relationships. The basic idea is to sustain attention on the operational implications of a North Korean nuclear attack as well as alliance mitigation and response options under a range of scenarios. The specific goal is to strengthen combined and coordinated conventional military planning under the nuclear shadow. If established, such an enhanced consultative process should reflect the reality that an effective response to a North Korean attack at any level will require a coordinated US-ROK-Japan approach. A trilateral nuclear crisis planning mechanism would strengthen planning and serve as a powerful deterrence signal.

- Forward Deploy: A second, more controversial approach would involve deploying US nuclear weapons to South Korea. This is an option long favored by a majority of South Koreans—about 55-65 percent—in public opinion polls for over a decade as well as prominent politicians, although not by South Korean President Moon Jae-in. There is scant support for this course of action in the United States for many good reasons. The main reason is that it is militarily unnecessary because the current suite of US capabilities can destroy any target in North Korea. In addition, US nuclear weapons based in South Korea would be vulnerable to attack and, thus, unreliable as a response option. Finally, their presence would provide first strike incentives that contribute to crisis instability.[3]

Arguments against the deployment option are valid in their own right but do not necessarily vitiate the underlying deterrence logic. Namely, it is difficult to imagine—in a world of garbled messages—a clearer signal of US willingness to run nuclear risks to defend a vital interest than placing nuclear weapons in harm’s way. While this may not significantly enhance US military options, it certainly complicates North Korean targeting decisions for any attack in which it might hope to keep conflict limited. By increasing the perceived risk that any conflict would become a nuclear one, partly due to first strike incentives, North Korea may be persuaded that, in fact, it cannot wage a limited conflict and manage the risks of escalation.

It’s possible the financial costs and escalatory risks inherent in this option would outweigh the deterrence benefits. China would be sure to make such costs as high as possible, if its reaction to the deployment of THAAD in South Korea is any indication. At the same time, it is precisely such high-cost and high-stake measures that can send powerful strategic signals. Cheap and easy actions do not carry much weight.

To be sure, the debate over the deployment option is not going away. It is likely to grow in intensity in the coming years. Pressure is mounting in

South Korea to develop an independent nuclear capability, if the United States does not take seriously perceived credibility gaps in the US nuclear “umbrella.” Few US strategists believe this would be a good outcome.

- **Phased and Adaptive:** With that in mind, a third approach could adopt a phased, adaptive model. The United States could commit to deploying nuclear weapons to South Korea at some indeterminate time in response to a heightened North Korean threat, implementing a series of phased steps to create the necessary conditions and reduce the deployment timeline. For instance, a preparatory phase might include conducting a survey of potential storage locations and an environmental impact study. A subsequent phase could involve training combined US-ROK units to conduct perimeter security, incident response and recovery operations. A later phase could involve certifying Korea-based US F-16 units (or F-35 replacements) for nuclear missions and conducting combined exercises. A final phase would be the construction of storage facilities. Each step could be adapted to a changing security environment prior to putting actual US nuclear weapons in South Korea.

There are inevitable tradeoffs associated with this approach. Concretely conveying resolve but conditioning deployment on North Korea’s behavior could strengthen deterrence and incentivize restraint. Each phase offers an opportunity to signal and apply incremental pressure on the North while preserving flexibility to manage associated costs and risks. However, perceived half measures would belie resolve. A convincing commitment toward deployment would be necessary but has the potential to create unhelpful “tit-for-tat” expectations in which every North Korean provocation requires taking the next step. Drawing out the timeline also would invite pressure from China, Russia and domestic audiences to abandon the option. Pushing forward in the face of associated costs could reaffirm the perception of resolve but ultimately may come at a higher price than a “deploy now” option. Optimistically, if China and Russia see that deploying US nuclear weapons to South Korea is a serious option, they might apply more pressure to restrain North Korea.

The US-ROK alliance could also take conventional measures to strengthen extended deterrence. For one, it could resume large-scale military exercises after a long pause to signal strategic and operational readiness. Sustained investments toward an integrated missile defeat capability—both left- and right- of launch—can deny North Korea the benefits it seeks from its missile force. Establishing a combined element to advance and align growing strike and missile defense capabilities would signal commitment to that mission. Integrating new nonkinetic capabilities, such as cyber and electromagnetic warfare, can expand the range of alliance options and reinforce deterrence objectives. Moreover, the alliance could take measures to demonstrate operational flexibility and resiliency necessary for fighting a limited nuclear war, including the ability to disperse and operate using a diverse range of ports and air bases. Should exercises involve locations in Japan, it would be a stronger message of trilateral unity.

Lastly, the US-ROK alliance could address Chinese pressure on extended deterrence by establishing a bilateral China policy coordination mechanism. This could be a valuable first step to signal Beijing and begin to strengthen response options against any effort to split the alliance. The United States is already investing heavily to maintain access to allies in the face of China’s growing regional power. But Washington has made clear those allies must contribute in meaningful ways in a new era of global competition. South Korea, a formidable high-tech ally, has much to offer in this regard. However, the alliance and ROK military investments have largely neglected China. Strengthening combined policies and military planning for third-party intervention could disabuse China and North Korea from concluding the United States might be unwilling or unable to defend South Korea. A turn of this kind toward Beijing would likely be extremely difficult for leaders in Seoul, but a failure to do so risks weakening deterrence on the peninsula.

Conclusion

As US and allied leaders consider how to respond to potential tensions with North Korea, they arguably face more challenging circumstances than two years ago. Demonstrating resolve may be a heavier lift largely due to North Korea's and China's growing capabilities. Fortunately, the allies have many tools and options for renewing US commitments. Each has costs and risks that must be weighed against expected deterrence benefits. None offers a silver bullet. The challenges discussed in this paper cannot be solved, only managed; they will require sustained attention and collective determination for the foreseeable future.

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NOTES

[1] The views expressed here are solely those of the author and are not the policies or positions of National Defense University, the Department of Defense or any part of the US government.

[2] Shane Smith, "Nuclear Weapons and North Korean Foreign Policy," in North Korea Handbook, ed. Adrian Buzo (New York: Routledge Press, forthcoming).

[3] See: Richard Sokolsky, "The Folly of Deploying US Tactical Nuclear Weapons to South Korea," 38 North, December 1, 2017, <https://www.38north.org/2017/12/rsokolsky120117/>; and Jon Wolfsthal and Toby Dalton, "Seven Reasons Why Putting U.S. Nukes Back in South Korea Is a Terrible Idea," Foreign Policy, October 11, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/11/putting-u-s-nukes-back-in-south-korea-is-a-terrible-idea/>.

Keeping an Eye on the Nuclear Ball

YaleGlobal (MacMillan Center at Yale University), 14 May 20 Richard Weitz

WASHINGTON -- The international community cannot become so preoccupied with the Covid-19 pandemic, a dire but transient threat, that enduring global challenges go overlooked – especially nuclear non-proliferation or arms control. Covid-19 already forced cancellation of this spring's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and suspension of the Russian-US arms-control dialogue. A recent US State Department report on global arms adherence warns that North Korea continues nuclear-weapons development, the Iranian government has declined

to resume nuclear talks with Washington, and China and Russia may have resumed low-level nuclear-weapons testing. Zoom, Skype and other means of remote communication among mid-level officials and expert communities cannot substitute for the senior-level intervention needed to overcome the accumulating challenges.

Global arms control is at a crossroads. The New START Treaty, adopted in 2011, will expire in less than 10 months. Moscow and Washington remain divided on how to proceed on the treaty and beyond. Besides the pandemic, the US presidential election, Vladimir Putin's proposed constitutional rewrites and other issues could impede the need for timely measures to reinvigorate great power arms control. The priority should be including more countries and strategic capabilities. If this is not possible, countries should at least sustain some limits – even if not enshrined in treaties – on various nuclear-weapons systems, means of delivery and practices that could lead to nuclear crises.

Failing renewed global arms control, the international order could become characterized by an absence of formal legal limitations on nuclear force modernization. In this scenario of unbounded nuclear arsenals, the world's most powerful countries would abandon arms control agreements. Instead, they would prioritize enhanced force capabilities achieved through researching, developing and deploying a large and diverse portfolio of nuclear delivery systems, including non-strategic weapons. They would also strive for qualitative and quantitative advantages to their offensive and defensive capabilities, for example, missiles and interceptors, to dominate all possible nuclear-escalation ladders.

Furthermore, the great powers would decline to place restraints on their capabilities in the hope of exploiting first-mover advantages of even fleeting nuclear advances. They would vigorously pursue emerging strategic offensive capabilities such as cyber weapons, hypersonic systems and counter-space weapons that could help achieve such superiority. The United States and other allies would not welcome this outcome. Such developments would adversely affect global nonproliferation dynamics since they would magnify frustrations among the non-nuclear-weapons states with the great powers and intensify pressure on Non-Proliferation Treaty restraints. The nuclear force buildups, resumption of nuclear-weapons testing, overt threats to employ nuclear weapons against other states and greater salience of nuclear weapons in military doctrines would encourage other states to pursue similar capabilities.

A more benign vision, espoused by both disarmament enthusiasts and the current US administration, would expand the scope of limitations to cover more capabilities and more countries than the Cold War-based Russian-US strategic arms control process. The Trump administration wants to include China within future negotiations and address novel strategic weapons as well as the non-strategic nuclear capabilities hitherto excluded from the Russian-US treaties. Disarmament advocates, including some working with Democratic US presidential candidate Joe Biden, favor great-powers arms control as a tool to transition from a world characterized by mutually assured destruction to one guided by mutually assured security. Despite their differences, both want to reconsider old truths and seek new paths to a safer nuclear future.

Moscow, Beijing and Washington differ on many key arms-control issues. These include Russian and Chinese concerns about US conventional superiority; the US desire to reduce Russia's tactical nuclear weapons; and mutual unease pertaining to each other's artificial intelligence, cyber, space and other emerging capabilities. Nonetheless, the nuclear powers could commit to a grand compromise in which they accept that they can achieve additional security through asymmetrical advantages and equivalent capabilities rather than through equal force totals in all categories. Such asymmetric arms control could employ either unbalanced reductions, as the USSR did when accepting the INF Treaty in 1987, or agreements in which parties could flexibly choose which types of forces to deploy under the overall agreed ceilings.

The resulting treaty limits would apply to a larger array of weapon types than in previous treaties, such as non-strategic tactical nuclear weapons, non-deployed and reserve warheads, space-based weapons, long-range conventionally armed hypersonic glide vehicles, and ballistic-missile defenses. Moreover, there would be restrictions on emerging strategically disruptive technologies and missile defense efforts in order to enhance stability, decrease security risks and reduce costs. Verification regimes could involve extensive onsite inspections in addition to other forms of multinational and national monitoring that would encompass nuclear warheads as well as their means of delivery.

Such a comprehensive approach would extend the previous Russian-US process into a multilateral format, bringing in China and perhaps other countries. In contrast to the first scenario, the positive elements of this alternative world would convince the non-nuclear-weapons states that the nuclear-weapons states were making progress towards meeting their stated NPT obligations. This would increase international support for the NPT regime and steer states away from quixotic proposals such as an immediate nuclear-weapons ban.

Unfortunately, a world of complete, verifiable and irreversible global arms control will not soon be realized. A less ambitious but more attainable scenario for arms control than near-term disarmament or comprehensive controls would be the pursuit of arms control primarily as a means to enhance strategic stability and decrease war risks. The mutually assured destruction paradigm would still shape countries' strategic nuclear policies and doctrines. Still, they would consider even imperfect agreements as valuable if they led to net security gains rather than absolute security.

In this third scenario of reduced risk if not reduced weapons, the great powers mostly would achieve limited deals in areas of common interest that would not require ratification of new formal treaties or legally binding accords. They would instead focus collaboration on achieving less formal executive agreements, informal parallel unilateral actions or greater reliance on strengthened norms of behavior such as that of the non-use of nuclear weapons.

Steps towards this end could include decreasing incentives for nuclear escalation through reducing risks of miscalculation, removing first-strike vulnerabilities and other measures to dampen pressures to escalate major conflicts between the great powers. Additional initiatives to increase great-power transparency and mutual understanding without formal treaties could encompass regular strategic stability dialogues, aimed at developing concrete measures to address the destabilizing potential of new weapons or nuclear doctrines; limiting the proliferation of nuclear and other strategic offensive arms; and identifying and averting dangerous operational practices like deploying nuclear-armed missiles near one another's territories.

Under these circumstances, other nuclear-weapons states such as Britain and France would accept some unilateral limits on their force, make their nuclear activities transparent and participate in some multinational confidence-building measures. They would also work with the three great powers to launch joint initiatives toward addressing the concerns of the non-nuclear weapons states, especially by coordinating their defense of the NPT against immediate nuclear ban proposals. The world could expect to see more cooperation on countering horizontal rather than vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons experts can help the nuclear powers advance toward the more positive scenarios, such as by developing means to better distinguish between missiles armed with nuclear or conventional warheads. Nonetheless, the fundamental challenge for global leaders is not to drop the ball on these enduring concerns.

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

Germany must invest in NATO's nuclear participation

Die Welt Online (Germany), 14 May 20 Richard A. Grenell

Before the fall of the Iron Curtain, Germany sat on the front lines of a possible nuclear conflict. So Germany and its NATO Allies came together to strengthen the Alliance's nuclear deterrence through allied nuclear sharing – a key joint project which protected Germany's security and strengthened NATO as the world's most successful multilateral security institution.

Today, Germany sits at the center of a unified Europe, but the threats to Europe's peace are no “anachronism” as some might have us believe. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Russia's buildup of new nuclear-capable missiles on Europe's periphery, and new capabilities from China, North Korea, and others make clear the threat is all too present.

Allies expect Germany to remain a “power for peace,” as Foreign Minister Maas recently said. Rather than eroding the solidarity that undergirds NATO's nuclear deterrent, now is the time for Germany to maintain its commitments to its allies through continued investments in NATO's nuclear share.

Now is the time for Germany's political leaders, especially in the SPD, to make clear Germany stands by that commitment and stands by its allies.

Those who seek a stronger voice for Europe on security policy should support a multilateral security umbrella through NATO – and active European investments to shore up its vital deterrence measures.

As leaders said in Warsaw in 2016, “The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression.”

As the major nuclear power within NATO, far from seeking nuclear escalation, the United States has consistently reaffirmed these deterrence goals. President Trump has been clear. The Trump Administration's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review affirmed that the first roles of US nuclear forces are, “[1] Deterrence of nuclear and non-nuclear attack; [and 2] Assurance of allies and partners.”

An honest assessment of the threats we face is essential for our partnership. Our allies in Poland and the Baltics know these threats are not a Cold War relic; no ally can fail to recognize that fact. As NATO leaders from across the Alliance, of every political stripe, reaffirmed when they met most recently in London in December:

“As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance... The strategic forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States, are the supreme guarantee of the security of Allies... NATO's nuclear deterrence posture also relies on United States' nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe and the capabilities and infrastructure provided by Allies concerned. National contributions of dual-capable aircraft to

NATO's nuclear deterrence mission remain central to this effort.”

This is no anachronistic outlook. As much as we all hope for a world free of nuclear weapons, and work toward creating those conditions, the threats we and our allies face have not diminished in recent months or years.

The purpose of NATO's nuclear share is to keep non-nuclear member states involved in the planning of NATO's deterrence policy. Germany's participation in nuclear share ensures that its voice matters. If Germany seeks to be a true power for peace, now is the time for solidarity. Will Germany bear this responsibility, or will it sit back and simply enjoy the economic benefits of security provided by its other Allies?

German political leaders speak often about the need to look at not only total military spending, but at specific capabilities needed for our collective security.

A credible nuclear deterrent, including through nuclear-capable aircraft, is a core NATO capability. One that remains needed in today's world, and one that Germany has pledged to contribute to.

--The author is Ambassador to the United States of America in Germany.

Untangling the Knot of Strategic Arms Control

By: [Alexey Arbatov](#) and [Igor Ivanov](#) to provide the Gawdless Rooskie View // 07 may 2020

With the attention and resources of state leaders and publics fully occupied by the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing arms control challenges is low on the world's list of concerns.

Following the abrogation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019, no steps are being considered for prevention of a new arms race with medium-range missiles. Discussions about extending the 2011 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between the United States and Russia, beyond its February 2021 expiration date, have stagnated. As a direct effect of the pandemic, on-site inspections, which are a key element of the New START verification regime, have been interrupted. The 50th Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), scheduled for April/May 2020 in New York, has been postponed until next year.

COVID-19, however, has not visibly affected the main weapons programs of the United States, Russia, China, and other leading military powers. A new cycle of the nuclear and advanced conventional arms race is gaining momentum. Against the background of the collapse of nuclear arms control regimes, this arms race inevitably will exacerbate controversies among the great powers, creating a high probability of armed conflict and the ensuing risk of nuclear escalation. If, God forbid, this were to happen, the current crisis caused by the pandemic would look like a minor inconvenience.

That is why we strongly believe that COVID-19 must not serve as a pretext to ignore or postpone urgently needed resolution of current arms control controversies. In particular, it is crucially important to salvage the essence of the INF Treaty. In 2019, the United States announced it would withdraw from the treaty, due to alleged Russian violations (deployment of prohibited missiles) and the massive build-up of such weapons by China

(which was not a party to that agreement). Since U.S. plans for possible new missile deployments in Asia are said to be linked to Chinese programs, it is up to those two powers to search for possible mutual accommodation, however difficult this presently looks.

In Europe, U.S. and Russian medium-range missile deployments should be avoided at all costs. They would be highly destabilizing by precipitating mutual planning for preemptive strikes. Such developments also would block any possibility of continuing strategic arms control cooperation, since American intermediate-range missiles in Europe would be perceived by Moscow as threatening a decapitating and disarming strike on Russia's strategic deterrent, as was Russia's concern in the early 1980s. A temporary deal on this issue, until a time when the U.S. and China reach some compromise, should be based on Russia's proposal to NATO states in late 2019 to agree on a moratorium on deployment of medium-range missile systems in Europe.

Controversies around the INF treaty were not alleviated when, in January 2019, Russian 9M729 (SSC-8) land-based cruise missiles, perceived by the United States and NATO as a treaty violation, were shown to foreign military representatives in an aircraft hangar in Moscow to demonstrate that they technically could not fly at the prohibited range. NATO states did not attend the demonstration and declared that the systems displayed were different from the missiles in question.

Hence the solution should be for the two sides to jointly develop additional means of verification, using confidence-building measures and on-site inspections, to make sure that the missiles deployed in Russian regular units are the same as those demonstrated in Moscow in 2019. In parallel, Russia's concerns also should be addressed. Moscow claims that U.S. missile defense launchers deployed in Romania and Poland could be used to deploy and launch offensive Tomahawk sea-based cruise missiles. This concern could also be resolved by agreed transparency and on-site inspection provisions.

Equally urgent is the need to address strategic arms control issues in the remaining months before the expiration of the New START treaty. The latest U.S. position is that extension, just like any START follow-on treaty, is conditioned on China's participation. This is flatly rejected by Beijing, with lukewarm support by Moscow. We believe that New START extension cannot involve China as it would imply China was joining the treaty – something neither the U.S. nor Russia would welcome since it would legalize China's right to build up its strategic nuclear forces to the New START ceilings of 700 deployed missiles and bombers and 1,550 warheads (thus increasing its current forces in the two dimensions by 4.5 and 10 times correspondingly).

The New START extension should remain a Russia-U.S. bilateral issue—with two important mutual understandings. First, the new Russian Avangard boost-glide system and Sarmat heavy intercontinental ballistic missiles must be recognized as subjects of all treaty provisions. Second, the motive to extend the treaty should not be just to retain the transparency of the treaty verification regime (as valuable as it is) for a few more years, but, still more importantly, to have time to begin work on a follow-on treaty. Issues related to a New START follow-on could be settled during this extra time: First, the question of China's participation, and second, the scope and parameters of further arms reductions and limits.

Regarding China's participation, it is up to the United States to develop a proposal that would interest China. This would involve devising a U.S.-China balance of parity and stability without stipulating U.S. reductions down to Chinese force levels or legalizing China's build up to U.S. force levels. Whatever was agreed by the two parties would be considered by Russia when deciding on its participation. The parties also should find a way

to engage the United Kingdom and France. In a new multilateral framework, Russia and China would certainly demand inclusion of the other two nuclear weapon states, and there would be no reason to exclude them. It would be fascinating to see how the Trump Administration solves this conundrum.

If forging a trilateral or five-party agreement proves impossible at this time, Moscow and Washington should proceed with plans for a bilateral deal, and its concept may be as follows. We believe that if the nuclear forces of China, the United Kingdom, and France are not limited, then further deep cuts of the strategic forces of the two major powers (following very substantial reductions since 1991) are not an urgent goal and may be safely postponed. Hence, the New START follow-on ceilings can be lowered by just 100-200 deployed delivery vehicles and warheads (i.e. down to 600-500 and 1400-1300 respectively). Far more important is the scope of the next agreement, which should enhance strategic stability.

It is essential that the air-launched nuclear and conventional cruise and hypersonic missiles and nuclear gravity bombs are included under a common warhead ceiling, and that they be counted according to the actual loading of the heavy bombers. Limits on strategic delivery vehicles and warheads should also include the new weapon systems: ground-based intercontinental cruise missiles and long-range autonomous underwater drones, as well as land- and sea-based boost-glide hypersonic systems with ranges defined similar to what was in the SALT and START treaties (e.g. land-based missiles with ranges greater than 5,500 km and sea-based missiles with ranges greater than 600 km). Such weapons should be limited regardless of whether their warheads are nuclear or conventional.

In this way, the most destabilizing long-range strategic systems which blur a clear line between conventional and nuclear warfare would become subject to verifiable arms control (including conventional missiles and low-yield nuclear bombs). Indirectly, their numbers would be limited, since under common ceilings they would “compete” with the number of nuclear-tipped strategic ballistic missiles. The latter would also have to be reduced to allow for ground- and air-launched cruise missiles, hypersonic boost-glide and ram-jet missiles, and underwater nuclear drones under the overall limit.

We recognize that such a treaty would not address a number of old and new potentially destabilizing weapon systems and technologies: tactical nuclear weapons, anti-missile defense, space arms, cyber-warfare, directed-energy weapons, and a great variety of drones with artificial intelligence—to name a few that are most commonly discussed. But those systems and technologies cannot be addressed immediately, either technically or diplomatically. Eventually they might be included in arms control, as well as the engagement of the three other recognized nuclear states, provided that the first steps outlined above are urgently taken to prevent the final collapse of the arms control regimes and process. The perfect should not become the enemy of the good, and the half-century successful history of nuclear arms control repeatedly has offered proof of this principle.

[Alexey Arbatov](#) is a former member of parliament of Russia (State Duma) and participant at the START I negotiations.

[Igor Ivanov](#) is a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia. They are members of NTI's [Board of Directors](#). Their views are their own.

CONGRESSIONAL

By Susan Cornwell

HASC

- See press release below and corresponding article from Congressman Mac Thornberry

May 13, 2020

Defense Drumbeat

Keeping the Industrial Base Healthy to Protect the Country

WASHINGTON, DC- In a column on RealClearPolitics today, HASC Ranking Member Mac Thornberry (R-TX) argues that keeping the Defense Industrial Base healthy is key to our national security, and explains what that will take. Read the full column here. Excerpts below:

"...COVID-19 demonstrates one kind of threat to American national security and our people. But we expect the government to have the country as prepared as possible against all of the different kinds of national security threats, including those we do not see coming. As in the past, being ready for future threats requires having a healthy, agile industrial base that can ensure those on the front lines have what they need to defend and protect us. That includes traditional defense suppliers, but it must extend to non-traditional companies, as well. Protecting the country is no longer just a question of tanks, ships, and planes, as we have seen...

"To have a healthy defense industrial base demands at least three things. One is to pay attention and know what the state of the industrial base is. Congress has previously required several reports on this topic, but we all probably underestimate the fragility of the supplier-and-subcontractor layer, which is largely small and medium-sized businesses. We need to keep our finger on the pulse of those we must count on in time of need and follow the readiness of our industrial base as closely as we follow the readiness of our military units.

"Secondly, we need stable, reliable funding. The recent history of defense spending being used as a political football is well-known. Without predictable, on-time funding, no industry can keep the necessary expertise on the payroll or make the needed investments upon which we rely in an emergency.

"Thirdly, with the transparency and appropriate oversight that must accompany such funding, we need more flexibility and less prescriptive regulation than we have now. Just as world events and the evolution of threats move quickly, we must be able to move faster in making funding adjustments to meet needs and opportunities...

"With COVID-19, the healthier an individual is going in, the better the chance of the surviving the disease. The healthier our defense industrial base, the better our country can weather and respond to the inevitable national security shocks to come. The time to prepare is now."

116th Congress

COVID-19 and the Defense Industrial Base

COMMENTARY

By Rep. Mac Thornberry

A number of apt analogies have been made between the current COVID-19 crisis and 9/11, including our appreciation and admiration for those on the front lines to keep the rest of us safe. Like 9/11, this threat seemed to come at us suddenly, and we were not as ready as we could have been. I observed a tabletop exercise in the aftermath of 9/11 which revolved around terrorists spreading a livestock disease that brought much of the nation's economy to a standstill. We have known that the spread of a pathogen, whether intentional or not, could inflict significant damage on the country. But still, we are playing catch up. What about the next time?

In some ways, a more appropriate historical comparison for our current situation may be World War II. That was the last time the entire nation was so deeply affected by emergency measures deemed necessary to fight a threat to our country. The civilian economy faced rationing, price and wage controls, and factories were converted to manufacture war weapons and materiel.

According to Arthur Herman's Freedom Forge, those responsible for war production knew that the key to winning was "America's free enterprise system. That meant keeping the drive for war production as voluntary as possible, so that the right incentives – which included the profit motive – found the right people to do the job." It took a while to make the transition, but once they did, American industry produced "two-thirds of all Allied military equipment used in World War II."

COVID-19 demonstrates one kind of threat to American national security and our people. But we expect the government to have the country as prepared as possible against all of the different kinds of national security threats, including those we do not see coming. As in the past, being ready for future threats requires having a healthy, agile industrial base that can ensure those on the front lines have what they need to defend and protect us. That includes traditional defense suppliers, but it must extend to non-traditional companies, as well. Protecting the country is no longer just a question of tanks, ships, and planes, as we have seen.

To have a healthy defense industrial base demands at least three things. One is to pay attention and know what the state of the industrial base is. Congress has previously required several reports on this topic, but we all probably underestimate the fragility of the supplier-and-subcontractor layer, which is largely small and medium-sized businesses. We need to keep our finger on the pulse of those we must count on in time of need and follow the readiness of our industrial base as closely as we follow the readiness of our military units.

Secondly, we need stable, reliable funding. The recent history of defense spending being used as a political football is well-known. Without predictable, on-time funding, no industry can keep the necessary expertise on the payroll or make the needed investments upon which we rely in an emergency.

Thirdly, with the transparency and appropriate oversight that must accompany such funding, we need more flexibility and less prescriptive regulation than we have now. Just as world events and the evolution of threats move quickly, we must be able to move faster in making funding adjustments to meet needs and opportunities.

Plus, many of the companies upon which we depend to meet national security threats also compete in the commercial market. The burden imposed by congressional restrictions and Department of Defense regulations too often makes them choose between government and commercial markets. We cannot protect our people if many of our most capable people and companies are on the sidelines.

Congress has made a number of changes to DOD's acquisition system in recent years, and program managers at DOD have been more willing to utilize those authorities with some impressive successes. I have some additional proposals to offer this year. But this effort must be continual. The world does not wait for us to catch up, and DOD is still a long way from moving at the speed with which the threats are coming at us.

With COVID-19, the healthier an individual is going in, the better the chance of the surviving the disease. The healthier our defense industrial base, the better our country can weather and respond to the inevitable national security shocks to come. The time to prepare is now.

Mac Thornberry, a Republican, represents Texas's 13th Congressional District in the House and is ranking member of the Armed Services Committee.

GENERAL NEWS

CQ NEWS

May. 14, 2020

Burr steps aside as Intelligence chairman as stock scandal grows

May 14, 2020 – 12:51 p.m. By Chris Marquette, CQ

Sen. Richard M. Burr will step down as chairman of the Intelligence Committee pending a federal investigation into his stock trades that followed a confidential briefing on the coronavirus pandemic before the financial markets cratered.

“Senator Burr contacted me this morning to inform me of his decision to step aside as Chairman of the Intelligence Committee during the pendency of the investigation,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said in a statement. “We agreed that this decision would be in the best interests of the committee and will be effective at the end of the day tomorrow.”

The announcement comes after the Los Angeles Times reported late Wednesday night the FBI served a warrant on Burr at his Washington residence. The federal agents seized the North Carolina Republican's cell phone to examine communications between him and his broker.

A source familiar with McConnell noted Burr will stay on the Intelligence Committee and said his move to step aside as chairman is “above and beyond conference rules.”

Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey temporarily left his post as top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee after he was indicted on federal corruption charges. The charges were eventually dropped by the Department of Justice after Menendez's first trial ended in a mistrial.

Burr has not been formally charged with any wrongdoing.

Burr sold between \$628,000 and \$1.72 million in his securities holdings on Feb. 13, after the panel began receiving daily coronavirus briefings, ProPublica first reported.

Additionally, NPR obtained a recording on Feb. 27 in which Burr offered a private assessment of the adverse economic impact from the coronavirus — a contrast to his more upbeat public comments.

When asked Thursday whether he exercised poor judgment regarding his stock trades in question, Burr said, “Nope.”

“It is part of the investigation and everybody ought to let this investigation play out,” Burr said of the federal agents taking his cell phone.

Burr noted that he has been cooperating with investigators since the outset of the inquiry and his decision to step aside is to quell the distraction the scandal is bringing to the panel.

“This is a distraction to the hard work of the committee, and the members and I think that the security of the country is too important to have a distraction,” he said.

The Times cited a U.S. law enforcement official who told the newspaper about the warrant on Burr. Burr said he will not publicly discuss the matter. “Listen they can publicly talk about it. I’m not going to publicly talk about it. It’s their investigation,” he said.

Alice Fisher, a lawyer from Latham & Watkins who is advising Burr, said: “He has made the decision to step aside as Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee until this investigation is resolved, and to allow the committee to continue its essential work free of external distractions. When the issue arose, Senator Burr immediately asked the Senate Ethics Committee to conduct a complete review. He has also been actively cooperating with the government’s inquiry, as he said he would. From the outset, Senator Burr has been focused on an appropriate and thorough review of the facts in this matter, which will establish that his actions were appropriate.”

Sen. Jim Risch is next in seniority on the Intelligence Committee. He declined to comment to reporters at the Capitol on Thursday, and his spokesperson later sent out a statement. “Obviously the situation has changed over the last half hour, but since Senator Risch is on the Ethics Committee and may be asked to review these circumstances, I’m unable to share a comment with you on the situation,” Marty Cozza, a spokesperson for the Idaho Republican said.

Senators’ sales of their securities during the pandemic has lead to some enhanced attention from the media and in some cases law enforcement, and prompted questions about whether they were using information in briefings that was not known to the public to direct such transactions. The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hosted an all-senators briefing on COVID-19 with top administration health officials on Jan. 24. Additionally, the Senate Intelligence Committee was apprised on the pandemic dating to around mid-February, according to ProPublica.

What about Loeffler?

Sen. Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga., a member of the HELP Committee, started selling off assets on Jan. 24, the same day as the briefing. Loeffler went on to sell over \$1 million in stock, according to The Daily Beast.

A spokesperson for Loeffler said she has complied with all laws. "Allegations of improper trading by Sen. Loeffler are completely false based on a political attack misrepresenting the facts to prey on the emotions of the American people as they endure the impact of a global pandemic," the spokesperson said. "No search warrant has been served on Sen. Loeffler. She has followed both the letter and spirit of the law and will continue to do so."

Burr, as chairman of the committee, played an important role in issuing a Senate report that concurred with U.S. intelligence agencies' conclusion that Russia interfered with the 2016 election to support Donald Trump's bid for the presidency and that the agencies' work was based on solid intelligence gathering processes.

Ned Price, a former Obama administration national security spokesperson, said there may be more at play when it comes to the apparent differential treatment of the two by the Justice Department. He noted Burr is not running for reelection (Loeffler is up against Rep. Doug Collins in a tough primary) and that Burr has not always sided with Trump.

"This is another clear example of President Trump — with the help of Bill Barr and the Barr Justice Department — not acting blindly when it comes to the rule of law, but actually taking precise aim at not only President Trump's perceived adversaries, but also those who are less than cooperative with his agenda," Price said. "And I think that Senator Burr clearly fits into that category."

"Kelly Loeffler has been a consistent defender, champion of President Trump and his administration. Burr has oftentimes done Trump's bidding, but hasn't always done so," Price added.

Republican Sen. James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma, who serves as an ex-officio member on the Intelligence Committee, sold between \$180,000 and \$400,000 of stock holdings on Jan. 27. That includes between \$15,000 and \$50,000 in Apple Inc., and PayPal Holdings Inc., each. That transaction report includes sales between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in Intuit Inc., Danaher Corp. and Brookfield Asset Management. Inhofe also sold between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in Brookfield Asset Management on Feb. 20.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein's husband sold between \$1 million and \$5 million in Allogene Therapeutics on Feb. 18. Feinstein is a California Democrat who serves on the Intelligence panel and was previously its chairwoman.

Feinstein has been interviewed by law enforcement about the stock transactions she disclosed, according to Tom Mentzer, a spokesperson for the senator.

"Senator Feinstein was asked some basic questions by law enforcement about her husband's stock transactions, as I think all offices in the initial story were," Mentzer said in an email. "She was happy to voluntarily answer those questions to set the record straight and provided additional documents to show she had no involvement in her husband's transactions. There have been no follow up actions on this issue."

Another lawmaker, Republican Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin — who is not on the Intelligence Committee but chairs the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee — sold millions in securities of Pacur LLC, a Wisconsin-based plastics company he used to run before taking office. On March 2, Johnson sold between \$5 million and \$25 million in the company.

Johnson has not been contacted by federal investigators regarding his stock trades, according to Ben Voelkel, a spokesperson for Johnson. Rachel Oswald and Jim Saksa contributed to this report.

AROUND THE WORLD



RUSSIA:

Russia makes massive missile deployments in response to US nuclear threat

RUSSIA is carrying out major missile deployments along its borders after warning the US was potentially plotting a shock nuclear attack.

By Simon Osborne for the UK Express // PUBLISHED: 16:42, Mon, May 4, 2020 | UPDATED: 17:13, Mon, May 4, 2020

Kremlin defence chiefs have accused Washington of building a "nuclear shield" in the region.

They have ordered the newly-developed Avangard and Sarmat missile systems to be strategically positioned in response to the heightened US military activity in the regions. And they warned US allies which host the weapons would become priority targets. First Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff's Main Operations Department Lieutenant General Viktor Poznikhir said the US was lining up missiles close to Russia's borders in a move designed to obtain the potential to deliver a surprise strike.

He said: "The deployment of missile defence systems near our borders creates a powerful strike potential for the US enabling it to deliver a surprise missile and nuclear strike on Russia." He accused Washington of developing a concept of pre-launch interception and planned to destroy intercontinental ballistic missiles of Russia, China and other countries while they are still in launchers.

And he warned the NATO countries which have agreed to host elements of the US missile shield will become priority targets for destruction. Gen Poznikhir also said using missile defence systems against missiles with nuclear warheads was linked to threats of a long radioactive contamination of the territory. He said: "Therefore, the countries taking part in implementing the Pentagon's anti-missile plans may suffer."

Gen Poznikhir said Russia was taking measures against the US global missile shield by creating Sarmat and Avangard weapons with the increased capabilities of breaching this system. He confirmed defensive and offensive armaments were being deployed along the Russian borders on a large scale as "adequate counter-measures" to the US threat. He said: "They primarily include arming the strategic offensive forces with cutting-edge missile systems with the increased capabilities of overcoming the missile shield, such as the Avangard and Sarmat weapons."

The Avangard is a strategic intercontinental ballistic missile system equipped with a hypersonic glide vehicle. The "breakthrough" weapon is a glide vehicle capable of flying at hypersonic speed in the dense layers of the atmosphere, manoeuvring by its flight path and its altitude and breaching any anti-missile defence. The RS-28 Sarmat is a Russian advanced silo-based system with a heavy liquid-propellant intercontinental ballistic missile.

It has been in the process of its development since the 2000s to replace the R-36M2 Voevoda intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Defence experts said the Sarmat is capable of breaching any existing and future missile defences. Despite the major deployments along its borders, General

Poznikhir said Russian President Vladimir Putin had insisted Russia was not interested in a strategic arms race "and is urging the United States to return to the negotiating table for a constructive dialogue on the issues of missile defence and the search for mutually acceptable solutions".

Russia makes massive missile deployments in response to US nuclear threat

RUSSIA is carrying out major missile deployments along its borders after warning the US was potentially plotting a shock nuclear attack.

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Kremlin defence chiefs have accused Washington of building a "nuclear shield" in the region.

They have ordered the newly-developed Avangard and Sarmat missile systems to be strategically positioned in response to the heightened US military activity in the regions. And they warned US allies which host the weapons would become priority targets. First Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff's Main Operations Department Lieutenant General Viktor Poznikhir said the US was lining up missiles close to Russia's borders in a move designed to obtain the potential to deliver a surprise strike.

He said: "The deployment of missile defence systems near our borders creates a powerful strike potential for the US enabling it to deliver a surprise missile and nuclear strike on Russia." He accused Washington of developing a concept of pre-launch interception and planned to destroy intercontinental ballistic missiles of Russia, China and other countries while they are still in launchers.

And he warned the NATO countries which have agreed to host elements of the US missile shield will become priority targets for destruction. Gen Poznikhir also said using missile defence systems against missiles with nuclear warheads was linked to threats of a long radioactive contamination of the territory. He said: "Therefore, the countries taking part in implementing the Pentagon's anti-missile plans may suffer."

Gen Poznikhir said Russia was taking measures against the US global missile shield by creating Sarmat and Avangard weapons with the increased capabilities of breaching this system. He confirmed defensive and offensive armaments were being deployed along the Russian borders on a large scale as "adequate counter-measures" to the US threat. He said: "They primarily include arming the strategic offensive forces with cutting-edge missile systems with the increased capabilities of overcoming the missile shield, such as the Avangard and Sarmat weapons."

The Avangard is a strategic intercontinental ballistic missile system equipped with a hypersonic glide vehicle. The "breakthrough" weapon is a glide vehicle capable of flying at hypersonic speed in the dense layers of the atmosphere, manoeuvring by its flight path and its altitude and breaching any anti-missile defence. The RS-28 Sarmat is a Russian advanced silo-based system with a heavy liquid-propellant intercontinental ballistic missile.

It has been in the process of its development since the 2000s to replace the R-36M2 Voevoda intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Defence experts said the Sarmat is capable of breaching any existing and future missile defences. Despite the major deployments along its borders, General Poznikhir said Russian President Vladimir Putin had insisted Russia was not interested in a strategic arms race "and is urging the United States to return to the negotiating table for a constructive dialogue on the issues of missile defence and the search for mutually acceptable solutions".

Putin Calls for 'Invincible' Unity as Russians Mark Victory Day on Lockdown

<https://www.ibtimes.com/putin-calls-invincible-unity-russians-mark-victory-day-lockdown-2973191>

Putin lays flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. -- TASS

President Vladimir Putin told Russians they are "invincible" when they stand together as the country on Saturday marked the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II on lockdown from the coronavirus. With the number of virus cases surging and authorities urging Russians to stay in their homes, celebrations of this year's Victory Day were muted after the Kremlin grudgingly agreed to postpone plans for a grand parade with world leaders.

Instead of columns of military hardware and thousands of troops parading through Red Square as planned, Putin walked alone to lay flowers at the Eternal Flame outside the red brick walls of the Kremlin. In a solemn televised speech, he made no mention of the virus, despite Russia having the fifth-highest number of confirmed infections in the world, with nearly 200,000 cases as of Saturday.

But Putin highlighted the sacrifices made by the Soviet Union in what Russians call the Great Patriotic War and hinted at the threat now facing the country. "Our veterans fought for life, against death. And we will always be equal to their unity and endurance," Putin said. "We know and firmly believe that we are invincible when we stand together." A ceremonial honour guard marched past Putin after his speech, as Russian television showed images of Red Square empty nearby.

Military helicopters, bombers and fighter jets then flew over the city, with some releasing smoke in the red, white and blue of the Russian flag over the Kremlin. The pandemic hit Russia later than many countries in western Europe but it has seen a major increase in cases in recent days, with more than 10,000 new infections registered every day this week. On Saturday officials said the number of confirmed infections had risen by 10,817 in the last 24 hours to reach a total of 198,676, putting Russia behind only the United States, Spain, Italy and Britain in total cases.

Russia says the increase is due in part to a huge testing campaign, with more than 5.2 million tests carried out so far. The country's reported mortality rate is much lower than in many countries, with 1,827 dead from the coronavirus as of Saturday. Officials credit a widespread testing and tracking effort, though critics have cast doubt on the numbers and accused authorities of under-reporting deaths.

The pandemic has been a major blow to Putin's political plans for this spring. The postponed Victory Day parade, which was due to be attended by world leaders including China's Xi Jinping and Emmanuel Macron of France, had been meant as a major showcase of Russia's increased global prestige under Putin. The Russian leader was also forced to postpone a planned vote last month on constitutional reforms that would have paved the way for Putin, in power for more than 20 years, to potentially stay in the Kremlin until 2036.

Officials are hoping both events can still be held later this year, though no dates have been set and much will depend on when the outbreak comes under control. As with others around the world, Russians are deeply worried about the long-term economic impact of the pandemic and polls show many are increasingly frustrated with the government's handling of the crisis. One survey by independent pollster Levada this week showed Putin's approval rating falling to a historic low of 59 percent in April. Authorities across the vast country have ordered a range of quarantine measures with Moscow, the epicentre of the epidemic, on a strict lockdown until the end of May.

Stay home

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin warned residents to stay home on Saturday and only watch ceremonies on television or the flyby from their balconies. A popular event in which Russians walk in a parade holding photos of family members who fought in the war was also reorganised online. While most ex-Soviet countries also remain under lockdown, two are going ahead with traditional military displays.

Belarus, where President Alexander Lukashenko has dismissed the dangers of the coronavirus, plans a parade involving some 5,000 troops. "We cannot do otherwise," Lukashenko insisted Friday, likening his country to a wartime fortress withstanding the Nazis. In Central Asia's Turkmenistan, which has reported no cases, a military parade will be held in front of a war memorial in the capital Ashgabat.



CHINA:

Rally cry for more Chinese nuclear warheads

Global Times editor leads the call but he's likely channeling sentiment among Communist Party hardliners
by [Frank Chen](#) for Asia Times // May 11, 2020

China should more than triple its nuclear warhead stockpile, according to the editor of a leading newspaper, a rally cry that has put Beijing's opaque nuclear arsenal into an unusual spotlight.

Hu Xijin, editor of the nationalist Global Times tabloid, sister publication of the leading Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily, openly called on China's military to more than triple its nuclear bomb and warhead stockpile to 1,000 in Weibo social media posts that went viral over the weekend. Hu opined China should quickly boost its nuclear deterrence, including through a stockpile of about 100 nuclear-capable Dongfeng 41 strategic intercontinental ballistic missiles. The missiles have a hit range of up to 15,000 kilometers and can reach the United States.

The Dongfeng 41 made its public debut during the chest-thumping military parade staged for the Communist Party's 70th anniversary last October. Hu said the warheads and missiles could guarantee China's peace of mind and counter an increasingly antagonistic US. "Before long we may need more stamina to face up to the challenges, and that stamina is buttressed by the Dongfeng and Julang missiles," wrote Hu. The Julang is a family of powerful intercontinental-range submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

Hu also suggested that the size of China's nuclear arsenal may determine how US political elites view and approach China. He wrote that peace between the two superpowers is never an act of largesse but is underlined by "strategic tools."

Global Times chief editor Hu Xijin said on his Weibo account that China would need 1,000 nuclear warheads including at least 100 Dongfeng 41 missiles for better deterrence against the US.

In China, where nationalist sentiments have been whipped up by the Covid-19 contagion and associated rising tensions with the US, those in favor of non-proliferation are now being drowned out by netizens howling for a robust military build-up. Most of the 25,000-plus replies beneath Hu's post were supportive of China spearheading a new arms race, with some even calling for Beijing to scrap its "no-first-use" pledge.

Observers say Hu, whose Global Times is known for its pugnacious anti-US and anti-West tirades, is aware that his remarks and newspaper are usually interpreted as channeling Beijing's official line – or at least the views of a hardline faction of the top leadership. The fact that he dared to raise such a sensitive subject for public discussion over social media may be indicative of Beijing's shifting stance on nuclear deterrence, some analysts say.

Li Mingjiang, a scholar at the Nanyang Technological University's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, said Hu's nuclear build-up call could be indicative of a growing malaise among senior cadres and intellectuals. It comes as China-US ties arguably hit a new nadir over the origin of the coronavirus pandemic, military posturing in the South China Sea and a lingering trade war.

"They think China needs to ratchet up its deterrence should ties with the US slip to new lows and when the two countries teeter on the brink of a war," said Li. He told the Singapore-based Lianhe Zaobao newspaper that he did not think China's leadership would want to start an outright arms race to get close or even overtake America's bulging nuclear stockpile. Other analysts say Beijing may feel it is imperative to boost its nuclear and missile strike capabilities after the US pulled out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty last August.

A political scientist with the Peking University's School of Governance who wished not to be named told Asia Times that Hu, a shrewd news professional working for a "party paper," must be aware of the rising calls within the military and the Communist Party for more nuclear investments and so he was likely speaking on their behalf when he broached the topic. "There must be people high up in the hierarchy of the military and the central leadership who back Hu's call for more nuclear capabilities ...

Let's not forget that [President] Xi Jinping, as top commander of the People's Liberation Army, elevated the military's nuclear strike division to the position of a standalone branch on a par with the ground forces, air force and navy, and renamed it the rocket force during his sweeping reforms in 2015," said the scholar. Hu has since added to his original Weibo posts, writing that what was enough of a nuclear deterrent in the past may not be adequate going forward now that the US has apparently made China its main global adversary.

He said China's nuclear deterrence should be boosted accordingly. The exact number of China's deployable nuclear warheads is a closely guarded state secret. The US-based Federation of American Scientists, however, estimated the size of China's nuclear arsenal at about 320 as of 2019. The Washington-based think tank noted that China's arsenal could be the second smallest among the five nuclear weapon states acknowledged by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The US is sitting on a much more formidable stockpile of at least 5,800 warheads, the same research shows. China conducted its first nuclear weapons tests in 1964 under revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, far away from prying eyes in far-western Xinjiang province. The country detonated

its first hydrogen bomb, again in Xinjiang, three years later. Nuclear tests continued over the decades until 1996, when China signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

China also acceded to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in 1984 and ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997. In a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on May 8, Donald Trump reportedly proposed to include China in future disarmament negotiations. In response, China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said on Sunday that countries with bigger nuclear stockpiles, including the US, should take the lead in disarmament.

China's Dual-Capable Missiles: A Dangerous Feature, Not a Bug

The DF-26 IRBM's ability to operate conventional and nuclear warheads creates dangerous inadvertent escalation risks.

By Ankit Panda for the Diplomat // May 13, 2020

Over at Popular Science, Peter W. Singer and Ma Xiu draw attention to China's DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM). The DF-26 is not only notable for being a system tailor-made for payload delivery to the U.S. territory of Guam, but for its dual capability.

It is currently the longest-range system in the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force explicitly designed for compatibility with conventional and nuclear payloads alike. As Singer and Ma note, this creates more than a few dangerous scenarios: for instance, in a conflict, the United States would be tempted to target DF-26 battalions to ensure that it could sustain operations into the Western Pacific and past the First Island Chain from its military facilities on Guam.

But conducting such an attack would amount to nuclear counterforce given that any given DF-26 launcher could play a role for nuclear retaliation by China. A separate scenario concerns China launching a conventional DF-26 during a conflict. With space-based early warning sensors able to notify the United States of a launch, planners may reason that such a launch could be a nuclear one.

Here, China's stated posture of No First Use might have little to do in shaping U.S. assumptions, especially as many in the U.S. government (certainly in the Trump administration) already view China's No First Use declaration with skepticism. This "pre-launch ambiguity" problem is very much a feature for the DF-26, however, and not a bug, per se (see a recent monograph on this topic by James Acton for more).

Singer and Ma draw attention to a fascinating CCTV report from a few years ago that boasts of the dual-capable nature of a missile presumed to be the DF-26. According to their translation of Zhou Lusheng, a brigade political commissar, cited in the report: "Our mission is the two major operations, the two major deterrences [a reference to both nuclear and conventional capabilities]... A nuclear-conventional dual-use brigade must train to simultaneously possess two different operational postures... meaning that personnel of such a brigade have a higher workload."

Even more interesting is the training procedure described in the article. According to the authors, "The article even describes a drill in which the brigade practices firing a precision missile, then rapidly switches over to a nuclear posture for a counter-strike mission." People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) training protocols are known to only involve nuclear exercises that simulate retaliatory strikes (to keep No First Use credible) so the implication in this exercise is that a conventional DF-26 strike might invite nuclear use from an adversary.

In the end, the co-mingling of conventional and nuclear capabilities is designed to create a calculated form of ambiguity that might cause the United States to think twice. There's some evidence that American planners are taking these risks seriously. The U.S. Department of Defense's 2019 report on Chinese military capabilities emphasized the ambiguity problem, including by drawing attention to internal debates on how China's doctrine might need to be modified.

"Some PLA officers have written publicly of the need to spell out conditions under which China might need to use nuclear weapons first; for example, if an enemy's conventional attack threatened the survival of China's nuclear force or of the regime itself," the 2019 report notes, adding, "There has been no indication that national leaders are willing to attach such nuances and caveats to China's existing NFU policy."

"China's commingling of some of its conventional and nuclear missile forces, and ambiguities in China's NFU conditions, could complicate deterrence and escalation management during a conflict," the 2019 report added. "Once a conflict has begun, China's dispersal of mobile missile systems to hide sites could further complicate the task of distinguishing between nuclear and conventional forces and, thus, increase the potential for inadvertent attacks on the latter."

It remains unknown how the Chinese leadership precisely views the question of retaliating for conventional, long-range precision strike on dual-capable strategic systems like the DF-26, but the capability for the system itself is an important feature. The United States and China remain no closer to the sort of dialogue on strategic stability that would allow for an authoritative qualification by the Chinese side on how it views this important question.

Chinese State Media Calls for Building Up China's 'Nuclear Deterrent'

By: Jason Lemon for Newsweek

Hu Xijin, the editor-in-chief of an English daily tabloid published by the ruling Chinese Communist Party, urged his nation to expand its nuclear arsenal in response to "bullying" from the U.S. in a new editorial.

In the article published by The Global Times on Saturday, Hu argued that China needed to build up its stockpile of nuclear weapons as a "deterrent," as U.S. officials have been increasingly critical of the Chinese government amid the coronavirus pandemic. The editor argued that this would "safeguard national security." "In the past, China's storage of nuclear weapons was deemed sufficient to generate adequate nuclear deterrent, however, it doesn't mean the same storage will be big enough in the future to curb US government's strategic ambitions and bullying impulse against China," Xijin wrote.

Continuing, the editor argued that the U.S. was currently "more likely to exert all its power at its disposal to suppress and intimidate China." He warned that "China needs to possess the real power to prevent the U.S. politicians from gambling with its nuclear armament and harming China." Hu clarified that he is not a "warmonger" and does not want a nuclear war. However, he argued that building up China's nuclear arsenal would be a defensive measure to prevent the U.S. from striking first.

"China is committed not to be the first to launch nuclear weapons, and it will never threaten non-nuclear countries with its nuclear arsenal," he added. The Global Times editor previously posted his suggestion to the Chinese social media platform Weibo. He tweeted about the post on Friday. "I said on Chinese social media that China needs to expand the number of its nuclear warheads to over 1,000 to strengthen nuclear deterrent, given US' rising strategic ambitions and impulses targeting China," Hu wrote.

"It received over 60K likes. China pledges no-first-use and it loves peace." I said on Chinese social media that China needs to expand the number of its nuclear warheads to over 1,000 to strengthen nuclear deterrent, given rising strategic ambitions and impulses targeting China. It received over 60K likes. China pledges no-first-use and it loves peace. Newsweek has reached out to the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C. and the State Department for comment.

According to 2019 data compiled by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, China currently possesses about 290 nuclear weapons in its arsenal. The U.S. and Russia have far more nuclear weapons, with a reported 6,185 and 6,500 respectively. France has the third highest number of nuclear weapons, possessing just a few more than China with about 300. President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and some top Republicans have been increasingly critical of China, as they attempt to blame the East Asian nation for the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

The novel virus was first discovered in Wuhan, China, and Chinese officials initially covered up the outbreak. In the intervening months, China has faced criticism for its lack of transparency about the outbreak, while speculation has mounted that the virus could have possibly leaked from a research lab. Scientists have dismissed conspiracy theories that the virus was manufactured, but they have not ruled out the possibility that a virus being studied may have leaked from a Wuhan research facility.

Trump and Pompeo have pushed the narrative that the virus came from a lab, but intelligence officials have said they do not have proof to back up the theory. Many scientists have also expressed skepticism, arguing that it is far more likely that the virus jumped naturally from animals to humans without leaking from a lab. "We don't have certainty, and there's significant evidence that this came from the laboratory. Those statements can both be true," Pompeo said last Wednesday.

Meanwhile, an internal Chinese government document reported by Reuters last week warned that global anti-China sentiment has reached a high not seen since 1989's Tiananmen Square crackdown. The document warned that the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic could even potentially lead to military confrontation with the U.S. Polling data from Pew Research Center showed that Americans broadly view China as a threat to the U.S. The poll, which was conducted from March 3 to 29, showed that about 9 in 10 Americans view China's global influence and power as a threat, including 62 percent who see it as a "major" threat.

Chinese Global Times' Call for 1,000 Warheads is Nuclear Trolling

by Mitchell Blatt for The National Interest // May 10, 2020

No, China is not planning on increasing its stockpile of nuclear warheads to parity with the United States anytime soon.

But they have raised the profile of their online trolling game to compete with the U.S. under its current president. Global Times editor-in-chief Hu Xijin published an editorial on May 9 calling for China to “increase its nuclear warheads to 1,000 in a relatively short time span” and to “fix its nuclear gap with the US.” That came one day after the Times published a news article quoting analysts who recommended, in the words of the headline, that China “expand [its] nuclear arsenal to deter US warmongers.”

The fact that the US has continued to conduct B-1B flyovers of the East China Sea and Pentagon plans to arm Marines in the Pacific with Tomahawk cruise missiles were cited as reasons for heightened vigilance. America’s 2020 defense budget calls for deploying W76-2 tactile nuclear warheads on its submarines, a proposal in line with the U.S. 2018 Nuclear Posture Review that the Global Times has been sounding the alarm about for the past two years. The Trump administration continues to push for bringing China into a new arms control treaty with Russia.

In Hu’s own editorial, he wrote, “[I]f the US initiates a nuclear war at China, it must not have any chance of winning -- that’s the kind of nuclear deterrent China must secure.” But just because the Global Times is a state-controlled paper doesn’t mean its editorials reflect the voice of the state. The Global Times is the party’s sensationalistic tabloid, while the People’s Daily, whose parent company publishes the Times, is the more solemn party-line mouthpiece.

The “experts” cited in the Times’ May 8 article were also of questionable influence, and their comments did not support Hu’s proposal. One, Song Zhongping, is a TV commentator and graduate of a PLA school who contributes op-eds to the Times and is cited in hundreds of other Times military articles, usually taking an aggressively nationalistic position. He said “China will have to expand its nuclear arsenal.”

The other, Wei Dongxu, said China should upgrade its nuclear force. (The article also quoted Hu’s own recommendation.) Neither of them called for increasing China’s stockpile to 1,000 or more. It is commonly understood that China intends to expand its arsenal, but the projections are more on an order of a few hundred, not a few thousand. The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency projects China could double its warheads in the next decade, which would represent an increase from estimates of more than 250 to approximately 500 or 600.

The U.S. has 3,800 active warheads, with 1,600 deployed. Hu called for at least 1,000 warheads in the three paragraphs of Chinese he originally posted to China’s Weibo microblog, but then he upped the ante to imply parity in his English language editorial. Either way, both numbers are well above what Chinese experts are proposing and what American experts observe of China. China is also modernizing its arsenal, with longer-range missiles and enhancing the weak points in its nuclear triad, but their modernization is about quality, not just quantity.

But if Hu’s editorial doesn’t reflect the agenda of the Chinese government, that was probably never his goal. He succeeded in firing up Chinese nationalists and attracting domestic and international attention. His first post went viral on Weibo, with tens of thousands of retweets in China, and got picked up by Baidu News. In English-language media, he got write-ups in Reuters and the Falun Gong-affiliated Epoch Times.

His weapon of words hit its target, and not for the first time. Just in the past two days, Hu was also quoted by Australia’s Spectator as calling the country a piece of “chewing gum stuck on the sole of China’s shoes” that must be “rub[bed] off” after Australia called for an investigation into the origin of coronavirus and quoted by CNN as tweeting, “The incompetence of US (government) is like a mirror, reflecting the reliability of Chinese (government).”

The prominence of Hu's Twitter account is reflective of a change in China's media strategy. Diplomats and state-run media figures are increasingly relying on Western social media outlets to get their points to the world and go viral. Their way of communicating is also changing; not just bland Party-speak that goes right by the eyes of Americans, but provocative bromides and table-turning meant to trigger as much as to convince.

There was a joke on China's social media early in the Trump administration: Chinese netizens used to pay attention to President Obama's Twitter account in order to practice English; now when they read President Trump's tweets, they think their English is already very good! But if Chinese are not learning English from @realDonaldTrump, they are learning social media tactics. Hu's Twitter followers have surged from 20,000 last April to over 254,000 today, and he has gotten into Twitter feuds with hedge fund managers.

Lijian Zhao, deputy director of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Department, has risen to prominence as the Chinese government's most successful Twitter star. Zhao is well known for having pushed the conspiracy theory that coronavirus was brought to Wuhan by American soldiers. But what is interesting about his strategy is how he relied on Western conspiracy blogs to base his case.

He linked to the Canadian blog GlobalResearch.ca in a few of his tweets. It's as if he's subtly pointing out how much of a cesspool the free and open internet is in the West. The virus might not have been manufactured in North America, but the conspiracy theory was. In that case, too, the formal face of China, Ambassador Cui Tiankai, had a more moderate view: avoid conspiracy theories and blame games. Zhao is the Global Times to Cui's People's Daily.

Hu's call for ramping up nuclear warhead production does not reflect official policy, but it does reflect a sentiment. The Chinese government is feeling besieged, as are many patriotic Chinese citizens. Many Chinese who are casual patriots, not nationalists, are joining in, accounting for the proliferation of messages like Hu's and Zhao's across Chinese social media. If the United States wants to affect change in China, and the administration does, judging by the fact that they have Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger giving speeches in Mandarin directed at the Chinese public, their strategy is likely to be counterproductive.

At a time when China could be vulnerable, it is instilling nationalism and allowing the Chinese government to create a common enemy. Mitchell Blatt is a former editorial assistant at the National Interest, Chinese-English translator, and lead author of Panda Guides Hong Kong.

Indian and Chinese border troops 'exchange blows'

From BBC News

Dozens of Indian and Chinese soldiers have exchanged physical blows in a clash on the shared border, Indian media report.

Seven Chinese and four Indian troops were injured, an army official reportedly said, near the Naku La sector in the border state of Sikkim. Local commanders spoke and resolved the dispute, which took place on Saturday. The two countries have competing claims over their shared 3,400 kilometre (2,100 mile) border. Sometimes stand-offs involve chest-bumping, pushing and shoving, and throwing stones at each other, BBC South Asia Editor Anbarasan Ethirajan reports.

The latest tense face-off took place near the Naku La sector in Sikkim, more than 5,000 metres (16,400ft) above sea level in the Himalayas. China and India fought a war over the border in 1962. In 2017, the two countries also clashed in the region after China tried to extend a border road through a disputed plateau. Though both countries send out patrols that often engage in physical stand-offs, no bullet has been fired over the border in the last four decades.

An elaboration of my advocacy for why China needs more nuclear deterrence

By Hu Xijin Source:Global Times Published: 2020/5/12 12:29:54

I welcome the criticism of my call for China to expand the number of its nuclear warheads. Here is my response to those criticisms.

First, to advocate that China increase the number of nuclear weapons is itself anti-peace. Some people holding this view are idealistic and have a complete aversion to nuclear weapons. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that others, whose positions and feelings are not in line with China's national security interests, will stand against it. In addition, some people say that the money for building nuclear weapons should be used to improve people's livelihood and alleviate poverty. I think it's difficult to talk to them. Just let them vent their emotion.

Second, the number of nuclear weapons China needs to keep must be strictly calculated. My advocacy is not based on professional knowledge. I am not an expert in this area. But it is too narrow to think that only arms control experts can talk about nuclear weapons. The game between China and the US is a matter between two big societies. Nuclear deterrence should shape not only the attitude of the other side's military, but also the psychology of the other side's political, economic and opinion circles, and the national will of the other side as a whole. I am no less knowledgeable about the will of the state than an arms control expert. I mean, obviously, I have a right to participate in this discussion.

Third, China's nuclear deterrent is an ambiguous strategy and I should not spell out how many nuclear weapons China needs. In fact, over 1,000 nuclear warheads and at least 100 DF-41 ICBMs that I mentioned are not exact number, but the concept of magnitude. There are both people who agree and disagree with me, and China's ambiguous strategy of nuclear deterrence has not become "clear" because of my post. China is already defined by the US as a major strategic competitor. If the US continues to believe with certainty that China has only a few hundred nuclear warheads, it will be dangerous for China.

China does not need to engage in an arms race with the US, but as Washington's strategic will to crush Beijing grows, so must our nuclear deterrence. Whatever calculation model is used to figure out how many nuclear warheads China needs, this common-sense logic needs to be the basis of all of them.

Fourth, even if China wants to expand its nuclear arsenal, it should just do it and say nothing. China should not make a big noise about it, and I agree. China could quietly increase nuclear warheads in certain phases, but I objected doing that for a long time. Nuclear weapons are for deterrence. If they're completely concealed, what do you need them for? At the Tiananmen military parade, the strategic missile part is the one that attracts the most attention every time, and that is what it shows to the outside world.

Finally, I would like to say that my gut feeling is that China will increase its nuclear warheads, and I believe this is also the gut feeling of many people. Because China actually has no choice.

The author is editor-in-chief with the Global Times. opinion@globaltimes.com.cn

The Cold War II with China

Review of the information component of China

By Joseph Bosco, contributor for The HILL // 05/12/20 10:00 AM EDT

Well before the coronavirus fuse was lit in Wuhan and exploded into a global pandemic, the Trump administration was moving toward a confrontation with the People's Republic of China in the realm of information warfare.

Communist China has waged the ideological component of Cold War II for decades without a serious response from the United States — until now. [President Trump](#) has assembled and enabled a national security team that is focused on China's existential threat to America's core interests, and Western values generally, and is attuned to engage it on the information and values front. From the outset, the president and his economic adviser, Peter Navarro, launched negotiations to achieve balance in U.S.-China trade relations.

Concurrently, the administration released its [National Security Strategy](#) (NSS) in December 2017 identifying China and Russia as “revisionist powers that use technology, propaganda and coercion to shape a world antithetical to U.S. interests and values.” The NSS reflected American disillusionment and sense of betrayal with China's anti-Western hostility, unchanged despite President Nixon's historic opening in 1972:

“For decades, U.S. policy was rooted in the belief that support for China's rise and for its integration into the post-war international order would liberalize China.” Like the anti-West campaign the Soviet Union conducted during the Cold War, China and Russia today rely heavily on [information warfare](#). According to the NSS, both “weaponize information to attack the values and institutions that underpin free societies, while shielding themselves from outside information. ... They disseminate misinformation and propaganda.”

The NSS faulted past U.S. efforts in the information competition and pledged new efforts to address the challenge: “The United States must empower a true public diplomacy capability to compete effectively in this arena. ... We will craft and direct coherent communications campaigns to advance American influence and counter challenges from the ideological threats that emanate from ... competitor nations. These campaigns will adhere to American values and expose adversary propaganda and disinformation.”

The theme was repeated in the administration's [National Defense Strategy](#) document in January 2018 and the [Indo-Pacific Strategy Report](#) in June 2019. Putting declaratory policy into action as the president and his economic team were tightening the screws on Beijing in the trade negotiations, Vice President Pence fired the first direct shot across the bow in the arena of diplomacy and information warfare. In [a speech](#) at the Hudson Institute in October 2018, he started by noting the “strong personal relationship forged” between Trump and [Xi Jinping](#).

But he repeated America's disappointment at China's unreformed attitude and aggressive behavior even after it was brought into the World Trade Organization: “Previous administrations made this choice in the hope that freedom in China would expand in all of its forms — not just

economically, but politically, with a newfound respect for classical liberal principles, private property, personal liberty, religious freedom — the entire family of human rights. But that hope has gone unfulfilled.

The dream of freedom remains distant for the Chinese people. [W]hile Beijing still pays lip service to ‘reform and opening,’ [it] now rings hollow.” The pace of U.S. public diplomacy on China picked up considerably last year. In late October 2019, just a year after his Hudson speech, Pence returned to the subject of China in a major [policy speech](#) at the Woodrow Wilson Center. It was a veritable declaration of Cold War II, certainly on the information front.

Pence ticked off the list of China’s human rights depredations: “To uphold the values of freedom-loving people everywhere, we’ve also called out the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] for suppressing freedom of religion of the Chinese people. Millions of ethnic and religious minorities in China are struggling against the Party’s efforts to eradicate their religious and cultural identities.”

He talked about Beijing’s intense persecution of Christians, and recounted Trump administration [sanctions](#) and [visa restrictions](#) on Chinese governmental and business entities responsible for the internment of Uighurs and other Chinese Muslims. Pence also reaffirmed U.S. support for “Taiwan’s hard-won freedoms [as a] beacon of Chinese culture and democracy.” He noted the demonstrations of [over a million people](#) and called on Beijing to respect “the rights of the people of Hong Kong.”

Just a week after Pence’s sweeping declaration of human rights as an essential component in a new U.S.-China relationship, Secretary of State [Mike Pompeo](#) delivered a major [foreign policy speech](#) in New York. Like Pence, he traced the disappointing record of four decades of U.S.-China relations and found not only Beijing at fault but also U.S. policymakers for turning a blind eye to China’s manifold violations of human rights:

“We all too often shied away from talking directly about the human rights issues there and American values when they came into conflict, and we downplayed ideological differences, even after the Tiananmen Square massacre and other significant human rights abuses.” Pompeo announced that he would be making a series of speeches addressing each of the areas where China’s conduct has violated international norms and damaged relations with the United States.

In past months, Secretary of Defense [Mark Esper](#) and national security adviser Robert O’Brien, both newly appointed to their positions, also have made speeches directly challenging China’s conduct that adversely affects U.S. and global security interests, ranging from the Huawei 5G network to the coronavirus pandemic. The most recent [address on China](#) by a Trump administration official was made by deputy national security adviser Matt Pottinger on May 4, to commemorate that date in Chinese history when young people in Beijing gathered to protest the unfair treatment of China in the post-World War I Paris Peace Conference.

The subject would not be on the tips of many people’s tongues except for the fact that Pottinger delivered it in fluent Mandarin. It was favorably received by ordinary Chinese citizens, though CCP spokespersons told Pottinger to “mind his business.” It is clear that the Chinese people hunger for honest information and friendly communication with the American people, including U.S. officials when possible. The administration should enable Pottinger and other Mandarin speakers to do so on a regular basis.

This would be a supplement to, not a substitute for, an expanded and invigorated effort by Radio Free Asia and Voice of America. The incompetent and/or ill-intentioned actions of the CCP that spawned the pandemic demonstrate conclusively that the Chinese people and people throughout the world are all the Party's victims and, like victims of the pandemic itself, deserve mutual moral support. A U.S. administration is finally leveling with the American people on the existential threat posed by China's communist government. Now the Chinese people are also owed the truth.

Joseph Bosco served as China country director for the secretary of Defense from 2005 to 2006 and as Asia-Pacific director of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief from 2009 to 2010. He is a nonresident fellow at the Institute for Corean-American Studies and a member of the advisory board of the Global Taiwan Institute.



NORTH KOREA:

North Korea horror: Nuclear war fears as Kim Jong-un's missile plot 'nearing completion'

NUCLEAR war fears have soared after a Washington think tank claimed North Korea is "nearing completion" of a ballistic missile facility.

By Steven Brown for the UK Express // PUBLISHED: 17:42, Thu, May 7, 2020 | UPDATED: 17:42, Thu, May 7, 2020

On Tuesday, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) claimed that the Sil-li Ballistic Missile Support Facility near Pyongyang International Airport was nearly complete.

The new facility accommodates the city's entire ballistic missile arsenal. According to CSIS, who obtained satellite imagery, the new site includes a high bay building capable of housing any of North Korea's known missiles. The facility is also thought to have been built near an underground base which is large enough to fit all the missiles including launchers and support vehicles. The report said: "Taken as a whole, these characteristics suggest that this facility is likely designed to support ballistic missile operations.

"As such, it is another component of the North Korean ballistic missile infrastructure that has been undergoing both modernisation and expansion during the past 10 years." According to CSIS' senior imagery analyst, Joseph Bermudez, who wrote the report, there has been no "slow down" at all and called for the public to be informed. He said: "There has been no slow down at all that we can detect at present.

"It is part of North Korea's expanding ballistic missile structure and it needs to be addressed at any future North Korean and US discussions. "What it does however is to bring this to the public light to discuss the issue in a more informed manner, it helps citizens of South Korea influence South Korean policy [toward North Korea], and it does the same thing here in the United States, [and in] Japan, Russia and China.

"To inform the public on the characteristics of North Korea ballistic missile threats is important, because the public influence the policy, and the policy ultimately influence the diplomatic development between the world and North Korea." Back in 2017, North Korea's Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un promised to produce ICBMs on a large scale and the continuing development of the missile base is in line with his pledge.

Michael Ellerman, from the International Institute for Strategic Studies, told RFA: "In short, the article highlights North Korea's efforts to build up its strategic missile forces, and is consistent with Kim Jong-un's pledge at the end of 2017, where he boasted that North Korea would begin serial

production of its long-range, nuclear-armed missiles. “The building of missile support facilities suggests that long-range missiles are being produced at pace.

“However, questions about the operational viability and reliability of its long-range missiles remains an open question, as too few test launches of Hwasong-14 and 15 missile prototypes have been undertaken.” According to Park Young-ho, the director of the Peace Research Institute Seoul, although the site shows North Korea has not stopped its missile infrastructure development, the facility serves not only to defend the Pyongyang Airport.

Park said: “It seems that North Korea is continuously trying to strengthen and develop short, medium and long-range ballistic missile capabilities since the completion of nuclear weapons in 2017. “Since the facility is located near Pyongyang Sunan Airport, it can be seen as a missile base to defend the Sunan Airport in the event of military crisis.” World War 3 fears were ignited across the globe just days into 2020 and as tensions rose between world leaders.

Concerns were first triggered around the globe following the death of Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani in a US airstrike in January. This week, Russia revealed a terrifying new military weapon as global tensions continue to rise. The Khabarovsk, also known as Project 09582, is the second submarine to serve as a carrier of Russia’s underwater nuclear drones after the first floated out back in April.

The new Poseidon drone will be out in late June. According to Russian News Agency, TASS, the first special-purpose nuclear submarine, the Belgorod, is expected to enter service with the Russian Navy this September. Both the Belgorod and the Khabarovsk are capable of carrying six Poseidon drones each.

Satellite images reveal North Korea is building a giant facility that hold nuclear missiles

By: tcolson@businessinsider.com (Thomas Colson) from [Business Insider](https://www.businessinsider.com) // May 7, 2020

Satellite imagery suggests North Korea is building a new facility near Pyongyang Airport large enough to store all of its nuclear missiles.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank say that the facility, 17 miles north-west of Pyongyang is "nearing completion" and "is almost certainly related to North Korea's expanding ballistic missiles program." The facility is large enough to hold North Korea's Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile, capable of hitting the United States. The development comes after talks between Kim Jong Un, the North Korean leader, and Donald Trump, the US president, broke down last year.

North Korea has almost completed construction of a giant facility large enough to hold nuclear missiles capable of reaching the United States, according to a new analysis of satellite photography. The facility "is almost certainly related to North Korea's expanding ballistic missiles program," according to the [analysis by the Center for Strategic and International Studies](#), a Washington-based think tank.

One building within the facility "is large enough to accommodate an elevated Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile and, therefore, the entirety of North Korea's known ballistic missile variants," the report states. CSIS suggests the facility is located 11 miles north-west of Pyongyang

and features an underground storage facility large enough to house all known North Korean ballistic missiles as well as their support vehicles. The site's existence had not previously been disclosed.

It also features an "unusually large" covered rail terminal, which could be used to transport missiles and supporting equipment, and interconnected buildings designed for drive-through access, the report states. The site is also relatively close to ballistic component manufacturing plants near Pyongyang. "Taken as a whole, these characteristics suggest that this facility is likely designed to support ballistic missile operations and for the interim is identified as the **Sil-li (신리) Ballistic Missile Support Facility**," said Joseph Bermudez, the report's author.

"As such, it is another component of the North Korean ballistic missile infrastructure that has been undergoing both modernization and expansion during the past 10 years." North Korea debuted its most powerful ballistic missile, the Hwasong-15, in 2017, which experts say could reach "[any part of the continental United States](#)." Donald. Trump has since met with Kim Jong Un on three occasions as he tried to broker a deal designed to halt North Korea's nuclear missile program.

But [talks between the two powers broke down in February](#) last year at a summit in Hanoi, Vietnam. Trump was said to have handed Kim Jong Un a piece of paper which included a blunt call for the transfer of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and bomb fuel to the United States in return for the lifting of economic sanctions. A lunch between the two leaders was subsequently cancelled, and a North Korean official subsequently accused the US of issuing "gangster-like" demands, heralding a significant cooling in relations since.



SOUTH KOREA:

Manufacturing of multiple ICBMs detected in North Korea, say U.S. authorities

Dong-A Ilbo (South Korea), 9 May 20

Amid the prolonged suspension of U.S.-North Korea denuclearization talks, it was reported on Friday that multiple intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) have been newly manufactured in Sain-ri, Pyongsong in North Korea.

It has been reported that the U.S. authorities have detected the assembly and completion of ICBMs at an automobile plant in Sain-ri, along with a transporter erector launcher (TEL). Sain-ri is where North Korea launched ICBMs in 2017. "We are keeping an eye on future developments," said a member of the U.S. government. "Multiple possibilities, such as ICBM test launches or a military parade to showcase the country's power, are under review."

The political landscape on the Korean Peninsula will become destabilized in the case of North Korea's provocations with ICBMs that can reach the U.S. territory given the upcoming presidential election in the U.S. in November. U.S. President Donald Trump picks the suspension of ICBM

launches and nuclear tests in North Korea as the biggest achievement since he made a switch in terms of the U.S. policies toward North Korea from “fire and fury,” which includes military options, to “negotiation-first.”

Experts are also worried about potential provocations by North Korea. “ICBMs in Sain-ri may be the upgraded version of the North’s existing ICBMs, such as Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-15, but we cannot exclude the possibility that they may be the missiles of a completely new weapon system,” said Professor Kim Dong-yeop of the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at Kyungnam University. “Provocations may be likely before the beginning of summer training of North Korean military – before June at the latest.”



IRAN:

Iran’s Khorramshahr Missile Is a Copy... of a Copy (Thanks, North Korea)

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/iran's-khorramshahr-missile-copy-copy-thanks-north-korea-154071>

Copy-ception?

by Caleb Larson for the National Interest // 14 May 2020

The Khorramshahr missile is classic Iran—vintage Soviet technology adapted by another country, and then again upgraded and tweaked by Iran. This makes the Khorramshahr a copy... of a copy. North Korea has been a steadfast exporter of weapons to Iran and that is where Tehran first got its hands on the adapted Soviet missile.

Far Reach—and Far-reaching Consequences

Iran’s missile arsenal is massive and represents perhaps the largest and most capable missile collection in the Middle East today. Though Iran is not a nuclear power, some of the country’s more capable missiles could hit not only Israel, but parts of Eastern and southern Europe (including some NATO countries), the western edge of China, most of India, and virtually the entire Middle East as well.

Yet Iran claims its Khorramshahr missile can’t shoot as far as some experts think. Speculation as to why its derivative’s range is so much less have centered on the Khorramshahr’s road-mobile maneuverability on the ground, thanks to its smaller size. Some arms experts have simply said that Iran may be inaccurately reporting the Khorramshahr’s range so as to not worry European countries that would otherwise lie in the Khorramshahr’s crosshairs.

Rumors

Iran’s Khorramshahr is relatively new and was first seen during an Iranian military parade in 2017. The large missile rides on a road-mobile ground launcher, and somewhat surprisingly for such a setup, is liquid-fueled rather than solid-fueled. Like other Iranian weapon projects, the Khorramshahr has its roots not in Iran but abroad—and comes from North Korea. There have been reports that the Khorramshahr is a derivative of North Korea’s Musudan ballistic missile.

The North Korean Musudan is likely more powerful, with roughly double the reported range of the Khorramshahr, and is likely a variant of a similar submarine-launched missile of Soviet origin. Cold War: Eight Communist bloc countries, including the Soviet Union, sign a mutual defense treaty called the Warsaw Pact. Lina Medina becomes the youngest confirmed mother in medical history at the age of five.

Khorramshahr

The Khorramshahr's range is 2,000 kilometers, or just about 1,200 miles at a minimum and possibly as great as 2,500 miles, or about 4,000 kilometers. Though Iran claims the Khorramshahr is capable of evading enemy radar, though this claim is dubious. It is more probable that the Khorramshahr is not terribly accurate. One report said that the Khorramshahr's accuracy is around 1,500 meters.

Though the warhead is quite heavy at 1,800 kilos or nearly 4,000 pounds, inaccuracy on this scale would certainly eat into the Khorramshahr's explosive potential, both literally and figuratively. This may not matter to Iranian planning however, as the Khorramshahr could be capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, in which case accuracy becomes somewhat of a moot point. Configuring the Khorramshahr to carry a nuclear payload is quite easy.

Postscript

Though the Khorramshahr may not ever be nuclear armed, it serves Iran's foreign policy agenda well—keeping adversaries in the Middle East uncomfortably aware of Iran's missile potential, while downplaying their effective reach and power. This strategy essentially under-promises but over-delivers when it comes to missile capabilities in particular. NATO and Israel beware.

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

Next Moves to Curb Iran's Nuclear Aspirations

Two years after withdrawing from the so-called Iran nuclear deal, the U.S. to heighten pressure further on the mullah regime.

by David Deptula for the American Spectator // May 13, 2020, 12:26 PM

Last week marked two years since the United States withdrew from the flawed nuclear agreement with Iran and began re-imposing sanctions.

While powerful, these economic penalties have not compelled a substantive change in the Islamic Republic's behavior, which continues threatening U.S. forces and interests. Now, as the regime's legitimacy teeters following a cascade of challenges, the U.S. should heighten pressure by increasing Iran's diplomatic isolation, further exposing its heinous abuses and establishing strong military deterrence.

Iran was accused of breaching some of the nuclear deal's restrictions prior to the Trump administration's pullout, including limits on its heavy water stockpile and advanced centrifuges. Its violations intensified following the U.S. exit, leading the deal's European supporters to trigger its dispute resolution mechanism in January and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to complain of Iranian stonewalling in March.

Of course, even with perfect adherence, the nuclear accord fails to permanently cut off Iran's pathway to a bomb — not least because it allows key restrictions on the regime's nuclear program to expire. The deal also seemed to embolden Iran's hegemonic ambitions, granting it billions of dollars in sanctions relief despite its support of ruthless tyrants and terrorists — from Hezbollah and Hamas to its proxies in Iraq and the Assad regime.

These days, the Iranian regime and its partners continue to engage in destabilizing activities like targeting U.S. and allied troops fighting ISIS, attacking Saudi Arabian oil facilities, harassing U.S. naval forces, and seizing foreign tankers in international waters. The regime is now at a critical juncture amid an avalanche of crises and self-inflicted wounds. Its legitimacy — already eroded following its ruthless massacre of Iranian protestors, demonstrations in Iraq and Lebanon, and its shootdown of a Ukrainian passenger jet — has further declined with its opaque, inept response to the coronavirus crisis.

Plummeting oil revenues and stalled commercial activity have further battered its bruised economy, and it continues struggling with Gen. Qasem Soleimani's loss during heightened regional tensions. Amid it all, the U.S. keeps implementing its “maximum pressure” campaign of economic sanctions, exacerbating a financial crisis caused by the regime's mismanagement and corruption. Sanctions have led to major cuts in military funding, according to the administration, and cost Iran \$200 billion in two years by the regime's own admission.

Iran's proxies and allies have certainly felt the pinch. Nonetheless, sanctions have not ended the regime's nuclear or missile programs, its domestic abuses, or its foreign belligerence. While the strike against Soleimani introduced a new layer of deterrence, more action is needed. The regime is in a uniquely vulnerable position. The U.S. should leverage its diplomatic, information, and military capabilities to strengthen and expand its pressure campaign, substantially increasing the costs for Iranian misbehavior. This includes working — ideally with European partners — to “snapback” United Nations sanctions on the regime for its defiance of nuclear, missile, and arms transfer restrictions, which would also preserve the soon-expiring UN arms embargo.

Washington should further encourage its allies and partners, particularly the European Union, to fully ban Hezbollah and clamp down on its operatives and infrastructure. The U.S. can also substantially improve its information operations. The regime's atrocities against the Iranian people are tragically widespread and well-documented — from its ruthless oppression of women, political dissidents, and minorities to its bloody exploits abroad.

The U.S. should dramatically expand its efforts to expose the Islamic Republic and its proxies, especially within Iran and countries in its orbit, while sharing a message of peace with the Iranian people and unmasking the regime's extensive disinformation campaigns. To bolster military deterrence, the U.S. should clarify and adhere to redlines against escalations by Iran and its proxies, underscoring that its strike against Soleimani was not an aberration and that U.S. forces will act in self-defense. President Trump already seems open to such warnings, having recently threatened to destroy Iranian gunboats that harass U.S. naval forces.

The U.S. should also step up maritime interdiction efforts targeting Iranian arms transfers to Yemen and work with regional allies to target weapons facilities belonging to Iran and its proxies in Iraq and Syria. It could also strengthen the military capability and deterrence of Israel, which is on the front lines of confronting Iranian aggression. For instance, it could front-load the defense assistance agreed to in the 2016 U.S.–Israel Memorandum of Understanding — a move that would not add any costs for taxpayers and would support the American defense industry amid an economic downturn.

Washington could also replenish and upgrade its prepositioned weapons stockpiles in Israel, and pursue a limited mutual defense pact with Jerusalem. The U.S. has a broad and powerful set of tools at its disposal. Now, two years following its withdrawal from the nuclear deal, Washington

should increasingly deploy them to intensify pressure on the Iranian regime, which is particularly susceptible and struggling with the repercussions of its own disastrous policies.

Lt. Gen. (ret.) David A. Deptula is the former chief of Air Force intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and a senior adviser at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA)'s Gemunder Center for Defense & Strategy. He is also the Dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies and a Senior Military Scholar at the Air Force Academy.

Iran Missile hit on own ship in exercise, kills 19, wounds 15

By Nasser Karimi - Associated Press - Updated: 6:10 a.m. on Monday, May 11, 2020

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — An Iranian missile fired during a training exercise in the Gulf of Oman struck a support vessel near its target, killing 19 Iranian sailors and wounding 15, Iran's state media reported on Monday, amid heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington.

The statement significantly raised the death toll in Sunday's incident from what was reported just hours earlier, when Iran's state media said at least one sailor was killed. The Konarak, a Hendijan-class support ship, which was taking part in the exercise, was too close to a target during an exercise on Sunday when the incident happened, the reports said. The vessel had been putting targets out for other ships to target. The media said the missile struck the vessel accidentally.

The friendly fire incident took place near the port of Jask, some 1,270 kilometers (790 miles) southeast of Tehran, in the Gulf of Oman, state TV said. A local hospital admitted 12 sailors and treated another three with slight wounds, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. Iranian media said the Konarak had been overhauled in 2018 and was able to launch sea and anti-ship missiles. The Dutch-made, 47-meter (155-foot) vessel was in service since 1988 and had capacity of 40 tons. It usually carries a crew of 20 sailors.

Iran towed the Konarak into a nearby naval base after the strike. A photograph released by the Iranian army showed burn marks and some damage to the vessel, though the military did not immediately offer detailed photographs of the site of the missile's impact. Iran regularly holds exercises in the region, which is close to the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of the world's oil passes. The U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, which monitors the region, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Iranian media rarely report on mishaps during exercises by the country's armed forces, signaling the severity of the incident. It also comes amid months of heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. since President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018 and imposed crushing sanctions on the country. It marks the second serious incident involving a misfired missile by Iran's armed forces this year. In January, after attacking U.S. forces in Iraq with ballistic missiles, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard accidentally shot down a Ukrainian jetliner, killing all 176 people on board.

Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.



IRAQ:



INDIA:

NSTR



PAKISTAN:

NSTR



UNITED KINGDOM:

NSTR



FRANCE:

NSTR



Germany:

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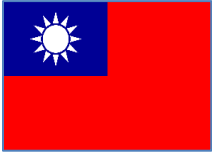
ISRAEL:

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JAPAN:

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TAWIAN:

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SAUDI ARABIA:

Saudi Arabia to deploy its own missile-defence systems at oil facilities after US withdrawal

Some US officials feel that Iran 'no longer poses an immediate threat to American strategic interests'

By: MEE staff in Washington // Published date: 11 May 2020 17:13 UTC |

Saudi Arabia will deploy its own missile-defence systems to protect oil installations in the country's east, following reports that the US was withdrawing two of its Patriot missile batteries from the kingdom, Al-Arabiya reported.

The Saudi-owned network reported on Monday that Riyadh would be deploying its Patriot Advanced Capabilities-3 (PAC-3) batteries to the kingdom's oil-rich eastern province to replace the US' Patriot surface-to-air missiles, which are meant to protect ground assets from missile and

aircraft attacks. PAC-3 missiles are frequently deployed by Saudi Arabia to intercept short-range ballistic missiles fired into Saudi territory by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Al-Arabiya said while two Patriot missile batteries would be withdrawn, the US would be still leaving two batteries at Prince Sultan airbase, some 80km south of the capital Riyadh. The US deployed the patriot batteries to the kingdom in late September after a series of drones and missiles targeted two Saudi oil facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais. The attacks on the Saudi Aramco facilities shut down around 5.7m barrels per day of crude oil production, causing a spike in oil prices.

Yemen's Houthi group claimed responsibility for the attacks, but both Saudi Arabia and the United States blamed Iran, a charge Tehran denies. Last week, the Wall Street Journal reported that Washington was withdrawing the batteries because "some officials" felt that Iran "no longer poses an immediate threat to American strategic interests." The Journal said that in addition to withdrawing the Patriot systems and dozens of military personnel, the US was also considering winding down its naval presence in the Gulf.

Washington has already ordered the relocation of two fighter jet squadrons, it said. Bloomberg reported that the four Patriot batteries were scheduled to be withdrawn in March but their redeployment was delayed after two rocket attacks on Camp Taji in Iraq.

'We've been taken advantage of'

The traditionally warm relationship between Saudi Arabia and the US has strained in recent weeks, largely due to a crash in oil prices due to a Saudi price war with Russia. "We're making a lot of moves in the Middle East and elsewhere. We do a lot of things all over the world, militarily we've been taken advantage of all over the world," President Donald Trump said on Thursday, regarding the withdrawal of the missile systems.

"This has nothing to do with Saudi Arabia. This has to do with other countries, frankly, much more." On Friday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed the Patriot missile withdrawal did not signal a decrease in support for the kingdom and was not related to the oil war. Pompeo said the US still considered Iran a threat. "Those Patriot batteries had been in place for some time. Those troops needed to get back," Pompeo told the Ben Shapiro radio show. "This was a normal rotation of forces."

In a statement, Saudi Arabia said Trump confirmed Washington's commitment to protecting its interests and the security of its allies in the region. Trump also reiterated US support for efforts aimed at reaching a political solution to the crisis in Yemen, the statement said.



TURKEY:

NSTR