

# WASHINGTON ICBM CONTRACTORS (ICons) GROUP



24 October 2020

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## ADMINISTRATION/PROGRAM SPECIFICS

### **U.S. Rejects Putin's Proposal On Nuclear Disarmament Treaty As 'Nonstarter'**

<https://www.rferl.org/a/u-s-rejects-putin-s-proposal-on-nuclear-disarmament-treaty-as-nonstarter-/30897847.html>

By RFE/RL // October 17, 2020 00:59 GMT

The United States says Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposal to extend the New START nuclear disarmament treaty without freezing nuclear warheads is a "nonstarter."

White House national-security adviser Robert O'Brien made the statement on October 16 on Twitter in response to Putin's proposed extension of the bilateral treaty for one year without preconditions. O'Brien said the U.S. proposal of an extension of New START for one year in exchange for Russia and the United States capping all nuclear warheads during that period "would have been a win for both sides."

[O'Brien said](#) the United States believed the Russians were willing to accept the U.S. proposal when he met with his Russian counterpart in Geneva earlier this month. He added that Washington is "serious about arms control that will keep the entire world safe" and hopes Russia will "reevaluate its position before a costly arms race ensues." The U.S. envoy for arms control, Marshall Billingslea, also reacted on Twitter.

"The United States made every effort. It is disappointing that the Russian Federation backtracked on an agreement covering all nuclear warheads for the first time," [Billingslea said](#). "This would have been an historic deal, good for the U.S., Russia, and the world."

Putin proposed extending the bilateral treaty for one year without preconditions to keep it from expiring and to allow talks to revive it to continue. Putin also instructed Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at a meeting with permanent members of Russia's Security Council on October 16 to work out Russia's position on New START and inform the United States of developments. "In this regard, I propose...extending the current treaty without any conditions for at least a year so that meaningful negotiations can be conducted on all the parameters of the problems...", Putin said, adding it would be "extremely sad" if the treaty expired.

Putin's proposal came just two days after Lavrov said that Moscow didn't see any prospects for extending the treaty with the United States, stressing however that Moscow plans to carry on with negotiations on the subject. The 2010 treaty limits strategic nuclear weapons and is due to expire in February, although it can be extended for five years, which Moscow has said it is ready to do without preconditions.

The White House, which has already withdrawn from other arms-control treaties because it accused Moscow of violations and felt the agreements benefited Russia more than the United States, has called for Beijing to join Moscow and Washington to find a replacement for New START. The Chinese government has balked at the prospect of participating in the treaty. Earlier this month, Russia and the United States held an 11th-hour round of talks on the treaty in Helsinki, with Washington saying it was willing to extend the New START treaty for some period of time provided the Russians agreed to the freeze, a proposal the Kremlin quickly rejected.

The issue of the New START treaty comes less than three weeks before the U.S. presidential election. Democratic challenger Joe Biden supports

extending New START "to use that as a foundation for new arms-control arrangements." If Biden wins, the treaty will expire just weeks after he is inaugurated. Biden [calls the treaty](#) -- which was negotiated when he was vice president under President Barack Obama -- an "anchor of strategic stability between the United States and Russia."

Trump's administration wants any new nuclear arms-control treaty to cover all types of warheads, to contain stronger verification and transparency measures, and to bring China, which has a fraction of the nuclear weapons of Russia and the United States, on board. Russia has warned that there is not enough time to renegotiate a complicated new treaty by February. On October 13, more than 75 lawmakers across Europe called on the United States to extend New START before its expiration.

The Trump administration has already left the landmark Cold War-era Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), accusing Russia of violating it. Washington also unilaterally exited Open Skies, a treaty that permits the United States and Russia to conduct reconnaissance flights over each other's territory.

With reporting by AFP, AP, Interfax, and TASS

### **DOD Must Rethink, Prioritize Strategic Deterrence**

<https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2389931/dod-must-rethink-prioritize-strategic-deterrence/>

BY: [TERRI MOON CRONK](#), for DOD NEWS // OCT. 21, 2020

The nation has not seriously considered the possibility of engaging in competition through a crisis or possible direct armed conflict with a nuclear-capable armed adversary in more than 25 years, Navy **Adm. Charles "Chas" A. Richard**, the commander of the U.S. Strategic Command said today.

The commander spoke virtually in a keynote address to the International Security at the Nuclear Nexus seminar hosted by the *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. "Given Russia and China's expanding capabilities in increasingly aggressive behavior, and those posed by nuclear North Korea and possibly Iran, we must reinvigorate the national conversation on the importance of strategic deterrence," he said.

During the last 30 years, however, the Defense Department has focused on capabilities-based development and planning, because there was no existential threat, he said. "Our post-Cold War experiences of operating in uncontested domains are over. Our adversaries took advantage of this period, emboldened ... their aggressive behavior, expanded their capabilities and reconsidered their tactics and strategies."

But, as the commander in charge of employing strategic deterrence capabilities for the nation and U.S. allies, Richard said he simply doesn't have the luxury of assuming a crisis conflict or war won't happen. "I know I painted a pretty sobering picture, but I really want to highlight the reality in front of us. It's also important to understand how our modernization programs support and integrate with our efforts to rethink how we do strategic deterrence," he noted.

The admiral said the DOD must prioritize the sustainment modernization of U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile bombers, ballistic missile submarines, weapons complex and its nuclear command, control and communications systems, also known as NC3. Richard said he is committed to investing in modernizing NC3 systems to be more robust and survivable against physical, electromagnetic and cyber attacks.

To shape the strategic environment to the U.S.' advantage, the DOD must first face the reality that its adversaries have blurred the lines between conventional and nuclear conflict, and have developed capabilities to directly challenge the strategy, doctrine and advantages the United States has held as a nation and alliance. "We can no longer expect our potential adversaries to act within our long-standing, self-imposed constraints based on our rule sets or values, particularly between conventional and nuclear," he said.

Richard has challenged Stratcom to revise its 21st-century strategic deterrence theory that considers U.S. adversaries' decision calculus and behaviors and identifies threat indicators or conditions that could indicate potential actions. Crafting this revised theory, he added, minimizes risks inherent in competing against another nuclear-armed state. "It's an exhaustive assessment to fully account for current conditions, emerging capabilities, changing norms and rule sets, and potentially unintended outcomes within a spectrum of conflict," he noted.

"By the end of the decade, if not sooner, we will face two nuclear-capable peer adversaries who have to be deterred differently. We've never had to face that situation in our history," Richard said. Additionally, the DOD must engage in the environment early to shape its potential adversaries' actions, using a synchronized whole-of-government and integrated global mindset, he said. "Our ability for globally integrated planning, communications and execution in a defined, shared understanding of the threat and what we do about it may be our last remaining advantage over the adversary," the Stratcom commander said.

The DOD must advance its abilities to integrate its coordination processes across the globe and across all domains, Richard said, adding that will include rethinking how DOD executes its NC3. "As advanced kinetic capabilities are developed, we must have the ability to detect, identify, track and integrate our command and control architecture. NC3 architecture is a patchwork of deliberate systems that have been piecemealed over decades, [and] it works quite well, but it needs to be updated," he said.

### **SecDef Esper Calls for More Defense Dollars to Offset Gains by China and Russia**

16 Oct 2020 Military.com | By [Richard Sisk](#)

The U.S. military is ready to fight tonight, but it won't be in the future unless Congress continues to boost defense budgets, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Thursday.

The addition of \$200 billion to defense spending in recent years to a record level of \$740 billion has resulted in a better-trained military that can deploy rapidly to meet current threats, Esper said, but an increase of 3% to 5% in Defense Department budgets will be vital to maintain readiness in the coming years.

"The bottom-line question we must answer is this: If called upon to fight tonight, are we ready? Today, given our efforts of the past few years, I am fully confident that the answer to that question is a resounding 'Yes,'" Esper said at a virtual Heritage Foundation forum.

But the answer will be less certain without more funding as the military continues to transition from the post-9/11 counterterrorism wars to preparations for potential conflict with China and Russia, he added.

Esper cited a range of immediate needs, including \$20 billion for shipyard overhauls, and long-term goals to improve sealift and airlift, install a new and secure IT structure for force management, and protect space assets.

"The success of our efforts relies on the support of Congress," he said. "In the face of rising strategic threats, we depend on steady fiscal commitments to sustain our current force and prepare for tomorrow's challenges. ... Our people must have the resources they need, when they need them, so that they never find themselves in a fair fight."

Esper did not address, and was not asked about, his own status in [carrying out ambitious plans](#) that include a 500-ship [Navy](#) by 2045. He has adopted a decidedly low profile in recent weeks, to the point where he does not go on record with reporters traveling with him. He almost certainly will be replaced should former Vice President Joe Biden win the November presidential election.

In addition, President Donald Trump appears to have added him to a list of administration officials in disfavor since Esper in June made clear that he was [against sending active-duty troops](#) into the streets to quell protests.

On June 3, the day after Esper made that statement, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany declined to say whether Trump still had confidence in him.

"As of right now, Secretary Esper is still Secretary Esper and, should the president lose faith, we will all learn about that in the future," she said. Esper also was not asked at the Heritage Foundation, and did not comment upon, whether troops might become involved if the election results in November are disputed, or whether they might assist at polling places.

In a National Public Radio interview that aired Monday, Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley said there is ["zero" chance](#) of the active-duty force becoming involved in a contested election.

-- Richard Sisk can be reached at [Richard.Sisk@Military.com](mailto:Richard.Sisk@Military.com).

### **U.S. and Canada sign memorandum of understanding on safeguards and nonproliferation**

<https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/articles/us-and-canada-sign-memorandum-understanding-safeguards-and-nonproliferation>

From NNSA // OCTOBER 16, 2020

WASHINGTON – The United States and Canada have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to enable more effective collaboration in the areas of nuclear safety and security.

The U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) today signed an MOU for Cooperation and Exchange of Information in Nuclear Security, Safeguards, and Nonproliferation Matters. "Accomplishments

like these are important to celebrate, especially when travel and face-to-face engagements are not possible during the COVID-19 global pandemic,” said Dr. Brent Park, NNSA’s Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation.

“We look forward to further cooperation with our Canadian partners.” NNSA has a history of collaboration with AECL and this agreement further solidifies the strong relationship and commitment to the advancement of mutual nuclear nonproliferation goals and priorities. The agreement includes the sharing of knowledge and information, including cross-training, workshops, and exercises, as well as collaboration on research and development.

The five-year agreement was signed virtually on Oct. 16 by Dr. Park of NNSA and two AECL executives: Richard Sexton, President and Chief Executive Officer, and Shannon Quinn, Vice-President, Science, Technology, and Commercial Oversight. AECL is a Canadian federal Crown corporation and Canada's largest nuclear science and technology laboratory. Its mandate is to enable nuclear science and technology and to protect the environment by fulfilling the government of Canada’s radioactive waste and decommissioning responsibilities.

### **U.S. threatens sanctions after U.N. arms embargo against Iran expires**

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/18/us-threatens-sanctions-after-un-arms-embargo-against-iran-expires.html>

By: [Amanda Macias](#) for CNN // PUBLISHED SUN, OCT 18 2020 2:25 PM EDT UPDATED SUN, OCT 18 2020 3:30 PM EDT

#### **KEY POINTS**

- Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned Sunday that the United States will slap sanctions on any individual or entity that assists Iran’s weapons program, a move that will likely intensify tensions between Washington and Tehran.
- Last month, the United States unilaterally reimposed U.N. sanctions on Tehran through a snapback process.
- Tensions between Washington and Tehran have mounted after Trump’s withdrawal from the landmark Iran nuclear agreement in 2018, calling it “the worst deal ever.”

**WASHINGTON** — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned Sunday that the United States will slap sanctions on any individual or entity that assists Iran’s weapons program, a move that will likely further aggravate tensions between Washington and Tehran.

“For the past 10 years, countries have refrained from selling weapons to Iran under various UN measures. Any country that now challenges this prohibition will be very clearly choosing to fuel conflict and tension over promoting peace and security,” Pompeo said in a Sunday statement. “Any nation that sells weapons to Iran is impoverishing the Iranian people by enabling the regime’s diversion of funds away from the people and toward the regime’s military aims,” he added.

The threat comes after a decade-long U.N. arms embargo against Iran officially expired Sunday as part of the nuclear deal agreed with world powers in 2015. Iran’s Foreign Ministry announced that the “Islamic Republic of Iran may procure any necessary arms and equipment from any source without any legal restrictions and solely based on its defensive needs.” However, Tehran said it has no intention to go on a buying spree of conventional arms.

Under the U.N. arms embargo, the export of “certain conventional arms to Iran” and the “procurement of any arms or related materiel from Iran” is in violation of the U.N. Security Council resolution and is subject to sanctions. However, the U.N. Security Council refused in August to support a U.S. effort to extend the arms embargo against Iran. China and Russia voted against Washington’s efforts, while even close U.S. allies such as Britain, France and Germany abstained. Only the U.S. and the Dominican Republic voted for an extension.

In response, the United States unilaterally re-imposed U.N. sanctions on Tehran last month through a snapback process, which other U.N. Security Council members have previously said Washington does not have the authority to execute because it withdrew from the nuclear deal in 2018. The same week that the U.S. reimposed the U.N. sanctions the Trump administration upped the ante even more.

Pompeo, flanked by Defense Secretary Mark Esper, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, said the administration would sanction Iran’s entire Ministry of Defense. “No matter who you are, if you violate the U.N. arms embargo on Iran, you risk sanctions,” Pompeo said [in an address on Sept. 21](#). “Our actions today are a warning that should be heard worldwide,” he added.

Esper followed on Pompeo’s remarks and said the Pentagon was “ready to respond to future Iranian aggression” and called on Tehran to “act like a normal country.” “We continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies and partners to counter Iran’s destabilizing behavior. In doing so, we will protect our people and our interests and maintain the security of like-minded nations across the region,” Esper added.

Tensions between Washington and Tehran have mounted after President Donald [Trump’s withdrawal from the landmark Iran nuclear agreement](#) in 2018, calling it “the worst deal ever.” The 2015 accord lifted sanctions on Iran that crippled its economy and cut its oil exports roughly in half. In exchange for sanctions relief, Iran accepted limits on its nuclear program until the terms expire in 2025.

Trump has previously said that the U.S. wants to reach a broader deal with Iran that puts stricter limits on its nuclear and ballistic missile work and suppresses the regime’s role in regional proxy wars. Tehran has refused to negotiate while U.S. sanctions remain in place. Following Washington’s exit from the nuclear deal, other signatories of the pact — France, Germany, the U.K., Russia and China — tried to keep the agreement alive.

Earlier this year, a U.S. strike that killed Iran’s top military commander triggered the regime to further scale back compliance with the international nuclear pact. In January, Iran said it [would no longer limit its uranium enrichment capacity or nuclear research](#).

### **Russia, China Push STRATCOM to Reconsider Strategic Deterrence**

[https://www.airforcemag.com/russia-china-push-stratcom-to-reconsider-strategic-deterrence/?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%2010.22.20&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://www.airforcemag.com/russia-china-push-stratcom-to-reconsider-strategic-deterrence/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.22.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

By [Amy McCullough](#) for Air Force Magazine // Oct. 21, 2020

U.S. Strategic Command is conducting an “exhaustive assessment” of current global threats, as adversaries like Russia and China force the U.S. to rethink the way it approaches strategic deterrence.

“I’ve challenged my command to revise our 21st-century strategic deterrence theory that considers our adversaries’ decision calculus and behaviors, and identifies threat indicators or conditions that could indicate potential actions,” U.S. Strategic Command boss **Adm. Charles “Chas” A. Richard**



said in a pre-recorded speech for the Center for Strategic and International Studies' two-day, virtual nuclear security conference, which began Oct. 21.

The analysis will include a look at emerging capabilities, changing norms, and potentially unintended consequences of conflict, as Pentagon officials argue other world powers have “blurred the lines” when it comes to conventional and nuclear conflict. That could be a challenge for the U.S. military, which tends to organize, train, and equip its forces based on whether their mission is nuclear-related or not.

That shift in thinking is driven by a push toward so-called “tactical” nuclear weapons, which Russia and the U.S. are both deploying as tools in a regional conflict that would complicate an adversary’s decisions without escalating into all-out nuclear war. Opponents say that view is misguided. [In August](#), then-Air Force deputy chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration **Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark** said the service has started to shape policy around the concept of “conventional and nuclear integration,” viewing them as two points on a spectrum instead of as separate concepts.

“We have to be able to reconstitute our capability. We have to be able to plan and execute integrated operations, multidomain, whether conventional or nuclear, and most importantly, we have to be able to fight in, around, and through that environment to achieve our objectives,” Clark said. Richard argues the ultimate goal—ensuring that the benefit of restraint outweighs the benefit of possible action—has not changed.

However, “we have to account for the possibility of conflict leading to conditions that could seemingly very rapidly drive an adversary to consider nuclear use as their least-bad option,” he said. By the end of the decade, the U.S. will for the first time face two nuclear-capable competitors, each of whom must be deterred differently. He estimated Russia is “close to 75 percent complete” with its aggressive nuclear modernization efforts, as well as conventional advancements, ensuring it is still very much a “pacing threat.”

“Russia has expanded the number of circumstances under which they would consider the employment of a nuclear weapon, or at least they’re now willing to say it publicly,” Richard said. “Although this circumstance is distressing, it should not come as a surprise.” China also is a growing threat, Richard said, cautioning the audience not to undermine its capabilities or nuclear ambition. He believes they will match America’s nuclear strength by 2030.

“They always go faster than we think they will, and we must pay attention to what they do and not necessarily what they say,” he said. China’s investment in “sophisticated” command and control capabilities and ongoing efforts to build up its own nuclear triad seem to contradict its claim that deterrence should require as small of an arsenal as possible, Richard said. The United States is pointing to those countries and others like North Korea and Iran to argue for the continued modernization of America’s nuclear missiles, bombers, and submarines, slated to cost more than \$1 trillion.

“I recognize that great power competition doesn’t equal conflict, or that we’re on a path to war, but as the commander in charge of employing strategic deterrence capabilities for the nation, and our allies, I simply don’t have the luxury of assuming a crisis, conflict, or war won’t happen,” Richard said.



## **AFGSC partners with Louisiana Tech University on internship program**

STRIKEWERX, 19 Oct 20 Sean Green

BOSSIER CITY, La. -- Air Force Global Strike Command has partnered with the Cyber Innovation Center in Bossier City, Louisiana, and Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, Louisiana, to create the AFGSC Internship Pilot Program.

Administered through the existing Partnership Intermediary Agreement with the CIC, the CIC and Louisiana Tech have provided 13 interns and four professors to collaborate with AFGSC on research and development needs. Starting in June of 2020, the pilot internship will last for a full year.

Through the PIA, the command is able to capitalize on existing local resources to catapult innovation and create an environment of sustained evolution.

“While the program is still in the starting phase, it is incredible to see the energy and outside expertise these students are able to provide to the command,” said Jeff Beene, director of the PIA.

Dr. Sumeet Dua, co-lead of the Internship Pilot Program, explained that this program enables a unique opportunity for LA Tech students and faculty to effectively address the problems of interest to partners at the AFGSC.

“The LA Tech research team represents multiple academic colleges on our campus to embody the principles of interdisciplinary research and experiential education to support these internship endeavors,” he said. “We are thrilled to cultivate a talented pool of students to serve our partners' needs and the defense of our nation through this program.”

The interns are a mix of undergraduate and graduate students from La Tech with a variety of academic backgrounds. Each intern is assigned to one of three focus areas within AFGSC: Portfolio-Level Digital Engineering Platform, Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications Center, or Knowledge Management.

With the assistance of their faculty lead, the interns are partnering with AFGSC Project Champions to provide innovative solutions to these three focus areas.

“This project gives experience through doctoral training at a more advanced level in order to really understand how a project begins and the process to see it finished,” said Dr. Mitzi Desselles, the Louisiana Tech faculty lead for the Knowledge Management focus area. “I want to start building a bridge with AFGSC so that we can explore additional projects. You can’t just knock on the door of the military and ask to do research with them, you have to build that trust and have a relationship.”

“Having the ability to capitalize on the organic capabilities and expertise at Louisiana Tech, while mentoring the interns on the ins and outs of the military and civil service is truly a win-win,” said Maj. Frank Perry, project champion for the Knowledge Management focus area.

His project is staffed by Industrial/Organizational Psychology Doctoral Candidates that have completed their academic work and are working on their dissertations.

“The ability to tap into that expertise, and to potentially add that to the long-term capabilities of DoD and the Air Force is a huge force enabler,” Perry said.

He added that Knowledge Management is a quickly evolving skillset that many commands solve via large contracts by executing the internship through the CIC, these costly contracts can be avoided while still growing Knowledge Management capabilities.

“By tapping into academia at a fraction of the cost, we have cracked the code on bringing the right expertise to aid our mission, while simultaneously providing valuable experience to our interns,” Perry explained.

One benefit of this program is the knowledge transfer that broadens horizons for both the students and AFGSC Project Champions. It also provides experience and an outreach to academia per AFGSC’s technology transfer and transition objectives.

“I would hope that the interns leave with a sense of accomplishment of what they have done, as a critical piece of General Timothy Ray’s expectations outlined in the 2020 Strategic Plan,” Maj. Perry said. “And, I would hope that we have been able to provide an example that the Nuclear Community is innovative, collaborative, and leading the way in the use of current technologies and processes.”

#### **How Air Force's ICBM missileers deal with stress and isolation during coronavirus restrictions in the middle of nowhere**

Washington Examiner Online, 20 Oct 20 Abraham Mahshie

Mountain biking and long runs in southern Wyoming and northern Colorado in between 24-hour shifts 80 feet underground are how nuclear missile operator Capt. Emma Stonehill has coped with the isolation of COVID-19.

“We’re not downstairs with the switch flipped on for two weeks straight,” Stonehill explained to the *Washington Examiner* about her responsibility to monitor up to 50 intercontinental ballistic missiles that are on alert for launch at the president’s word.

Ever since COVID-19 lockdowns began at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, where the 20th Air Force is responsible for the nation’s three wings of ICBMs, the highly trained airmen who “pull alert” at the controls were faced with increased isolation pressures to prevent the spread of the virus.

The service members who oversee the nation’s 450 nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles were forced to find creative ways to cope with the increased isolation.

“I go on a lot of long runs. Sometimes, I bring my mountain bike out and go on long bike rides too,” Stonehill said of her two-week stays at far-flung ranch houses known as missile alert facilities.

“I actually really prefer it,” she added. “It makes it easier for me and a lot of the other crew members to get in the zone, either when you’re at home or out on alert.”

Before the pandemic, Stonehill and other nuclear operators would travel hours to the desolate launch control facilities sprinkled across the Plains states and the Rockies for a single 24-hour shift.

The Department of Defense quickly initiated enhanced protocols to protect the highly trained airmen who monitor sensors, review checklists, oversee maintenance, and know the top-secret procedures for a nuclear launch. That meant COVID-19 tests, periods of isolation, and longer on-alert times than ever before.

“I make sure that everything is taken care of so they can go out and focus on doing the mission,” said Capt. Nikki Nicely, a flight commander who is responsible for regular mental health checks on 18 operators.

To ensure the operators are fit and suitable to operate a warhead, Nicely leaves nothing to chance.

Brutal honesty and probing questions about what is going on in their lives is the norm. It could even mean making sure a family’s driveway is shoveled after a snowstorm, so the operator doesn’t have to worry.

During the pandemic, it also meant more virtual contact and new ways of socializing.

“We’ve done a really good job of keeping each other’s spirits high,” Nicely said. “We are checking up on them daily to find new ways to connect with each other in different ways and do it as frequently as we can.”

Elsewhere in the military, lockdowns are known to have increased stress levels, depression, and feelings of isolation. In the Army, suicides have increased by 20% this year over 2019, although there is no proof yet that the incidence is related to coronavirus lockdowns.

In desolate Wyoming, where miles of open range are broken only by the occasional group of pronghorn deer and small mounds that give away the location of nuclear missile silos, the mission of nuclear deterrence must continue — with or without a global pandemic.

To help, the Air Force also increased the internet bandwidth at missile alert facilities. That has allowed crews on downtime to play video games, have video chats with family, or watch movies.

“We get those breaks, and you’re really able to disassociate when you get upstairs with whatever people’s personal resets are,” said Stonehill. “I think it’s less stressful than it was before because there’s not as much travel back and forth.”

She said day-to-day operations have stayed exactly the same during the pandemic — from training and capability to mission.

Stonehill also said that the new schedule provides more predictability for her family, including her wife of two years and her younger sister, a 22-year-old recent college graduate who is living at her home while her active-duty Air Force father lives overseas with her mother.

“These are small closed communities,” nuclear security expert Rebecca Hersman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies told the *Washington Examiner*. “What happens if COVID takes a group of them out?”

Hersman added, “If we are going to have nuclear weapons, we need to have the best systems that are modern, effective, and are crewed by the best and brightest of the U.S. military.”

Col. Tytonia Moore, 90th Operations Group commander, explained how the elite service members selected to oversee the ICBMs adjusted to pandemic restrictions.

“You’re dealing with nuclear weapons,” he said of the ICBM crew force. “We train them to understand the responsibility that the nation is entrusting them with.”

Chief Frank Smith, 90th Operations Group superintendent, who was present for the start of COVID-19 operations, said that the operators had to show resilience with changing schedules and protocols to limit exposure while maintaining training, readiness, and exercises.

“The ICBM community led the way for the Air Force, really the DoD, in how to overcome COVID and innovate and still be able to still do your options,” he said. “As far as the resilience goes, they did step up to the plate.”

More exercise and time outdoors have helped Stonehill keep her mental fortitude to oversee the nation’s ICBMs.

“When I’m at home, I’m home, and I can focus on family,” she said. “And when I’m on alert, I’m on alert mode, and that’s all I have to worry about.”

### **‘We’re always fighting time’: Urgency to upgrade U.S. nuclear deterrent as rival upgrades near completion**

Washington Examiner Online, 21 Oct 20 Abraham Mahshie

FRANCIS E. WARREN AIR FORCE BASE, Wyoming -- As reliable as the clanking of railroad cars as they pass through Cheyenne day and night just outside the gates of Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, America’s nuclear arsenal has been at the ready for half a century.

But experts and those protecting the ICBMs now say there is no room left to extend the life of the 1970 Minuteman III missiles, even as the nation faces mounting budget pressures.

“You have things that go with aging. We’ve done a number of things to make sure that these missiles maintain at a high alert,” Col. Tytonia Moore, 90th Operations Group commander overseeing the nation’s ICBMs, told the Washington Examiner.

When the United States was fighting terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan in the 1990s and 2000s to the tune of trillions of dollars, China and Russia were upgrading their nuclear deterrence.

Now, with all reasonable delays and extensions exhausted, the U.S. military faces an urgency to upgrade its nuclear deterrence from 1960s technology if that deterrent is to remain effective.

“Our senior DOD leaders have said that they're too old,” Heritage Foundation nuclear security expert Patty-Jane Geller told the Washington Examiner.

“The time has passed for life-extending. They need to be replaced in order to avoid a gap in our deterrent,” she added.

The age of America’s arsenal and the forward progress of adversaries has not escaped those responsible for keeping U.S. ICBMs operational and ready.

Col. Damien Schlussel, security forces commander for the 90th Security Forces Group, charged with protecting the nation's ICBMs, would not tell the Washington Examiner how often his security convoys protect missiles or parts returning from silos to the depot for maintenance.

He only stressed the urgency for meeting the modernization targets.

“We’ve been the leader of the free society over time,” he said.

“There’s near peers who want to question that, so they have spent tons of money and tons of GDP to modernize their stuff,” Schlussel told the Washington Examiner. “There’s a bill associated with that.”

In September, the Air Force awarded Northrup Grumman a \$13.3 billion contract to upgrade the aging system by 2029, but Congress and the public still question the costs against trillions of dollars spent to rescue the economy amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Some have called for trimming tens of millions from the defense budget this year and delaying the modernization further.

“The most significant hurdle is really the cost,” Brookings Institution nuclear security expert Frank Rose told the Washington Examiner, noting the Congressional Budget Office expects the full price tag for nuclear modernization to be \$1.2 trillion over 30 years.

For Rose, America’s adversaries are already far ahead.

“The Russians, for the most part, completed their nuclear modernization program,” Rose said. “The Chinese are continuing to modernize their nuclear deterrent. Right now, it looks like that modernization program is primarily about maintaining a secure second-strike capability and being able to penetrate any U.S. missile defense system.”

Geller argued of the vital importance of keeping the land-based deterrent. She noted that the 450 ICBMs scattered across six Midwestern states are

the most survivable part of the nuclear triad when weighed against the bombers and submarines that can be more easily targeted by adversaries.

“It would take a massive nuclear attack by our adversaries to destroy them all,” she said.

Moore said that despite their age, America’s ICBMs remain at the ready.

“When we say we have on-alert ICBMs, we have on-alert ICBMs,” he said.

“We’re that backstop, that backbone of all the services,” he added. “We’re dealing with a system that came out in the 1960s, and we’ve been able to maintain it to this point, but we’re always fighting time.”

### **NNSA Administrator hosts Department of Defense officials in Texas**

Administrator Gordon-Hagerty Takes Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on Tour National Nuclear Security Administration, Oct. 21 | Press Release

WASHINGTON -- Lisa E. Gordon-Hagerty, Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE’s) Under Secretary for Nuclear Security, hosted officials from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) for a tour of NNSA’s Pantex Plant near Amarillo, Texas.

Ellen Lord, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, and Dr. James H. Anderson, Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, joined the Administrator for an update on the important role Pantex plays in maintaining the Nation’s nuclear deterrent to ensure the security of America and our allies.

“The United States is committed to ensuring our world-class nuclear deterrent is safe, secure, effective, and modern,” said Under Secretary Lord. “The work being accomplished at the Pantex Plant, and across all of NNSA is unparalleled. We are grateful for Administrator Gordon-Hagerty’s leadership and for the NNSA’s strong relationship with the Department of Defense.”

The Pantex Plant is home to a myriad of work for NNSA, most notably it is where nuclear warheads are assembled and disassembled. Briefing topics for the delegation included the safe and secure transport of warheads, as well as warhead storage and the DOE-DoD chain of custody for nuclear weapons.

“Today, we had an opportunity to see the exceptional capabilities of our great country and resolute workforce at Pantex who ensure America’s security every day,” said Acting Under Secretary Anderson. “The care and maintenance of our deterrent is in good hands.”

NNSA plays a critical role in our Nation’s national security with the responsibility of modernizing our nuclear weapons stockpile, ensuring that stockpile is safe, secure, and effective, and assisting in ongoing arms controls discussions led by Ambassador Marshall S. Billingslea, the Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control, who recently visited four NNSA sites with the Administrator in September.

“It has been a privilege to show our partners at the Department of Defense the invaluable missions of NNSA, and the men and women at the heart of its success,” said Administrator Gordon-Hagerty. “NNSA is proud of what we accomplish in furthering our Nation’s security, and the support of our interagency partners helps guarantee that our deterrent and arms control efforts protect our country and our allies.”

**U.S. and Canada sign memorandum of understanding on safeguards and nonproliferation**

*<https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/articles/us-and-canada-sign-memorandum-understanding-safeguards-and-nonproliferation>*

From NNSA // OCTOBER 16, 2020

WASHINGTON – The United States and Canada have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to enable more effective collaboration in the areas of nuclear safety and security.

The U.S. Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) today signed an MOU for Cooperation and Exchange of Information in Nuclear Security, Safeguards, and Nonproliferation Matters. “Accomplishments like these are important to celebrate, especially when travel and face-to-face engagements are not possible during the COVID-19 global pandemic,” said Dr. Brent Park, NNSA’s Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation.

“We look forward to further cooperation with our Canadian partners.” NNSA has a history of collaboration with AECL and this agreement further solidifies the strong relationship and commitment to the advancement of mutual nuclear nonproliferation goals and priorities. The agreement includes the sharing of knowledge and information, including cross-training, workshops, and exercises, as well as collaboration on research and development.

The five-year agreement was signed virtually on Oct. 16 by Dr. Park of NNSA and two AECL executives: Richard Sexton, President and Chief Executive Officer, and Shannon Quinn, Vice-President, Science, Technology, and Commercial Oversight. AECL is a Canadian federal Crown corporation and Canada's largest nuclear science and technology laboratory. Its mandate is to enable nuclear science and technology and to protect the environment by fulfilling the government of Canada’s radioactive waste and decommissioning responsibilities.



## News & Opinion

### **Estimate of new nuclear missiles to replace Minuteman 3 arsenal increases to \$95.8B**

[https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/10/19/estimate-of-new-nuclear-missiles-to-replace-minuteman-3-arsenal-increases-to-958b/?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%2010.20.20&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/10/19/estimate-of-new-nuclear-missiles-to-replace-minuteman-3-arsenal-increases-to-958b/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.20.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

By: [Robert Burns, The Associated Press](#) for Military Times // 9 hours ago

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has raised to \$95.8 billion the estimated cost of fielding a new fleet of land-based nuclear missiles to replace the Minuteman 3 arsenal that has operated continuously for 50 years, officials said Monday. -- The estimate is up about \$10 billion from four years ago.

The weapons, known as intercontinental ballistic missiles, or ICBMs, are intended as part of a near-total replacement of the American nuclear force over the next few decades at a total cost of more than \$1.2 trillion. Some, including former Defense Secretary William J. Perry, argue that U.S. national security can be ensured without ICBMs, but the Pentagon says they are vital to deterring war. The Trump administration affirmed its commitment to fielding a new generation of ICBMs in a 2018 review of nuclear policy.

“The ICBM force is highly survivable against any but a large-scale nuclear attack,” the review concluded. “To destroy U.S. ICBMs on the ground, an adversary would need to launch a precisely coordinated attack with hundreds of high-yield and accurate warheads. This is an insurmountable challenge for any potential adversary today, with the exception of Russia.” The current fleet of 400 deployed Minuteman missiles, each armed with a single nuclear warhead, is based in underground silos in Montana, North Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska.

Their numbers are governed in part by [the 2010 New START treaty](#) with Russia, which is due to expire in February. Russia wants to extend the treaty but the Trump administration has set conditions not accepted by Moscow. The U.S. also is building [a new fleet of ballistic missile submarines](#) to replace the current Ohio-class strategic subs; [a new long-range nuclear-capable bomber](#) to replace the B-2 stealth aircraft; a next-generation air-launched nuclear cruise missile; and a new nuclear command and communications system.

It also is working on updated warheads, including an ICBM warhead replacement for an estimated \$14.8 billion. [The nuclear modernization program](#) was launched by the Obama administration and has been continued by President Donald Trump. Democrat Joe Biden has said that if elected in November he would consider finding ways to scale back the program. The Pentagon’s \$95.8 billion cost estimate for the Minuteman replacement was first reported by Bloomberg News.

The Pentagon provided the estimate to Congress last month but had, until Monday, refused to release it publicly. Last month the Air Force awarded Northrop Grumman a \$13.3 billion contract for engineering and manufacturing development of the new missiles. The **total “lifecycle” cost**, including operating and sustaining the missiles over their expected lifetime into the 2070s, is set at \$263.9 billion

### **Is The U.S. Space Force Preparing For War?**

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/us-space-force-preparing-war-170793>

*Russia and China likely think so.*

by [Ryan Faith](#) for The National Interest // October 17, 2020

If I were a Russian or Chinese space warfare theorist, thinking about a future war with the United States, it might be reasonable to bet that the newly-minted U.S. Space Force was planning for a kinetic space conflict, starting on Day 1.

Understandably, the Space Force keeps a tight lid on broader discussions of its capabilities. There isn't a lot of direct information one way or another. Without a clear understanding of what the U.S. can do, an analyst might start trying to figure out U.S. intentions. The culture of the Space Force might still be unformed and changing; it does bear at least a family resemblance to its sister services in at least one significant respect. In the services, the purveyors of kinetic mayhem — the shooters and the killers — tend to be culturally dominant within their respective services. The Space Force has been no exception to this.

Whether or not the Space Force shooters want to or not, they present a louder, more muscular, aggressive face of the Space Force. Conversely, non-kinetic approaches to space dominance get little discussion indeed. Between the relative boldness of the kinetic space warfare community and the comparative silence of the non-kinetic warfare practitioners, the overall message suggests a Space Force with a strong bias towards kinetic warfare.

Compounding this problem, the USSF does not speak a lot about the activities of its potential foes. In public discussion, there's little to suggest that U.S. opponents are hostile and aggressive and that need a muscular response. Keeping malicious actions secret makes the cultural bias towards kinetic action appear spontaneous — that it is not a response to unfortunate real-life conditions, but more of an itchy trigger finger.

As space conflict planners know, kinetic action in space comes with an immense risk associated with orbital debris. An anti-satellite weapon, like the Chinese weapon demonstrated in 2007, can generate huge amounts of debris. The Chinese test itself created more than 3,000 bits of space shrapnel. Keep in mind that orbital speeds are immense, so an impact by even a small bit of debris can have a devastating effect producing vast clouds of junk. Those bits of debris themselves become unguided, uncontrolled, kinetic anti-satellite weapons of their own.

Should the debris get thick enough, collisions can create a sort of feedback effect, called the Kessler Syndrome, where each bit of space shrapnel hits and annihilates additional satellites, creating more debris and so on. Thus, at the very far end of kinetic space conflicts, we may see some echoes of strategic deterrent thinking about nuclear warfare in decades past. An orbital debris chain-reaction starts to take on at least a passing resemblance to the more familiar idea of Mutually Assured Destruction.

Without getting into the entire history of the nuclear deterrent, the fundamental problems should be familiar to people thinking about space conflict everywhere: Difficulties with escalation control, issues with massive retaliation as a doctrine, deterrent credibility, and so on. At a strategic level, the USSF would probably benefit from steering conversation in a slightly different direction.

**First**, by clarifying the kind of environment we are operating in, one in which a kinetic response is a legitimate response, not just an itchy trigger finger.

**Second**, the U.S. has a variety of tools at its disposal, enabling the U.S. to control and manage escalation of a space conflict.

**Third**, explain that the U.S. can do all kinds of things to zap a satellite without going the full Skywalker and blowing it to smithereens.

These suggestions are really just a small part of learning to think about space operations in the extensive political-social-media context that is and will continue to be the backdrop to combat operations for the foreseeable future. Maintaining a very tight lid on what the reality of space conflict today may be a matter of winning the security battle versus losing the messaging war tomorrow.

**Ryan Faith** is a space policy consultant who previously served as a professional staff member supporting the House Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics. Prior to that, Faith was VICE Media's Defense and Security editor and a research analyst for the Space Foundation.

### **North Korea's Two New Strategic Missiles: What Do We Know and What Do They Mean for US Deterrence?**

<https://mwi.usma.edu/north-koreas-two-new-strategic-missiles-what-do-we-know-and-what-do-they-mean-for-us-deterrence/>

By: Joe Varner for the Modern War Institute // October 15, 2022

North Korea has conducted its annual military parade to commemorate the anniversary of the founding of the state's communist ruling party.

The parade featured a [tear-filled speech](#) by Kim Jong-un outlining the challenges facing Pyongyang, including Covid-19 and sanctions, and thanking the members of the armed forces for their service. The parade has historically generated a degree of excitement internationally as North Korea tends to showcase new equipment to demonstrate its military power to its neighbors and to the United States.

This year's parade did not disappoint, with new strategic systems in the spotlight intended to convey Pyongyang's capability to present new challenges to the United States' and its allies' security and nuclear deterrence. This year's parade featured what [appear to be essentially clones](#) of the Russian Armata main battle tank, the US M1128 mobile gun system, the Japanese Komatsu light armored vehicle, and the Russian Tor air defense missile system.

The North Koreans [also showcased](#) an anti-tank guided missile vehicle not seen since its first appearance in 2018, and a new anti-ship cruise missile. Pyongyang's Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the longest range tested missile in its arsenal, was also displayed, along with the giant KN-25, which "[blurs the distinction](#)" between multiple-launch rockets systems and short-range ballistic missiles—although it appeared to have a chassis problem.

Most notable on display was a new solid-fuel submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), believed to be the Pukguksong-4, with a range that at least would allow it to strike South Korea and all of Japan with nuclear warheads. Initial assessment from the [International Institute for Strategic Studies](#) and [38 North](#) suggests that the Pukguksong-4 is shorter in length than its predecessor Pukguksong-3.

But it is larger in diameter, possibly 2.5 meters, which is on par with Russia's Bulava, China's JL-2, and the US Trident II SLBMs. There are visual indications of improvements to the rocket engines and solid fuel system. The Pukguksong-4 appears to be constructed with [wound filament rocket casings](#) for the fuselage that North Korea has had the capability to produce since 2017. Wound filament allows for the construction of a lighter rocket, and therefore, increased range and payload.

It is believed that the Pukguksong-4 was developed for service on North Korea's modified [Romeo-class](#) ballistic missile submarine with two or three of these weapons mounted in the extended submarine sail. But at the parade the Pukguksong-4 was not supported by sailors but by ground forces and

was transported on a transporter erector launcher, or TEL vehicle. This raises the prospect that it could be a land-based derivative of the Pukguksong-3 SLBM, just as the Pukguksong-2 was a land-based derivative of the Pukguksong-1 SLBM.

The nose cone suggests that the Pukguksong-4 could carry three warheads, likely on one multiple re-entry vehicle as the United States, UK, France, and the Soviet Union did in the early days of their nuclear deterrent development. Given advancements, it is very likely that the Pukguksong-4 has a range greater than its predecessor's two thousand-kilometer range, but not great enough to strike targets in Guam.

There is the concerning prospect that the Pukguksong-4 is the basis of a new compact, land-based, road-mobile ICBM with at least three warheads that could deploy to a launch site with a much smaller signature than North Korea's existing ICBMs and launch much more quickly than a liquid-fueled ICBM, perhaps just a matter of minutes. Finally, and most importantly, as expected Pyongyang unveiled a new liquid-fueled ICBM, likely designated either Hwasong-16 or KN-27.

[Experts agree](#) that [the new ICBM](#) is about twenty-five to twenty-six meters long, making it the largest road-mobile ICBM in the world (although the Russian liquid-fueled [Sarmat ICBM](#) now under development appears bigger). The diameter of the new missile is likely between 2.5 and 2.9 meters and its first stage is liquid powered, potentially by a cluster of four RD-250-type engines for a total sea-level thrust twice that of the Hwasong-15 ICBM. The second stage remains a bit of a mystery.

Note that a road-mobile ICBM and TEL vehicle of this size has a huge signature in a country that does not have a great deal of roadway and the fact that it is liquid fueled makes it vulnerable to discovery and attack before launch. As well, it is worth noting that the size and configuration of the TEL vehicle indicate that North Korea now has developed a domestic capacity to manufacture both the vehicles and the ICBMs to go with them, meaning their deterrent effect will continue to grow.

By way of comparison the new missile's launch weight of 100,000–150,000 kilograms is significantly greater than that of the [Chinese DF-41](#) solid-fuel, road-mobile ICBM (80,000 kilograms) and the Soviet/Russian solid-fuel, rail-mobile [SS-24 ICBM](#) (104,500 kilograms). As Vann H. Van Diepen and Michael Elleman [noted at 38 North](#), it could deliver 2,000–3,500-kilogram payload of three or four warheads in one multiple re-entry vehicle to any point in the continental United States.

It could also deploy a massive warhead to a US target like the Soviet-era [SS-18 Mod 1 ICBM](#), which was geared to first-strike and counterforce attack. North Korea's new ICBM may also be designed to deliver [multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles](#) and missile defense decoys, although this is likely at some time in the near strategic future. Its size, power, and payload make the missile perfect for city-busting countervalue attacks on the United States, and by extension most of North America, and potentially in the future for counterforce strikes depending on its level of accuracy.

The missile could also be intended to overwhelm US missile defenses that [fire a salvo of four interceptor missiles](#) at each warhead. The United States would need twelve to sixteen interceptors per missile for a potential successful kill—at a [cost of around a billion dollars](#). Even a small force of North Korea's new missiles with their heavy payload of several warheads would thereby provide the basis of a credible deterrent where some warheads

would likely get through to North American cities presenting a real challenge to existing US missile defenses, if not rendering them irrelevant in the near future.

All of this suggests very strongly that North Korea is developing a nuclear deterrent along the path of other traditional nuclear powers, which will include a variety of strategic systems—a deterrent that, for anybody who still harbors [hope that denuclearization is possible](#), they have no intentions of giving up. A likely test of either of the Pukguksong-4 SLBM or the new ICBM could come in the next month or two, possibly prior to the US presidential election for potential impact on its outcome. Both strategic systems represent a serious challenge to US security interests at home and abroad and will most likely require a new and robust approach to nuclear deterrence, force structure, doctrine, and the size of US Missile Defense.

**Joe Varner** is a consultant on defense diplomacy, strategic intelligence, and military operations. He is an adjunct scholar at the Modern War Institute and author of “Canada’s Asia-Pacific Security Dilemma.” He served as Director of Policy to the Minister of National Defence and Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada the Hon. G. Peter McKay from 2008 to 2014. -- The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official position of the United States Military Academy, Department of the Army, or Department of Defense.

### **U.S. Working to End Chinese Secrecy Around Nuclear Capabilities**

<https://news.usni.org/2020/10/15/u-s-working-to-end-chinese-secrecy-around-nuclear-capabilities>

By: [John Grady](#) for USNI // October 15, 2020 3:16 PM

America’s senior arms negotiator said Washington is taking diplomatic and military steps to put an end to Beijing’s “great wall of secrecy” that surrounds its rapid and expanding strategic weapons program.

Speaking at a Heritage Foundation online forum this week, Marshall Billingslea, senior envoy for arms control, said Xi Jin-ping and the Communist Party leadership are engaged “in a crash nuclear build-up” with the intent of re-establishing China as the Middle Kingdom, the dominant global power. China continues “to hide a dagger in a smile” diplomatically, Billingslea said. Billingslea contrasted the more than 100-page document the United States has released on nuclear strategy to the five paragraphs China has publicly released on its [nuclear program and strategy](#). He said in prepared remarks and in answers to questions that the United States is willing to engage in nuclear arms talks with Beijing and Moscow to avoid a new nuclear arms race.

Billingslea was speaking a little more than a month after the Pentagon released a report saying China has 200 operational nuclear weapons in its stockpile and is driving to at least double that number over the next decade. Visible proof of Chinese intentions to build up strategic forces came most recently in the two-and-a half-mile-long parade of cruise and ballistic missiles on Oct. 1. In marking the 70th anniversary of the Communist takeover of China, Xi unveiled a new mobile launched DF-41 intercontinental missile.

For the past several years, Beijing has “aggressively” been testing cruise and ballistic missiles. Billingslea said that as of August, China has conducted “at least 70 this year.” The schedule “portends a major shift in Chinese nuclear posture.” Several times during the forum, Billingslea noted that the shift was taking place as Beijing increased pressure on Taiwan, asserting its territorial claims in the South and East China Seas and escalating border tensions with India.

“This is a warmongering Communist Party,” he said. Billingslea said, “this cannot continue.” The result of China’s secrecy over the nuclear program, the aggressive cruise and ballistic missile testing and its refusal to join in serious arms control talks could lead to a three-way nuclear arms race. The

great danger is that Chinese nuclear “capability is likely outpacing their strategic thinking.” He noted China is also operating as a [major nuclear power](#) without any hotline connections to Washington or protocols on data exchanges to avoid miscalculations in a crisis.

“Diplomacy has not yet run its course,” he said. Billingslea argued countries would see Beijing in a better light internationally if China sat down to talk with the United States and Russia, as its prestige has fallen for its aggressive behavior and its initial handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Billingslea noted the support from Washington’s European allies — Austria, Sweden and expected support from New Zealand and Australia — on pressing the Chinese to honor their commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and become involved in writing a new strategic arms agreement.

As a way to entice China to participate in serious negotiations, “we’ll start with the Russians” on extending the START [Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty], he added. But any “new treaty has to be multilateral,” meaning China needs to come aboard at some point. “We’re ready to strike the deal” to extend the treaty’s terms with the Kremlin, freezing nuclear weapon stockpiles, but with new verification methods in place. China has to come aboard at some point to make the treaty viable.

Other nuclear powers, especially India, are watching to see whether China chooses to engage in these new strategic arms limitation talks, Billingslea said. For allies and other nations, he said “now’s time to ring up the Russians and tell them to take the deal.” The next step would be for Moscow to work to bring China into the wider negotiations. So far, they “are not going to us get there.”

Right now, the Chinese “want to finish the build-up before they sit down to talk,” he added. The steps the United States is taking to counter Chinese and Russian nuclear build-ups include modernizing its nuclear triad — from systems like the Columbia class ballistic missile submarine to low-yield warheads and sea-launched missiles. Billingslea added that Washington is also developing land-based intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles for the Army and Marine Corps and hypersonic weapons.

Billingslea estimated China has “as many as 2,000 intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles.” Like START, China was never part of a treaty agreement to limit these weapons. The United States [withdrew](#) from Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, arguing Russia had violated its terms repeatedly by stationing missiles with a range of 500 TO 5,500 kilometers on its western border.

In addition, to show Beijing that China’s “wanton aggression to your neighbors has consequences,” Billingslea said the United States will field new missile defense systems throughout Asia and Europe.

### **Xi Jinping Tells Elite Troops "Prepare For War" As US Destroyer Sails Through Taiwan Strait**

<https://www.theburningplatform.com/2020/10/15/xi-jinping-tells-elite-troops-prepare-for-war-as-us-destroyer-sails-through-taiwan-strait/>

by [Tyler Durden](#) for the Burning Platform // Thu, 10/15/2020 - 11:15

China has again put its military in a "high state of alert" after two US Navy warships recently sailed through the Taiwan Strait.

Late last week the US destroyer John McCain sailed near the disputed Paracel Islands administered and militarized by China, upon which the PLA military warned the US to "halt its provocations". The latest incident was Wednesday, when the Arleigh Burke class guided-missile destroyer USS Barry passed through the strait. Washington was quick to emphasize that it was a "routine transit" like others toward the purpose of peaceful 'freedom of navigation' operations, while Beijing once again [denounced](#) the "trouble-stirring statements and moves".

State-backed Global Times said the USS Barry transit resulted in assets from China's Eastern Theater Command being mobilized. It "organized naval and air forces and tracked and monitored the USS Barry destroyer for the entire course when the U.S. warship sailed through the Taiwan Straits on Wednesday," [according](#) to GT. The PLA's Senior Colonel Zhang Chunhui said: "We sternly urge the U.S. to stop making trouble-stirring statements and moves.

The command forces are always on high alert in resolutely safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits." These latest tensions based on US presence in the contested sea lanes cased the PLA military to be put on alert. While this is nothing new Chinese President Xi Jinping's language has grown more threatening in referencing talk of war.

While touring a military base at Chaozhou City in the southern province of Guangdong Xi is [reported to have told](#) the elite troops to "maintain a state of high alert" and "put all (their) minds and energy on preparing for war". This also comes at a moment of fresh reports the Trump administration has authorized three types of major weapons sales to Taiwan, which China has condemned as a violation of the long-standing 'One China' status quo. More advanced weapons are also under consideration, thus the threats out of Beijing are only expected to grow more fierce.

#### **Satellite images show China has expanded the shipyard where its nuclear-powered submarines are built**

<https://www.businessinsider.com/china-expands-shipyards-where-nuclear-powered-submarines-are-built-2020-10>

- New satellite imagery appears to show that China has expanded its capacity for building nuclear-powered submarines at one of its largest shipyards.
- The images show work on a new construction hall at the Bohai shipyard that could make room for two additional submarines to be built simultaneously.

By: Sarah Zheng, for the [South China Morning Post](#) // Oct 15, 2020, 12:53 PM

New satellite analysis has found that China has expanded its capacity for building nuclear-powered submarines at one of its largest shipyards.

The US Naval Institute (USNI) news site [reported this week that commercial satellite imagery](#) has revealed work on a new construction hall at the Bohai shipyard — a major site for China's nuclear submarine programme — that could make room for two additional submarines to be built simultaneously. The latest hall resembles another one built there in 2015, which is believed to be intended for construction of a new generation of nuclear submarines, according to the report.

This could mean the shipyard will have capacity for four or five submarines in the sheds at one time, including room for two more at the new hall and potentially another one at a third, older construction hall. Chinese state media have previously said that the Bohai shipyard, located at the Huludao port off the coast of northeastern Liaoning province, was the site where China constructed its Type 096 nuclear ballistic missile submarine and the Type 095 nuclear attack submarine.



The USNI report said there were three new classes of submarine that may be built at Bohai, the Type 095, Type 096, and the upgraded Type 093B nuclear-powered attack submarine, which has an increased capacity for cruise missiles. It added that details of the new construction hall at the shipyard were still not fully clear and no new submarines had yet been seen, so it was still possible that it could be designated for some other purpose.

China has worked toward building a blue-water navy, including by delivering a number of new vessels over the past year such as the country's first indigenous aircraft carrier, the Shandong, as well as the J-15, a mass-produced carrier-based fighter jet. The upgraded capabilities of China's navy have raised concerns for the United States and other regional powers over Beijing's ability to defend its claims to most of [the South China Sea](#) and within the Indo-Pacific region.

US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper in early October outlined a plan for the US Navy to have over 500 manned and unmanned ships by 2045, and raised concerns about Beijing's stated goal of fielding a world-class military by 2049. Esper said China had invested in weaponry such as long-range missiles and autonomous unmanned submarines that it believed would be "cost-effective counters to conventional American naval power," and that Beijing sought control over critical waterways such as the South China Sea.

For China's submarine fleet in particular, the US Office of Naval Intelligence projected in a report in March that its nuclear-powered attack submarines would grow from seven in 2020 to 13 by 2030. The number of nuclear submarines had grown from just five in 2000.

### **Beijing's new world order**

[https://washingtontimes-dc.newsmemory.com/?token=cf5b63f339521cc4d82bc5d3a53e8ea8\\_5f903549\\_d3019ac&selDate=20201021](https://washingtontimes-dc.newsmemory.com/?token=cf5b63f339521cc4d82bc5d3a53e8ea8_5f903549_d3019ac&selDate=20201021)

*China's rulers seek to dominate the high-tech global economy — with help from Germany*

By Clifford D. May for the Washington Times // 21 Okt 2020

For countless centuries, tribes have fought and conquered other tribes, nations have fought and conquered other nations, empires have fought and conquered other empires.

After World War II, a different future was imagined. The United States created the hopefully named "United Nations." Americans began to build what would become known as the "liberal international rules-based order." When the Soviet Union disintegrated, America was left as what **Charles Krauthammer** termed **"the unipolar power."** Unlike hegemons of the past, and consistent with the international order it had nurtured, the United States sought consensus, shared decisionmaking, attempted to resolve conflicts through diplomacy, obeyed rules and signed multilateral treaties that constrained its own power.

A long period of peace and rising prosperity seemed all but inevitable. You know what happened next. Revanchist movements utilizing terrorism arose in both Sunni (e.g. al Qaeda) and Shia (e.g. the Islamic Republic of Iran) forms. Vladimir Putin, who came to power in Russia, was not interested in cordial relations with the U.S. And then there was the People's Republic of China. For decades, American leaders were confident that outreach, engagement and increasing economic interdependence would transform China's Communist rulers into solid stakeholders in the international order.

Slowly but surely, evidence to the contrary has been accumulating. Only those determinedly ignoring that evidence continue to insist that Xi Jinping, the most powerful Chinese ruler since Mao Zedong, does not have global ambitions and an intricate strategy to achieve them. Consider Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative, which is transforming weak nations around the world into dependencies. Consider Beijing's manipulation of the U.N. and such affiliated bodies as the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization. Consider that despite Beijing's heinous oppression of the subject peoples of Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, China this month was elected a member of the U.N. Human Rights Council. How many European Union officials opposed that or at least expressed concern? **Not one.**

Another significant strand in Mr. Xi's strategic tapestry is revealed in a new study by two *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* scholars. Emily de La Bruyere and Nathan Picarsic have found that Beijing is on track to "capture the modern networks, technical standards, and technology platforms that will form the foundation of the 21st-century global economy." You might ask: "What's wrong with that? Let them compete!" But the goal of China's rulers is not to win within the international order but rather to restructure that order so that only they can win.

Ms. de La Bruyere and Mr. Picarsic write: "Beijing does not seek to out-innovate its competitors through direct competition on a level playing field. Rather, China exploits partnerships with foreign companies, governments, and institutions to siphon technology. Those technologies and international partnerships enable Beijing to export and shape networks, standards, and platforms that lock in enduring advantages for China."

Their report details how Beijing enlists Chinese companies in support of its "military-civil fusion" policy. It instructs them to obtain technology from other countries, "including through joint ventures and forced technology transfers within those partnerships. To proliferate favorable standards, Chinese companies build industrial zones, telecommunications infrastructure, and logistics information networks with little concern for immediate profit."

They quote retired People's Liberation Army (PLA) Commander Wang Xiangsui: "Whoever controls the flow of resources, markets, and money, is hegemon of the world." There's also this unwelcome surprise: Key to what Ms. de La Bruyere and Mr. Picarsic call Beijing's "strategy to dominate the 21st-century economy and set the rules for the modern world" is Germany, America's NATO ally and the strongest member of the European Union. Which is why their report is titled "Made in Germany — Co-opted by China."

Their data and analyses show that China is using "theft, centralization, and non-market incentives to establish partnerships through which Berlin's advanced capabilities prop up Beijing's champions. China also deliberately encourages the dependence of German actors to cement such one-sided arrangements, even after malign behavior is revealed." It is not yet clear that German officials understand this. And blocking Beijing, should they decide to do so, won't be easy.

German companies, unlike their Chinese counterparts, enjoy substantial freedom and are loath to take orders from politicians. Ms. de La Bruyere and Mr. Picarsic offer three policy recommendations that I have space here only to summarize.

- To start, the U.S. and Germany should work together to "identify and combat disinformation, misinformation, and the malign leverage that Beijing claims by twisting narratives."
- Second, the allies should develop "a new toolkit of cooperative export restrictions and investment-review mechanisms tailored to China's subversive bid" and create "an intelligence task force focused on Chinese investment in the European Union."

- Third, the United States and Germany “should utilize NATO’s tremendous potential as a coordinating mechanism.”

Ms. de La Bruyere and Mr. Picarsic conclude: “China’s designs on Germany require an urgent, cooperative Western response that spans the economic and security domains. Beijing seeks to weaponize cooperation with Germany to subvert traditional German strengths, exploiting them to propel Chinese technological advancement and dominate the 21st-century economy. If left unchecked, China’s strategy will undermine, and produce a world hostile to, the prosperity, security, and values of Germany, the United States, and their liberal democratic allies.”

More broadly, with the help of the U.N., Germany and a growing list of nations that Beijing has on a short leash, Mr. Xi is pursuing not global leadership but global domination. His intention is to build a new illiberal international order, one with rules made in China, for China and enforced by China. America, Germany and other free nations can take steps to frustrate his ambitions. Or they can fail to rise to the challenge. I’m making no predictions.

Clifford D. May is founder and president of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) and a columnist for The Washington Times.

### **'Significant shift': Trump driving 'the Quad' to unite against rising China threat**

<https://amp.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/oct/19/quad-unites-against-rising-china-threat/>

By [Guy Taylor](#) - The Washington Times - Monday, October 19, 2020

The Trump administration’s push for a military alliance among the major democracies of Asia to contain [China](#) showed new signs of moving ahead more rapidly than anticipated, with Australian agreeing to join [U.S., Indian](#), Japanese forces in historic joint naval exercises next month.

While the four have engaged in a loose diplomatic grouping known as “the Quad” for years, they has previously struggled to achieve major military or geopolitical coordination amid reservations from [India](#) and the uncertain reaction from Beijing. But recent days have seen a shift in New Delhi, which announced Monday Australia would be taking part in an upcoming war game with Americans and Japanese — a development following closely on the Trump administration’s push for the Quad to serve as the core of a more formal “Asian [NATO](#)” to constrain [China](#).

There were also fresh signs Monday that at least one key smaller nation on [China](#)’s periphery — communist-run Vietnam — may be increasingly eager to align with the Quad for economic and military security. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, in his first foreign trip since becoming succeeding Shinzo Abe last month, and Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc inked an agreement for [Japan](#) to begin exporting defense equipment to Vietnam.

Mr. Suga said a key thrust of his four-day trip to Vietnam and Indonesia was to pursue economic and security cooperation to counter [China](#)’s growing power and protect sea lanes in disputed areas of the South China Sea. It remains to be seen whether those nations or others, such as the Philippines and South Korea, might one day become members of a [NATO](#)-like security alliance in Asia, analysts generally agree they could be included in an expanded version of the “Quad.”

Past efforts for an East Asian security alliance, such as the post-World War II Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to guard against Cold War-era communism, failed to gain lasting traction. But that was before [China](#)’s emergence as a rising superpower, a reality that has prompted many

to argue the Quad — a strategic forum first suggested in 2007 by Mr. Abe and later embraced by the Trump administration as part of its 2017 Indo-Pacific strategy — is ripe for expansion.

At a top-level meeting of Quad diplomats in Tokyo this month, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Beijing's economic aggression toward smaller nations, military muscle-flexing and territorial bullying must be countered by deeper coordination among the region's pro-democracy forces. "As partners in this Quad, it is more critical now than ever that we collaborate to protect our people and partners from the [Chinese Communist Party's] exploitation, corruption and coercion," Mr. Pompeo said.

Beijing has sharply criticized the U.S. push, with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi asserting on a recent tour of several Asian nations that the Trump administration and its Indo-Pacific strategy represent "a huge security risk" to the region. During a stop in Malaysia, Mr. Yi slammed the Quad as already being an "Indo-Pacific [NATO](#)," according to the South China Morning Post. The catch is that the Quad, while gradually stepping up joint military exercises in recent years, has been hampered by the hesitation of some members who worry that a more formal [NATO](#)-like organization would invite a punitive economic backlash from Beijing.

[China](#) ranks as by far the top foreign trading partner for [India](#) and Australia, and is very close second to the U.S. for [Japan](#). And then there is the issue of [India](#), which traditionally has resisted participating in formal alliances, even with powerful and like-minded democracies such as the United States. But [India](#)'s official and popular thinking has been colored by recent Chinese aggressiveness, notably the deadly clash this summer along the tensely disputed Himalayan border running between the two nations.

[India](#)'s decision to invite Australia to participate next month in the so-called Malabar joint naval exercises with the U.S., [Japan](#) and Australia — and Canberra's decision to accept — "reinforce the fact that the Quad finally has legs," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia program at the Wilson Center. "The fact that all four countries will be participating in a major training exercise is no small matter," Mr. Kugelman said Monday, although he cautioned against reading too deeply into the development.

"I would not, however, suggest that Australia's inclusion in the Malabar exercise means that the Quad is evolving into something [NATO](#)-like," Mr. Kugelman said. "Let's be clear: the Quad nations are not interested in an alliance," he said. "They see the Quad as a stepping stone to operational maritime security cooperation, but outside of the alliance system in which the U.S. has traditionally embedded its military cooperation with its closest defense partners."

Still, [India](#)'s Economic Times newspaper said the invitation marked "a significant shift in policy" by government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The war games, which will feature joint aircraft carrier and submarine exercises in both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, will demonstrate a change of stance for the first time since 2007, the paper reported. Australia participated in Malabar that year, but was not invited by the Indians in subsequent years after [China](#) complained.

"It's a positive sign that [India](#) has taken the initiative here by reaching out to the Australians to conduct military exercises along with the U.S. and [Japan](#)," David Maxwell, a retired U.S. Special Forces Colonel and East Asia expert with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said in an interview Monday. "It's a positive sign for the potential of the Quad to be developing interoperability and trust, along with a security architecture that

will be able to defend the interests of all the members against threats, including that represented by [China](#) as the 600-pound gorilla,” Mr. Maxwell said.

However, he too was cautious about over characterizing the latest developments as a clear cut move toward something like an Asian [NATO](#). “I’m worried when we call it a ‘[NATO](#)-like’ architecture because it’s got to be Asia unique,” he said. “We certainly need these relationships of like-minded countries, but not necessarily in the European style.” He added that while [Japan](#) and Australia appear to be giving “strong support” to the notion of a beefed-up Quad aimed at countering [China](#), the Indians remain the wild card.

“The long pole in the tent, I think, is Indian politics,” Mr. Maxwell said. “If we push it too far and [India](#) thinks they are really falling under our sphere of influence, they’re no longer going to be the independent [India](#) they’re always aspiring to be.”

### **Henry Kissinger is decades late in recognizing China's aggressive nature**

<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/521754-henry-kissinger-is-decades-late-in-recognizing-chinas-aggressive-nature>

BY JOSEPH BOSCO, CONTRIBUTOR to THE HILL // 10/20/20 10:00 AM EDT

Former Secretary of State [Henry Kissinger](#), 97, is still intellectually sharp enough to offer his insights on the security situation facing the world.

Last week, in [a virtual talk](#) with the Economic Club of New York, he turned his attention to the increasingly dangerous confrontation between the United States and the People’s Republic of China. In his current view, if the two powers do not find a way to manage their rising tensions, “We will slide into a situation similar to World War I.” But the legendary sage is more than a half-century late in recognizing the very real prospect of a violent turn in those relations — and still fails to acknowledge publicly the root cause of the problem: the inherently aggressive nature of China’s communist government.

By 1967, Kissinger had devoted none of his professional career or study to China, but [Richard Nixon](#), who had spent a lifetime thinking and speaking about it, penned [an article in Foreign Affairs](#) that identified “Red China [as] Asia’s most immediate threat.” The future president, and soon-to-be China mentor to Kissinger, warned that conflict with China “will pose the greatest danger of a confrontation, which could escalate into World War III.”

Unlike Kissinger’s five decades of reticence and empathy toward China’s leaders, however, Nixon was not hesitant about identifying the source of the global peril: a communist regime that “nurtures its fantasies, cherishes its hates and threatens its neighbors.” Having diagnosed the problem, Nixon went on to prescribe the solution, while warning that there was a right and wrong way to address the China challenge — in fact, there were several wrong ways. Preemptive war and its catastrophic consequences led the list.

But Nixon also cautioned against over-eager accommodation with China: “[A]s many would simplistically have it, rushing to grant recognition to Peking, to admit it to the United Nations and to ply it with offers of trade — all of which would serve to confirm its rulers in their present course.” But, once he became president, with Kissinger ensconced at his side as national security adviser, Nixon’s hardheaded cautions somehow disappeared into the ether.

Convinced that “playing the China card” would give the United States leverage in achieving detente with the Soviet Union, a favorite Kissinger project, and a face-saving withdrawal from Vietnam — neither of which actually materialized to America’s advantage — the realist Nixon and uber-realist Kissinger made a series of preemptive concessions to Beijing, particularly on Taiwan.

As the years passed without changes in China’s behavior — toward its own people, its regional neighbors, or to the West generally — Nixon began to have serious second thoughts about the historic deal he had struck with China. In his Watergate-forced retirement, he [told his former speechwriter](#): “We may have created a Frankenstein” (mistaking the monster for its creator). Nixon initially advocated a “dynamic detoxification ... to help draw off the poison from the Thoughts of Mao” as the way to achieve a peaceful modus vivendi with China.

But, he later noted that Leonid Brezhnev, general secretary of the Soviet Union’s Communist Party, who would know about such things, had a different view. He once told Nixon that “Chinese policies would not change, even after Mao’s death; he was certain that the entire Chinese leadership was instinctively aggressive.” The Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989, under the great reformer Deng Xiaoping, provided a bloody demonstration of that truth.

After a controversial post-Tiananmen trip to Beijing, Nixon told a Senate Committee that U.S.-China relations “are at the lowest point in my lifetime.” Kissinger, by contrast, took the Tiananmen slaughter in stride. Deng, he asserted, had simply acted as any world leader would when confronted with such a massive public gathering. Never mind that the students and workers were peaceful, even festive.

When Kissinger was asked in a Wilson Center retrospective of his career whether he was disappointed that his work with Nixon had not produced any progress toward political reform in China, he [responded](#): “We cannot solve all the problems of the world and the domestic structure of all the countries in the world. As a national effort, we must have objectives in that direction, and we must promote it where we can.”

But, it seemed for Kissinger there was never the right time or opportunity to promote change in China — which had been the entire purpose of Nixon’s project until the president linked up with the professor. But, whereas Nixon, out of office, seemed inclined to return to his original thinking about “Red China’s” danger to the world, Kissinger remained insouciant, because political reform in China never had been on his geopolitical agenda.

Their philosophical paths diverged even on Taiwan, which they both were willing to abandon in 1972. Taiwan’s democratization greatly impressed Nixon, who said in 1994 that China and Taiwan “are permanently separated politically.” No so Kissinger; he warned Taiwan in 2011 to move forward in submitting to Chinese communist rule because “China will not wait forever.” In April, Kissinger wrote a Wall Street Journal [article](#) entitled, “The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order.”

It included no reference to China. Kissinger avoided any responsibility for blame-fixing with the assertion: “To argue now about the past only makes it harder to do what has to be done.” Yet, he is prepared to invoke the conditions that led to World War I as a model to be avoided if China and the United States are not to repeat those mistakes. Too bad he didn’t notice what was happening with China over the past 50 years under the engagement policies he nurtured through eight U.S. administrations and five Chinese communist dictators.

**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.

### **What's 'verifiable'? Extension of US-Russia nuclear New START treaty hinges on word**

<https://www.rt.com/news/504068-new-start-extension-verifiable/>

20 Oct, 2020 21:05 / Updated 21 hours ago

The sole remaining US-Russia nuclear arms control deal may get a last-moment extension after all, but everything now depends on what the US State Department means when it says warhead caps need to be “verifiable.”

New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) is scheduled to expire in February 2021. While Russia has offered a “clean” renewal of the existing treaty, without preconditions, the Trump administration has first sought to expand it to include China, then demanded a limit on total nuclear warheads as a condition for agreeing to an extension. The Russian Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday that Russia is ready to accept the warhead cap, but “strictly on the understanding that the freezing of the warheads will not be accompanied by any additional demands from the US side.”

“We appreciate the Russian Federation’s willingness to make progress on the issue of nuclear arms control,” State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said in response. “The United States is prepared to meet immediately to finalize a verifiable agreement. We expect Russia to empower its diplomats to do the same.” Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia’s ambassador to the international organizations in Vienna, hailed the announcement but wondered what Foggy Bottom meant by “verifiable” – the current verification regime under the treaty, or something else?

The current treaty places a limit on deployed warheads, but the US wants to expand that to those in storage. Washington apparently demands monitoring mechanisms outside warhead production sites, according to Arms Control Today reporter Kingston Reif. Making the limit on the number of warheads in storage “verifiable” would involve establishing counting rules, monitoring methods and joint declarations, none of which are minor details and will take far longer than the remaining time on the treaty, noted Arms Control Today publisher Daryl Kimball.

Meanwhile, the Russian Foreign Ministry said it had only seen “comments made by US officials on social media platforms” about the treaty, but is yet to receive any official response from the US government to their October 16 note proposing the New START extension. By way of clarification, the ministry said Russia is “ready to jointly with the US undertake a political commitment to ‘freeze’ for the above-mentioned period the number of nuclear warheads that each side possesses.”

Under the 2011 treaty, the US and Russia are limited to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads each. Expanding the limit to warheads in storage has never been done before, according to Reif. New START is the last remaining arms control treaty between Washington and Moscow, as President Donald Trump withdrew the US from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) in August 2019, claiming that Russia had violated it with the introduction of a new missile. Within weeks, the US was testing missile systems that had been banned under the treaty.

Talks on extending New START began in June, with Washington demanding that Moscow “pressure” China to join the regime. Beijing has rejected any such proposal, however. Asked last week about the possibility of a deal, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters, “There is no



such prospect. I personally don't see such a prospect. My colleagues who work ... with the American delegation don't see such a prospect either." While Russia was not closing the door to a deal, "talking through the language of ultimatums is impossible," **Lavrov added.**

### **China is the threat of the century**

*Trump's security adviser says:*

[https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china/trumps-security-adviser-says-china-is-the-threat-of-the-century-idUSKBN2762Z4?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%2010.22.20&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china/trumps-security-adviser-says-china-is-the-threat-of-the-century-idUSKBN2762Z4?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.22.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

By [Tim Hether](#) for Reuters // OCTOBER 21, 2020 3:35 PM -- UPDATED 15 HOURS AGO

**ABOARD HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH (Reuters)** - President Donald Trump's national security adviser accused China on Wednesday of trying to steal COVID-19 vaccine research from the West, casting it as a malign rival that was seeking to monopolise every important industry of the 21st Century.

FILE PHOTO: U.S. President Donald Trump talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping as Xi arrives for dinner at the start of their summit at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in West Palm Beach, Florida, U.S. April 6, 2017. REUTERS/Carlos Barria/File Photo/File Photo Trump identifies China as the United States' main competitor, and has accused the Chinese Communist Party of taking advantage over trade and not telling the truth over the novel coronavirus outbreak, which he calls the "China plague".

In a 20-minute broadside against China, Robert O'Brien told top British and U.S. military and intelligence officials that China was a predatory power that repressed its people and had sought to coerce both neighbours and Western powers. "The CCP is seeking dominance in all domains and sectors... (and) plans to monopolise every industry that matters to the 21st century," O'Brien told the Atlantic Future Forum via a video link to Navy aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth.

"Most recently the PRC used cyber-enabled espionage to target companies developing Covid vaccines and treatments in Europe, the UK and the United States all the while touting the need for international cooperation," O'Brien said. China, under President Xi Jinping, says the West - and Washington in particular - is gripped by anti-Chinese hysteria, colonial thinking and simply anger that China is now once again one of the world's top two economies.

China's economic and military rise over the past 40 years is considered to be one of the most significant geopolitical events of recent times, alongside the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union which ended the Cold War. O'Brien said the West had for decades granted China concessions, including membership of the World Trade Organization, believing it would open up economically and politically, while easing its own barriers against foreign companies.

"Sadly, those are promises that to this day it has not kept," said the 54-year-old former Los Angeles lawyer. "Instead the CCP leaders doubled down on their totalitarian approach and mercantilist, state-dominated economy." China in 1979 had an economy that was smaller than Italy's, but after opening to foreign investment and introducing market reforms it has become the world's second-largest economy.

It is now the global leader in a range of 21st Century technologies such as artificial intelligence, regenerative medicine and conductive polymers. China's response to the novel coronavirus outbreak had, O'Brien said, "erased any lingering doubts about its intentions." He said China had co-opted international organizations and forced them to install Chinese telecommunications equipment in their facilities. He accused the Communist Party of blocking foreign companies while subsidizing its own.

He said China's flagship international project, the so-called Belt and Road initiative, involved offering impoverished nations "unsustainable loans" to build "white elephant" infrastructure projects using Chinese firms and labourers. "These countries' dependence on Chinese debt leaves their sovereignty eroded and with no choice but to hew to the party's line on UN votes and ... other issues," said O'Brien.

### **Just Restart New START – Timing is Running Out for Nuclear Stability**

The Diplomat Online, 20 Oct 20 Daniel R. DePetris

Approximately four months from now, the U.S.-Russia arms control regime the world has relied on for nearly a half-century could be over. Nuclear negotiations between U.S. and Russian officials are mired in confusion, with the chief U.S. and Russian arms control envoys offering completely divergent interpretations of where the process is. On October 20, a senior U.S. official suggested that a deal with Russia was within reach, although technical issues such as verification have yet to be resolved.

For the United States, the list of options is shrinking. It is unreasonable to hash out a brand new arms control agreement with Russia in just four months, particularly when U.S.-Russia relations are already enveloped with distrust and hostility. The only option available at this late stage in the game is to sign to extend what we already have: New START.

The treaty faces an uncertain fate. New START is a bilateral accord negotiated nearly a decade ago that caps the number of deployed U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550 on deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers. Critically, New START provides the world's two nuclear superpowers with the ability to ensure the limitations of the agreement are being implemented. Through a system of mutual, on-the-ground inspections and information exchanges, both countries have been able to operate with a sense of confidence that neither is cheating.

The Trump administration, however, has never been especially supportive of the Obama-era accord. President Donald Trump blasted the agreement during his first phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, calling it a bad deal for the United States. Long before he was tapped as national security adviser, John Bolton argued the pact gutted Washington's nuclear flexibility. While there was an implicit understanding that preventing a nuclear arms race was a noble objective, there was also a strong, underlying sentiment in the administration that Moscow was a serial arms control violator that needed to be held to account.

This assessment was not entirely wrong — Moscow did breach the terms of the Cold War-era Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) by deploying a treaty-busting ground-launched missile system. But the U.S. State Department continues to certify Moscow's compliance with New START, demonstrating just how valuable an arms control regime can be in limiting Moscow's deployed nuclear arsenal.

For Washington, however, merely extending New START for another five years is insufficient. Trump administration officials have strongly pushed

for a more comprehensive accounting of Russia's nuclear weapons stockpile and insist that China must eventually be involved. China's inclusion in a strategic dialogue is of course understandable; the Pentagon calculates that Beijing could double its nuclear warhead stockpile over the next decade and is close to fielding its own nuclear triad.

Yet from the standpoint of the Chinese, participating in a trilateral arms control negotiation with the U.S. and Russia is a foolish proposition. At roughly 320 warheads, or even fewer, China's inventory is peanuts compared to what the U.S. (5,800) and Russia (6,370) bring to the table. As a senior Chinese arms control official reiterated in July, "China has made its position [on trilateral arms control] known on numerous occasions." The answer: We aren't interested, so stop asking.

After waiting years before showing any interest whatsoever in arms control talks, Washington is now scrambling to sign a deal with Moscow before the U.S. election in November. The only problem, of course, is that arriving at an agreement typically takes time and multiple rounds of painstaking, highly technical negotiations. New START was the product of a year of talks between U.S. and Russian officials before Presidents Obama and Medvedev celebrated with a signing ceremony. The INF Treaty was inked in December 1987, but only after three years of arduous give-and-take. In waiting so long and attaching unrealistic conditions to the signing of a new accord, the administration has backed itself into a corner as the clock ticks — so much so that the White House has asked U.S. Strategic Command to assess how much time is needed to pull nuclear warheads out of storage and mate them onto bombers, submarines, and land-based missiles in the event New START expires.

To be fair, the Trump administration deserves credit for slowly evolving its position to more realistic terrain. In August, the White House dropped the link between China's participation and a New START extension, removing a major roadblock in the process. But Washington is still pushing Moscow to agree to a freeze on its entire nuclear weapons arsenal, including its advantage in tactical nuclear warheads. The Russians are highly unlikely to accept this condition so long as Washington refuses to put U.S. missile defense systems on the table for discussion.

Diplomacy is the art of the possible. Sitting here today, with the last nuclear guardrail at risk of disappearing, negotiating something from scratch is not in the cards. Keeping New START alive would preserve the limitations and transparency that would otherwise be lost, help prevent the U.S.-Russia relationship goes over the cliff, stop a 21st century arms race between two powers who already possess 90 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal, and put more time on the clock so both states can explore whether more groundbreaking opportunities are possible.

Maintaining strategic stability with the world's major powers is a critical ingredient in formulating an effective and restrained U.S. foreign policy — even more so in an international environment dominated by great power competition. The more U.S. officials dither, the harder it will be for the U.S. to manage that competition.

--Daniel R. DePetrìs is a fellow at Defense Priorities and a columnist at the Washington Examiner

### **A risky game of chicken on arms control**

Washington Post, 23 Oct 20 George P. Shultz, William J. Perry and Sam Nunn

Albert Einstein is said to have thought that God does not play dice with the universe. Two nations, Russia and the United States, now possess about 90 percent of the world's inventory of nuclear warheads and have the godlike power to destroy most of humanity and all it has built. Yet we are not

gods but flawed human beings. In a very real sense, the presidents of Russia and the United States are stewards for all humanity: They have a duty to act responsibly in current arms-control negotiations. "Get on with it" must be humanity's instruction to them.

In recent days, there has been a glimmer of hope. Russian President Vladimir Putin offered to extend the life of the nuclear accord known as New START by at least one year beyond its expiration date of Feb. 5, 2021. Russia also agreed to accept the U.S. proposal for a political commitment to "freeze" for one year the total number of nuclear warheads on each side, and to use the time gained to continue negotiations on a new agreement. The Trump administration is seeking to negotiate verification measures for the warhead freeze, which in our experience will be a complex endeavor and take considerable time.

The United States and Russia should seal the deal now to extend New START, because if the last remaining bilateral treaty governing U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces ends in February, the world's most destructive nuclear arsenals will be unlimited and unverified for the first time since the end of the Cold War.

Despite the significant progress of reducing total nuclear stockpiles by 75 percent since their Cold War heights, the danger of nuclear weapon use is growing. Approximately 14,000 such weapons in the world are spread among nine countries. Many of these arms are on high alert, ready to be launched in only a few minutes, based on the decisions of a handful of fallible humans and their fallible computers. Cyber- interference with command-and-control and the warning systems of any nuclear-armed nation significantly increases the risks of false warnings and nuclear war-by-blunder.

New START must be extended without delay, but it is now threatened by a risky game of chicken being played by Presidents Trump and Putin. Skillful diplomacy between the United States and Russia could extend the life of the agreement by up to five years, as provided for in the treaty, and as Russia offered last year. This would allow precious time for negotiating deeper reductions in the world's two biggest nuclear arsenals. The Trump administration, meanwhile, has insisted on the inclusion of China, whose military programs are growing rapidly, in future nuclear negotiations. The goal is laudable, but China must be persuaded to join, not bullied by diplomatic stunts and threats. Beijing has made clear that it first needs to see substantial reductions in the stockpiles of both the United States and Russia, which far exceed its own.

The United States, Russia, China and other nuclear powers need time to address the range of destabilizing factors that threaten to turn a conditional peace into an irreparable catastrophe. As a first significant step, China could be invited to join the United States and Russia in restating the Reagan-Gorbachev principle: "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

The Trump administration's pursuit of a freeze on all U.S. and Russian nuclear warheads is also an important goal, but it will take time to develop an agreement with meaningful constraints and verification provisions. Russia has its own list of issues to be addressed in the next treaty. Extending New START would provide essential time for a careful, step-by-step approach to further stockpile reductions, with the ultimate goal of eliminating these weapons as a threat to the world.

With the foundation of New START in place, all of the two countries' nuclear weapons - including those associated with short-range systems, the so-called tactical nuclear weapons, of which Russia has a larger number - should be subject to limits. But the United States and Russia will have to

invest the time and effort necessary to establish new verification methods. Other long- standing issues will need to be discussed in parallel, including ballistic-missile defense; weapons in space; precision- guided, long-range conventional arms; and emerging technologies, including cyber.

Is there reason for hope? Can the world get onto a less dangerous path? We believe the answer is yes, but the United States and Russia must extend New START to preserve what is already working and to gain time for discussions about what can be done next.

Given the dangerously high risk that a nuclear weapon could be used today, and the catastrophic consequences if that happened, extension of New START is a crucial and responsible step.

# NOVEMBER ELECTIONS

## **North Korea's Message for Donald Trump or Joey Biden**

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/north-koreas-message-donald-trump-or-joe-biden-170940>

*What should the next administration do? Watch the march. Understand Kim's message. Respond accordingly.*

by [Doug Bandow](#) for the National Interest // October 18, 2020

[Kim Jong-un](#) used a big [military parade](#) to send a message that could have been communicated by North Korea's ambassador to the U.S. government. Except that the North does not have an ambassador to the U.S. government.

One of the dumbest strategies during the Cold War was withholding diplomatic relations for political purposes from disfavored regimes. Washington paid a high price for not talking with the People's Republic of China for decades. Had the two been in contact in late 1950, perhaps the U.S. could have forestalled Chinese intervention in the [Korean War](#). Diplomatic relations actually are more important the more dangerous the regime. Frankly, American diplomats could simply phone the authorities in, say, Norway or New Zealand or Uruguay if an issue arose.

Who needs an ambassador in those nations? It would be much more useful to have diplomats sitting in Pyongyang in contact with the North Korean foreign ministry. Nevertheless, Kim [presented his message](#). It was simple: don't ignore me. It is not in America's interest to put the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the backburner. For it will be a different DPRK by the time Washington moves forward on Korean issues again.

To call the North unique is forever an understatement. One of its unique abilities is staging largescale propaganda events. The mass games are infamous. The parades, along streets filled with enthusiastic bystanders, are equally impressive though in a different way. In this case on October 10 the regime put on quite a show. Gaining most attention was [a new ICBM](#), which presumably could reach the U.S. and [carry MIRVs](#), or multiple reentry vehicles, that could hit multiple targets with nuclear payloads.

Although a crowd-pleaser that collected the "best of show" prize, it is not a sure winner. Its biggest flaw is that it is liquid-fueled, which leaves it more vulnerable to preemptive attack. [Harry Kazianis](#), Senior Director of the Korea Studies at the Center for the National Interest, [wondered](#) if it "was never meant to be a deployable military asset in the first place, but a technological demonstrator." Nevertheless, whatever its eventual efficacy, it is an impressive example of DPRK technical expertise.

There were other important missile developments. Numerous short- and medium-range missiles and a [new SLBM](#), or submarine-launched ballistic missile. A new, bigger transporter, erector, and launcher, or TEL, for the monster ICBM. Additional, possibly domestically-produced TELs for smaller missiles. Overall, increased numbers of missiles and TELs probably ensure the ability to overwhelm any attempt at missile defense by the U.S. or other states.

Equally impressive were the North's apparent conventional upgrades: new anti-air defense system and missiles, [main battle tank](#), anti-tank missiles, armored personnel carriers, and small arms. Of course, it is impossible to know whether all are widely operational and effective. However, in aggregate they represent a significant improvement in [the Korean People's Army's fighting ability](#).

This mailed fist was displayed in a velvet glove, however. The large ICBM has not been flight-tested. Moreover, Kim was remarkably pacific in his [remarks](#), admitting his failure to deliver promised economic growth and insisting that “we are not strengthening our war deterrence against anyone specific.” He also offered “warm regards to the Southern brethren” and said he looked forward to when “the North and the South will hold hands together.”

A U.S. government official called the military developments “[disappointing](#),” criticizing the DPRK for “continuing to prioritize its prohibited nuclear and ballistic missile program.” No matter how disappointing, however, this approach was entirely predictable. When has Pyongyang waited patiently without enhancing its military? Especially when Washington seems to be failing to treat the North’s desire to negotiate seriously.

Kim’s message was multi-part and unmistakable, which Washington can ill afford to ignore. Rather, the next administration should respond once the present political madness has passed. 1. Sanctions will not stop North Korea from investing in its military. By whatever means, including sanctions evasion, illicit commerce through China, and domestic investment squeezed from the civilian economy, Kim’s government will find the resources to improve everything from its nuclear deterrent against America to its ability to wage conventional war against U.S. and South Korean forces on the peninsula.

2. So far Kim has been patient, not breaching his promise not to test nuclear weapons or long-range missiles. Presumably he did not want to cause Trump trouble before the election and is content to wait for the results. Once the identity of the next president is known, however, all bets will be off. The failed Hanoi summit is fast approaching its third anniversary. In his message Kim expressed frustration over the regime’s economic failures. He’s ready to deal.

3. Washington’s failure to make a serious disarmament offer will not redound to America’s and the Republic of Korea’s benefit. Kim will risk the administration’s “disappointment” to strengthen his negotiating position when engagement resumes, as it eventually will. The George W. Bush and Obama administrations learned this lesson. Now the Trump administration will do so, as will the potential Biden administration.

4. Although Pyongyang might accept the inevitability of delay if Joe Biden emerges victorious, it is unlikely to exhibit much “strategic patience,” especially given the performance of the last administration of which Biden was a member. Even if Kim eschews provocation, he will move ahead on weapons development. And the regime certainly won’t wait if a Biden administration decides to first address Iran, China, and other global hotspots.

5. The next move up the escalatory ladder is obvious and presumably ready: flight test the new missile. In a briefing organized by NKNews academic and analyst Andrei Lankov noted that every DPRK operator and general dreams about seeing such a missile fly. Continued allied intransigence would give Kim a good reason to let them fulfill their fantasies and move forward. 6. Every ICBM improvement increases the risk to the American homeland. And thereby makes both the alliance and the ROK’s security less certain.

Once the North develops the capability of destroying major U.S. cities even a conventional conflict on the peninsula would risk going nuclear. Which would increase pressure on any president to disengage from South Korea’s defense. 7. Lest the incoming president consider the idea of

preventative military strikes, the North's numerous mid-range missiles offer a reminder of the North's capability of hitting American forces in Guam, South Korea, and Japan, as well as major population centers in the latter two allied states.

Moreover, the new conventional equipment displayed would likely help the KPA slow the inevitable allied victory in conventional combat that could be triggered by allied attack. 8. Washington's fabled objective of CVID, comprehensive, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization, is long out of reach. Now the price of even a more modest deal has increased. The U.S. shouldn't expect to make an agreement based on its conditions, emphasized Lankov.

Realistically, any result will be arms control rather than denuclearization. At the start that probably means formalizing a testing halt and freeze on nuclear developments. Hanoi might be a good starting point. 9. China likely has retrogressed significantly from its tougher sanctions enforcement of 2017. Despite the Kim regime's evident heavy military investment, the North's civilian economy has not collapsed. Fuel prices, one of the most important economic indicators, have not spiked. This almost certainly reflects Beijing's support.

It also is unclear whether China sold the North additional logging trucks, which were reworked into TELs, or if Pyongyang managed to produce them domestically. So long as U.S.-Chinese relations remain hostile and Pyongyang avoids provoking a violent American response, Beijing is unlikely to clamp down. 10. Kim again demonstrated a worldly nature that raises hopes for serious if difficult negotiations.

The parade sharply increased pressure on the U.S. without breaking any commitments and embarrassing Trump, which could have triggered a dangerous response. A potential President Biden also could not miss the message. 11. Moreover, to view the parade Kim dressed in a suit, not knock-off Mao outfit, acknowledged his regime's failure, while blaming circumstances beyond his control, and showed emotion in discussing hardships afflicting his people. Lankov called the DPRK dictator "a good actor" who "is a politician."

Although Kim won't sacrifice his power, he would prefer to improve the living standards of his people. Of course, this also gives the U.S. leverage, since he is more interested in sanctions relief than was his father. 12. The interregnum after the election would be a good moment to reestablish (for Trump) or establish (for Biden) contact with Kim. The North will be holding its 8th Korean Workers' Party congress in January.

The prospect of engagement would encourage him to present a more positive message and avoid making any provocative gestures to gain Washington's attention. Dealing with North Korea once brought to mind Winston Churchill's famous description of the Soviet Union: "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma." The Hermit Kingdom no longer is quite so mysterious. The regime remains a bizarre outlier, a Marxist-Leninist monarchy, a communist regime without communist symbols, and a dynastic rather than personality cult.

Rather like Voltaire called Prussia an army that had a country, North Korea is a nuclear arsenal with a country attached. Nevertheless, Kim appears to be much closer to a normal ruler with normal ambitions and objectives. That does not make him a liberal. But it does make him someone the U.S. might be able to do business with, in Margaret Thatcher's famous—and accurate—assessment of Mikhail Gorbachev.



While the president should not yet clear a space for his Nobel Peace Prize, Kim just might be willing to make a limited arms deal that would improve both stability and security on the Korean Peninsula. And which could lead the way to progress on other issues. What should the next administration do? Watch the march. Understand Kim's message. Respond accordingly.

[Doug Bandow](#) is a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. A former Special Assistant to **President Ronald Reagan**, he is author of *Tripwire: Korea and U.S. Foreign Policy in a Changed World* and co-author of *The Korean Conundrum: America's Troubled Relations with North and South Korea*.

### **Defense Experts Blast Biden's Taiwan Policy**

*Biden, advisers have sought to cut back support for key U.S. ally*

[https://freebeacon.com/national-security/defense-experts-blast-bidens-taiwan-policy/?utm\\_source=actengage&utm\\_campaign=FreedomMail&utm\\_medium=email](https://freebeacon.com/national-security/defense-experts-blast-bidens-taiwan-policy/?utm_source=actengage&utm_campaign=FreedomMail&utm_medium=email)

By: [Jack Beyrer](#) - OCTOBER 20, 2020 5:00 AM

Former vice president Joe Biden's willingness to abandon the Trump administration's efforts to strengthen Taiwan could create major problems in the region and bolster China, defense experts say.

"I don't have very high expectations," said Heritage Foundation national security expert James Jay Carafano. "China will have a lot of cards to play." "Taiwan is the new Hong Kong, it's the new canary in the mineshaft," Carafano continued. "For the West not to stand up for Taiwan is a really strong signal that you're not really going to push back on the Chinese anywhere." Biden's own record on Taiwan, as well as the public writings of his top foreign-policy surrogates and advisers, hints at potentially dangerous policies for both the United States and Taiwan.

In 2001, Biden authored an [op-ed](#) arguing that U.S. support for the country could "draw us into a war across the Taiwan Strait." Meanwhile, [recent editorials](#) from some of Biden's top Indo-Pacific advisers spell out a vision for Taiwan that would downplay U.S. military backing, cut defense spending, and rely on more flexible deterrence to counter Beijing. Zack Cooper, China scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, said such measures would only fuel Chinese ambitions in the region.

"You will see some serious downward pressure on the defense budget," Cooper told the Washington Free Beacon. "I think the Democrats know that this is going to be a real tension." Carafano lodged similar complaints. "The problem with our enemies is that they can all count," he said. "We can do all this stuff about how we are going to be smarter on defense.... That has zero impact on great-power competition."

The Biden campaign did not return a request for comment about Democrats' past handling of Taiwan, including his eight-year tenure as vice president. Obama and his Asia hands [struggled](#) with Taiwanese-U.S. relations, loath to do anything besides the "bare minimum," according to Carafano. The administration could not forge a free trade agreement and was generally reluctant to send senior diplomats to Taiwan. In contrast, the Trump administration sent two senior-level executive branch officials to Taiwan in 2020 and is moving to secure Taiwan's first free trade agreement with Washington.

Obama acted on an "[engage and hedge](#)" strategy on Beijing, which meant to cooperate with China on key issues, but to dissuade the Chinese Communist Party when it made decisions contrary to American interests. Experts anticipate a similar "compete but hedge" strategy from the Biden camp, which they say does little to recognize a new era of great-power competition. "Their whole bumper-sticker idea is coexistence with China," said Indo-Pacific expert at the American Foreign Policy Council Michael Sobolik.

"What we're going to need to be ready for is China not approaching that in good faith." Taiwan has been a major player in supporting the offshoring of American industry from China, and a critical ally in the effort against the Chinese Communist Party. To abandon this ally, experts warned, could signal trouble for the future of global democracy. Beijing continues to improve its capabilities to invade Taiwan. The regime has already conducted war games in anticipation of overtaking the island nation.

Sobolik told the Free Beacon that a pick-and-choose strategy effectively undermines a key U.S. ally to counter Chinese influence. Experts also said that Biden's Taiwan platform is in tension with two other key areas: readiness to defend Taiwan and cooperating with allies and partners. "The Chinese Communist Party is an existential threat to the First Amendment to the Constitution," Sobolik said.

"The American people need to understand that the same regime that is threatening our free speech at home, is also threatening the political survival of a fellow democracy in Asia, a democracy that stands with the United States resolutely." Allies and partners would also suffer from a pivot away from Taiwan, experts told the Free Beacon. From the [Czech Republic](#) to [Japan](#), allies have significantly increased their public overtures toward Taiwan—a fellow democracy unwilling to bow to Beijing—in a larger effort led by Washington.

If a future Biden administration walks back that support, Cooper said, it raises questions about "whether democracies are going to be able to survive or whether they are going to face coercive or even military pressure by China." Biden's past approach to China and Taiwan is at odds with the message that he has advanced on the campaign trail. Disengagement on Taiwan would run afoul of a major plank of the Biden foreign-policy platform: better relationships with allies and partners, Carafano told the Free Beacon.

"They say they want to work more with allies, and do everything opposite what Trump did. Those statements are not logically consistent," he warned. "The reality is that we have worked better with allies in Asia, all of whom are increasing their engagement with Taiwan. By walking away from many of the commitments that this administration has done, we're actually going to be teeing off from allies."

Though a potential Biden administration could consider Taiwan a secondary regional issue, experts made clear that the stakes could not be higher. China has long laid [claim](#) to the island, but Biden advisers have made past comments that downplay the threat to Taiwan that China has historically posed. "What we need to do now is to encourage patience on all sides, but particularly in Beijing," Biden adviser Kurt Campbell [said](#) in a 2001 interview. Campbell also said that Mao Zedong had "unusual patience" when it came to diplomacy with Taiwan.

Mao, however, was the same leader who chose to take military action against Taiwan in both 1954 and 1958. During the 1958 conflict—which nearly sparked a global nuclear crisis—Mao told then-Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko he believed the Chinese could withstand a nuclear war with Washington by retreating to the interior of China. Even the Soviets were taken aback by Mao's boundless aggression in his hopes to retake Taiwan.

Chinese president Xi Jinping does little to separate himself from Mao in his determination to seize Taiwan. Last week, Xi [told](#) Chinese marines to prepare for war. "Put all [your] minds and energy on preparing for war," Xi told Chinese troops. "[Be] absolutely loyal, absolutely pure, and absolutely reliable."

## **Growing North Korean nuclear threat awaits US election winner**

<https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-military/2020/10/21/growing-north-korean-nuclear-threat-awaits-us-election-winner/>

By: [Deb Riechmann, The Associated Press](#) for the Air Force Times // 4 hours ago

**WASHINGTON — “Where’s the war?”** That’s how President Donald Trump defends his North Korea policy at campaign rallies even though he’s joined the list of U.S. presidents unable to stop the ever-growing nuclear threat from Kim Jong Un. That threat will transcend the November election, no matter who wins.

Despite Trump’s three meetings with Kim, [the North Korean leader is expanding his arsenal](#). This month, Kim rolled out a shiny [new, larger intercontinental ballistic missile](#) during a nighttime parade in Pyongyang. Arms experts said the missile could possibly fire multiple nuclear warheads at the United States. It serves as a reminder that despite Trump’s boasts, North Korea remains one of the biggest dangers to U.S. national security.

North Korea hasn’t been a major campaign issue, though it could surface in Thursday’s debate, which is supposed to include a national security segment. Democrat Joe Biden has blasted Trump’s chummy relationship with Kim, saying that, if elected, he would not meet the North Korean leader unless diplomats first draft a comprehensive agreement. Trump, meanwhile, predicts he can get a deal quickly if reelected, citing the dire conditions in North Korea.

Talk of a quick deal is probably just talk because there’s [no sign of significant contacts](#) between Washington and Pyongyang, says Bruce Klingner, a research fellow at the Heritage Foundation and former CIA Korea deputy chief. He and other North Korea watchers say they are bracing for Kim to showcase his military might again after the U.S. election. “North Korea already has an ICBM that can range all over the United States, down to Florida and beyond, so the only reason to have an even larger missile is to be able to carry a larger payload,” Klingner said.

He said it’s likely that North Korea will “do something strongly provocative early next year, regardless of who is elected president.” North Korea is continuing to produce nuclear material, according to a Congressional Research Service report. In addition, between May 2019 and late March 2020, North Korea conducted multiple short-range ballistic missile tests in violation of United Nations Security Council prohibitions.

Multiple diplomatic initiatives during both Democratic and Republican administrations have failed to get North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for sanctions relief. Trump dared to be different, opting for in-person meetings with Kim in Singapore, Hanoi and the Demilitarized Zone. But despite the summits and exchanges of what Trump called “love” letters, his administration has been unable to get traction on denuclearizing North Korea. The last known working group meeting was last October.

Even so, Trump is still claiming victory, saying he’s kept the U.S. out of war with North Korea. “Where’s the war?” he asked supporters last week in Greenville, North Carolina. He’s used the same line in other campaign speeches in battleground states. “We have a good relationship with Kim Jong Un,” he said in Freeland, Michigan. “Who knows what likely happens? All I know is we’re not in war and that’s OK.”

Biden says that if he's elected, he will inherit a North Korean challenge that is worse than when Trump took office. "After three made-for-TV summits, we still don't have a single concrete commitment from North Korea," Biden said in a statement on North Korea. "Not one missile or nuclear weapon has been destroyed. Not one inspector is on the ground. If anything, the situation has gotten worse."

He added: "North Korea has more capability today than when Trump began his 'love affair' with Kim Jong Un, a murderous tyrant who, thanks to Trump, is no longer an isolated pariah on the world stage." Biden has pledged to work with allies to press Kim to denuclearize. Biden's advisers say the former vice president is not averse to sitting down with Kim, but not before a comprehensive negotiating strategy is outlined at working-level meetings by diplomats on both sides.

The Biden campaign also criticizes Trump for [scaling back military exercises with South Korea](#). North Korea typically fires off missiles or conducts tests in a show of force before key U.S. and South Korean elections. This time, experts predict, Kim will engage in saber-rattling after he knows who wins. "Kim would like to deal with President Trump, rather than Biden," said Sue Mi Terry, a former intelligence analyst specializing in East Asia who is now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

She said Kim does not want to make trouble for Trump by conducting a major provocation before the election. "In January," she said. "That's the time we need to watch out for it." If Biden wins, the North Koreans will want to engage with the new administration from a position of strength, according to Victor Cha, who negotiated with North Korea during the George W. Bush administration.

**If Trump wins**, Cha thinks the president might want to move quickly to begin negotiations because he went "all in" on his man-to-man diplomacy with Kim and doesn't want to accept personal defeat. Some experts believe that instead of repeating diplomatic failures, the U.S. should recognize the reclusive nation as a nuclear weapons state and mitigate the threat through arms control treaties.

Biden's vice presidential running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, disagrees, saying the U.S. cannot accept North Korea as a nuclear power. But she also said, in written responses to questions posed by the Council on Foreign Relations, that demanding complete denuclearization is a "recipe for failure." She has pledged a tough approach to North Korea. "I guarantee you I won't be exchanging love letters with Kim Jong Un," she wrote.

# CONGRESSIONAL

*By Susan Cornwell*

## CONTINUING RESOLUTION

- December 11: Current CR (HR 8337) will end
  - The last 13 of 18 years we have been operating under CRs
  - DOD has been operating under a CR for the last 9 out of 10 years
  - This years CR will fund Defense at \$738 Billion
    - ✦ This is last years Appropriated budget of :
      - \$666.5B for Base Funding
      - \$71.5 B for OCO
- It does NOT include last years funding of
- \$8B for Natural Disaster Relief OR
- \$10.5B for COVID relief under the CARES Act
- HR 8337 does NOT allow for “new starts” meaning programs that were not funded for production in FY20
  - Congress can grant “anomalies” which are exceptions to this rule
  - Only one was granted in HR8337.
    - ✦ It is for the Procurement of 2 Columbia class submarines in FY21

## HASC PRESS RELEASE

## DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

SASC and HASC have passed their respective Bills

- *ALL ICBM PEs at PB*

## AUTHORIZATION CONFERENCE

- **November:** Tentative timeframe for markup

## DEFENSE APPROPRIATION

HAC

- **July 8: HAC-D Marked up the FY21 Defense Bill**
  - *GBSD lost \$60M*
  - *Missile Repl/Eq Ballistic lost \$1.53M*
  - *ICBM Fuze Mod lost \$3.458M*
  - *MM Mods lost \$23.684M and transferred \$4.173 to another line*

**SAC Markup:** TBD

**APPROPRIATION CONFERENCE:** TBD: Possible that Conference may occur without a SAC bill

### **HASC chairman 'unconvinced' by arguments to slash defense budget**

[https://thehill.com/policy/defense/522083-democratic-chairman-unconvinced-at-arguments-to-slash-defense-budget-but-open?utm\\_source=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=34203](https://thehill.com/policy/defense/522083-democratic-chairman-unconvinced-at-arguments-to-slash-defense-budget-but-open?utm_source=&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=34203)  
BY [REBECCA KHEEL](#) for THE HILL // 10/21/20 01:58 PM EDT

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee said Wednesday he is “unconvinced” that the defense budget can support deep cuts, but left the door open to the possibility should Democrats win in November.

“I am unconvinced that our national security policy would be what it needs to be if we cut the defense budget by 10 or 20 percent,” Chairman [Adam Smith](#) (D-Wash.) told reporters on a conference call Wednesday. “But I am wide open to the conversation and the debate and discussion. I do not presume that I know everything and am absolutely right about this.” Smith’s latest comments [expand on recent remarks](#) where he predicted a fight among Democrats over the defense budget if former Vice President [Joe Biden](#) wins the presidency and the party wins control of the Senate.

In his previous comments, Smith argued a 20 percent budget cut is too large, but acknowledged the likelihood of an intraparty fight on the issue if Democrats control the executive and legislative branches next year. The comments stoked some ire from progressives, who have been pushing Biden to slash the defense budget if he wins. Biden told [military newspaper Stars and Stripes](#) last month he does not foresee making major defense cuts. If anything, he added, the defense budget could increase in certain areas, such as cyber capabilities and unmanned aircraft.

On Wednesday, Smith said he envisions a relatively flat defense budget of \$720 billion to \$740 billion going forward. The lower end of that range would be a \$20 billion cut from this year, but, as Smith noted, “a \$20 billion cut out of \$740 billion isn’t 20 percent, it isn’t even 10 percent.” Smith said he rejects arguments that the defense budget should be cut “because the U.S. military is a malign actor in the world and must be constrained.”

But, he added, he is open to debate about how to adjust U.S. national security strategy to support further cuts. “You have to explain to me that, OK, are we not going to have as many troops in Asia to deter North Korea from invading South Korea and China from invading Taiwan? Are we going to reduce even further our footprint in Africa and then cede that area more to China and to Russian mercenaries? Well, what are the implications there? Is there an argument for that?” Smith said. “I want to have that debate, and I want to have that discussion.”

In that vein, Smith said he had a “productive” conversation with progressive group Win Without War on Tuesday where they talked about adjusting national security strategy to enable defense cuts. “I do agree with the idea that we can have a national security policy that has a lower defense budget than we currently have,” Smith said. “It’s just you got to get there in a rational, responsible way.” -- Win Without War similarly described the conversation as “productive.”

"We had a productive conversation with Chairman Smith, wherein we reiterated our hope for a long-overdue rethinking of runaway spending at the Pentagon," Stephen Miles, the organization's executive director, said in a statement. "As our, and the world's, experience these past several months with COVID have devastatingly shown, the true security challenges of the 21st century require reinvesting in real human needs, not more battleships and bombs."

### **Congress holds the key to outpacing North Korea's nuclear capabilities**

[https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/521700-congress-holds-the-key-to-outpacing-north-koreas-nuclear?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%2010.23.20&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/521700-congress-holds-the-key-to-outpacing-north-koreas-nuclear?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.23.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

BY MAJ. GEN. (RET.) HOWARD N. THOMPSON, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR — 10/21/20 01:00 PM EDT

While our nation is understandably focused upon election year politics, members of Congress and defense oversight committee staffers are wrestling with another challenge that will have serious repercussions of its own: production and passage of a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and Defense Appropriations Bill.

As long as our government continues to operate under continuing resolutions, the fate of a number of critical, new Department of Defense programs hangs in the balance. Within the rapidly changing arena of ballistic missile defense, one such new initiative at the top of the Missile Defense Agency’s (MDA) list is the [Next Generation Interceptor](#) (NGI), a program MDA believes will finally place U.S. missile defenses out in front of the threats we face.

A credible and capable defense against a rogue nation, such as North Korea or Iran, and their intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) has been, and will continue to be, a national imperative. The threat is real and growing, especially with respect to North Korea. Recent open-source assessments conclude that North Korea possesses approximately [30 to 40 warheads](#) within their inventory, the wherewithal to produce more, and has successfully miniaturized those warheads to enable carriage and delivery on their missiles.

In his [2019 posture statement](#) to the Senate Armed Services Committee Strategic Forces Subcommittee, Air Force Gen. Terrence O’Shaughnessy, commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, stated that “North Korea’s ICBM program turned the corner in 2017 when North Korea successfully flight-tested multiple ICBMs capable of ranging the continental United States and detonated a thermonuclear device, increasing the destructive yield of its weapons by a factor of ten.”

While we cannot put too much stock in what North Korea chooses to share with the world, the North Koreans recently [paraded out their largest ICBM](#) we have seen to date. All of these developments, taken together, threaten to overwhelm the existing [Ground-based Midcourse Defense system](#), which was not designed or built to defeat this threat. This is not MDA’s first attempt to counter the evolving threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear-capable ICBM program.



In fact, MDA has suffered multiple false starts over the years in attempting to deal with this problem. The [multi-object kill vehicle](#) dates to 2004 and was an attempt by MDA to both enhance the firepower of a single interceptor missile and potentially defeat the use of decoys or other countermeasures on a North Korean re-entry vehicle. It was an on-again, off-again effort that currently enjoys no funding support.

Last year, Mike Griffin, under secretary of Defense for research and engineering, [canceled](#) the redesigned kill vehicle, a program to replace and improve upon the existing exoatmospheric kill vehicle that is currently mated with each of MDA's ground-based interceptors. With no viable modernization way ahead, MDA clearly saw the need for a new approach, one that will "leap ahead" with technology and capability that not only exceeds today's threat, but also that foreseen in the future. NGI must be designed and built to address the short-term existing threat and that anticipated on the horizon.

In April, MDA released a request for proposal to industry for an NGI and in August, multiple companies or teams of companies responded with bids. MDA is evaluating those submissions with the goal of selecting two competitors to go forward through the preliminary design review milestone. Unlike previous attempts to upgrade the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system that protects the U.S. homeland, the NGI program envisions an entirely new missile booster to launch the kill vehicle(s) into space, allowing MDA potentially to take advantage of decades worth of improved technology.

MDA Director Vice Adm. Jon Hill says, "We're leveraging competition ... now that we have bids on the table and we're going through that evaluation. ... It is accelerated; we're going to be able to do this faster. ... That's one of the benefits of competition." However, that competition must be sufficiently funded by Congress. The simple fact is that the president's budget request of \$664 million for NGI will not be fully funded, because of extreme budget pressure related to pandemic response. All reasonable people involved understand this.

Fiscal realities cannot be wished away. Congressional committees with oversight jurisdiction have put forth significantly different numbers for NGI in their fiscal year 2021 (FY21) bills. The House Armed Services Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee submissions are relatively close, at a \$250 million cut and a \$160 million cut, respectively. The sweet spot for Congress, and MDA, may be somewhere in between their numbers, assuming they do not include a rescission of 2020 funds as some have proposed.

To have any reasonable chance of funding a real competition within industry, the \$302 million planned for NGI within the 2020 budget submission must carry over into 2021. NGI will be stillborn, and added to the ash heap of other MDA false starts, if congressional authorizers and appropriators do not provide sufficient funding to incentivize industry to compete and push the technological envelope and deliver this much-needed capability to the warfighter in the 2028 timeframe.

Congress owes the nation the chance for MDA to show that it now has an executable path forward to finally significantly reduce the possibility of a nuclear weapon, launched by an unpredictable rogue regime, exploding above an American city.

Retired Maj. Gen. [Howard "Dallas" Thompson](#) is a former chief of staff for NORAD/NORTHCOM and a former Air Force fighter pilot.



## **The most important debate in the NDAA**

[https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2020/10/21/william-shatner-and-the-military-times-brought-america-into-the-most-important-debate-in-the-ndaa/?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Air%20Force%20DNR%2010.21.20&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Air%20Force%20-%20Daily%20News%20Roundup](https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2020/10/21/william-shatner-and-the-military-times-brought-america-into-the-most-important-debate-in-the-ndaa/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Air%20Force%20DNR%2010.21.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Air%20Force%20-%20Daily%20News%20Roundup)

*William Shatner and the Military Times*

Dr. Brent D. Ziarnick for Military Times

The most important and far-reaching decision in the FY21 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is whether the U.S. Space Force (USSF) will adopt a naval rank structure for officers. If Congress agrees, it will begin the service's great cultural shift necessary to carry America's values boldly into space. If Congress punts, the service will continue meandering aimlessly while touting baffling trivialities such as being "born digital" to an increasingly disinterested public.

At least some people in the USSF knows that Americans find space exciting. Recruiters have done a great job capitalizing on this with their slogan "Maybe your purpose on this planet isn't on this planet." However, the difference between the USSF's romantic marketing and it's toxic combination of ignorant and terminally boring "vision" has confused the public. William Shatner undoubtedly spoke for many Americans when he asked in a tweet if the USSF really planned on not calling Space Force ship commanding officers captains.

Over 7,000 people liked Shatner's tweet, including both Sen. Ted Cruz, chairman of the Aviation and Space Subcommittee, and Congressman Dan Crenshaw, who is championing a bipartisan House amendment calling for Navy ranks in the U.S. Space Force. That House amendment got a major shot in the arm when William Shatner elaborated on his tweet with a popular culture perspective in the Military Times.

The evolution of a tweet into a deceptively penetrating essay in an independent and reputable military newspaper breathed new life into a debate not just among military professionals and science fiction fans, but nationally among people from all walks of life. Shatner instigated a slew of articles on military culture and vision, and reinforced others written earlier dealing with space and the American psyche. Shatner brought the public into the on-going two-year debate about USSF ranks muffled because of a service corporate culture that has not historically valued dissenting perspectives.

Retired Air Force space officer Timothy Cox's essay supporting a slightly modified Crenshaw rank structure is pivotal for its honesty, logic, and courage in declaring the USSF broken — comparable to former Acting Air Force Secretary Matt Donovan's essay that ended the Air Force's "malicious compliance" opposition to the USSF's establishment. Cox's proposal integrates Shatner's concerns with Crenshaw's proposed ranks to support the USSF's mission within the service's newly chosen three-echelon command structure. Crenshaw's and Cox's proposals fit the USSF's own preferred organizational structure like a glove, and are critical to evolving the USSF into what the nation both wants and needs. Exploring how these proposed ranks fit elegantly into the USSF's command structure will quickly explain why.

## **The admirals — The field commands and the "fleet"**

During the Age of Sail, a fleet would be split into thirds — the van (front), the middle, and the rear. The USSF's top-level command structure bears a strong resemblance to a classic naval fleet. The USSF's Office of the Chief of Space Operations (OCSO) oversees three echelons (layers) of command that comprise, from highest to lowest: the Field Commands, the Deltas, and the Squadrons. OCSO houses the two four-star officers: the

chief of space operations and the vice chief of operations. Under the bipartisan House amendment, these two officers are the “leaders of space” would become full admirals — a term derived from the Arabic Amir-al-Bahr (leader of the sea) — and oversee the manning, training, and equipping of the entire USSF and directly command the Field Commands.

The two proposed “senior” Field Commands are aligned to broad, enduring missions. The Space Operations Command (SpOC) is the “primary force provider of space forces and capabilities for combatant commanders, coalition partners, the joint force, and the nation.” Once authorized, the Space Systems Command (SSC) will develop, acquire, launch, test, and sustain and maintain USSF space systems. Under the House amendment, the three-star flag officers overseeing SpOC and SSC would convert to vice admirals.

The two envisioned “junior” Field Commands support the senior Field Commands' activities. The Space Training and Requirements Command (STARCOM) and the U.S. Space Force Support Element to the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) would be commanded by two-star flag officers, who would be retitled rear admiral under the House amendment. Slated to be established in 2021, STARCOM would “train and educate space professionals, and develop combat-ready space forces to address the challenges of the warfighting domain of space.” The USSF Element – NRO is proposed to support USSF personnel assigned to the NRO.

The USSF structure and organization has adopted much of the naval model in which the admiral’s flagship, in this case the OCSO, would be in the middle third of the fleet to best communicate with both his fleet’s van — in this case the senior Field Commands conducting operations, and rear — the junior support Field Commands responsible for readiness and support. In the USSF’s fleet model, the admiral’s deputy vice admirals would command the operational van while the USSF’s rear admirals command the rear support branches. Crenshaw’s ranks structure is a natural fit, but it does not apply to only admirals.

### **The captains — At the head of the deltas**

The USSF command structure has fewer one-star officers who will likely serve as Field Command deputy commanders or as staff officers. Since they will not be within the USSF’s “fleet” structure, the bipartisan House amendment’s call for rear admiral lower half needs to be modified to commodore, an honorific title once used for senior captains commanding more than one U.S. Navy ship. The USSF can utilize commodores, as a senior captains, to reinforce the middle commands, the deltas, which report directly to Field Commands.

Deemed critical by USSF leadership, eight permanent deltas are grouped by specific missions such as Missile Warning, Orbital Warfare, and Command and Control. Under the House amendment, the O-6 officers leading the deltas would become O-6 captains. Rooted in the Latin term caput (head), captains were originally as ship’s masters in charge of fighting and sailing. These ranks reinforce the identity of the delta leader because, over time, both commodores and captains will probably command deltas, depending on the importance of the mission and organizational size responsible for tasking assigned squadrons.

### **The commanders — Masters of the squadrons**

Squadrons are the USSF’s small organization and command echelon “focused on specific tactics” or operating specific systems. USSF squadron commanders are led by O-5 commanders, who are responsible for all squadron operations in similar ways the naval “Master and Commander” is a

ship's commanding officer and serves as sailing master, responsible for every major task. The House amendment formally recognizes the O-5 squadron commanders with the commander rank by reinforcing this leader's grade duties.

Similarly, O-4s in the USSF will often be operations officers, who direct lieutenants to squadron commanders, and some may even command smaller squadrons. The House amendment's conversion of majors to the rank of lieutenant commander reinforces the continuity of the squadron commander position just as well as the USSF's more senior ranks. The lieutenants — Crew commanders and fighting experts

Below the lieutenant commander, the junior officer ranks of lieutenant (O-3), lieutenant, junior grade or the Cox variant of vice lieutenant (O-2), and ensign (O-1), round out the House amendment proposal for Space Force officers. Derived from French word for "placeholder," a lieutenant serves in lieu of a ship's captain and was often referred to as "lieutenants commanding." In the USSF, lieutenants will often get their first chance of command as spacecrew commanders, leading spacecrews operating the space systems "in lieu" of the squadron commander, but invested with his authority, on a day-to-day basis. USSF junior grade officers will often be the spacecrew's technical experts, focused on developing their tactical space expertise.

However, they will often be capable of serving as crew commanders "in lieu of" lieutenants. Therefore, when considering the House amendment it may be useful to rename O-2s to vice lieutenants to distinguish between the roles and responsibilities of O-2s and O-3s, since in most of the services an O-3 promotion is considered a significant increase in responsibility and prestige. The officer rank, ensign, derives from the Norman enseigne (flag) was used as a U.S. Army rank until 1814 to designate an infantry regiment's lowest ranking officer. The U.S. Navy later adopted the rank in 1862 for "passed midshipmen," often fresh from the Naval Academy. Ensign is an appropriate Space Force rank since it has been widely by Army, Navy, and Coast Guard history as a newly commissioned officer.

The bipartisan House-approved Crenshaw system for USSF officer ranks is neither nonsense nor service parochialism. On the contrary, it naturally supports the USSF's organizational construct and Americans' expectations. Ignoring the amendment by downplaying current realities, the vision of how the USSF will need to evolve to meet future threats and opportunities, and allowing the USSF to muddle along with an Air Force culture will play into the hands of those critics who never supported the idea of the USSF to begin with and wish to keep it grounded. Without a doubt, the bipartisan House amendment would have gone unnoticed by the public, maligned by Air Force lobbyists, and killed without reflection had it not been for the Military Times publishing Shatner's editorial and continuing to let the debate play on its pages. This essay continues that debate and provides the Department of Defense and Congress an opportunity to reach an understanding in order to develop a positive solution.

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## AROUND THE WORLD



### RUSSIA:

#### **Russia ready to freeze nuclear warheads in exchange for New START extension**

[https://thehill.com/policy/defense/521832-russia-ready-to-freeze-nuclear-warheads-in-exchange-for-new-start-extension?utm\\_source=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=34177](https://thehill.com/policy/defense/521832-russia-ready-to-freeze-nuclear-warheads-in-exchange-for-new-start-extension?utm_source=&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=34177)

BY [REBECCA KHEEL](#) for THE HILL // 10/20/20 09:30 AM EDT

Russia said Tuesday it would be open to a mutual nuclear warhead freeze with the United States in exchange for extending the last nuclear treaty between Moscow and Washington for a year.

The offer, made in a statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry, injects new life into talks that [days ago appeared dead](#) after both sides rejected the other's latest offer. "Russia has proposed extending the New START for one year and is ready to assume a political obligation together with the United States to freeze the sides' existing arsenals of nuclear warheads during this period," the Foreign Ministry said in its statement, adding the offer would only be possible if the United States does not make additional demands.

The yearlong extension of New START, Russia said, "could be used to hold comprehensive bilateral talks on the future of nuclear missile control, with the mandatory discussion of all factors that can influence strategic stability." Clinching a nuclear agreement, while not as extensive as what he first sought, would give [President Trump](#) a foreign policy win to tout in the closing days of the presidential election in which he is trailing Democratic nominee [Joe Biden](#) in national polls and key battleground states.

Still, a Trump administration official [told The Wall Street Journal](#) the two sides must still agree on verification measures for the warhead freeze and what the definition of a warhead is. The State Department said Tuesday it "appreciate[s] the Russian Federation's willingness to make progress on the issue of nuclear arms control." "The United States is prepared to meet immediately to finalize a verifiable agreement," department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus said in a statement. "We expect Russia to empower its diplomats to do the same."

New START caps the number of deployed nuclear warheads the United States and Russia can have at 1,550 a piece, as well as places limits on the weapons that can fire the warheads and creates a verification regime. The treaty expires in February, though it includes an option to extend it up to five more years without needing new approval from the U.S. Senate. The Trump administration wants to replace New START with a treaty that covers China's weapons, as well as Russia's so-called "tactical" nuclear weapons.

The Russian offer comes about a week after its negotiator in the arms control talks called the U.S. proposal to extend New START for a year in exchange for a warhead freeze "unacceptable," denying the U.S. envoy's claim that the two sides had reached a "gentleman's agreement." "The U.S.

position in favor of freezing has long been known to us, it is unacceptable to us,” Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said last week. “Not because we are against freezing, but because we need to deal with the problems of strategic stability as a whole.”

On Friday, Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) publicly offered to extend New START for at least one year without any other conditions, but the Trump administration quickly rejected the offer in a statement from national security adviser Robert O’Brien. In Tuesday’s statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Moscow has not received an official response to Putin’s offer, only comments on social media, so thought it was “necessary to clarify the matter.”

### **Putin Says Russia Has Weapons the US Doesn't, So Trump Should Extend Nuclear Treaty One Year**

<https://www.newsweek.com/russia-weapons-us-does-not-extend-nuclear-arms-treaty-1539863>

BY [TOM O'CONNOR](#) for Newsweek Magazine // ON 10/16/20 AT 1:01 PM EDT

Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) has called for an immediate, unconditional renewal of the last nuclear arms treaty between Moscow and Washington, highlighting that his own country has developed new strategic weapons that the United States does not have.

Amid an unprecedented spike in COVID-19 cases, the Russian leader met virtually on Friday with members of his security council and placed arms control high on his agenda. After calling first on Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to report on the progress of talks to extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) before it expires on February 4, Putin weighed in on the failing non-proliferation pact.

"It would be extremely sad if the treaty ceased to exist altogether and were not replaced by another fundamental document of this kind," he said. He touted the success of the treaty and its 2010 and 1991 predecessors in preventing an all-out arms race between the top two nuclear powers, but also took the opportunity to claim that the Russian arsenal has in some ways surpassed that of the U.S.—something he was willing to address in a new agreement.

"It is clear that we have new weapons systems that the American side does not have, at least not yet," Putin said, "but we do not refuse to discuss this side of the issue." Putin, who has since late last year proposed a no-conditions extension of New START, offered a new, more specific path to potentially push forward negotiations with the Trump administration. "I have a proposal, namely: to extend the existing treaty without any conditions for at least a year, in order to be able to conduct meaningful negotiations on all parameters of the problems that are governed by agreements of this kind," he said, "so as not to leave our countries and all states of the world that are interested in maintaining strategic stability, without such a fundamental document as New START."

Shortly afterward, Trump's own national security council released a statement calling Putin's proposal a "non-starter" because it didn't include "freezing nuclear warheads." "The United States is serious about arms control that will keep the entire world safe," national security adviser Robert O'Brien said. "We hope that Russia will reevaluate its position before a costly arms race ensues." The state of New START consultations remains in flux just weeks ahead of the U.S. election, raising concerns on the Russian side.

Confusion erupted Tuesday after U.S. Special Presidential Envoy on Arms Control Marshall Billingslea said he believed the two sides had reached "an agreement in principle at the highest levels of our two governments" on extending New START "for some period of time." A State Department official later [confirmed this view to Newsweek](#). Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov quickly dismissed this remark, saying the U.S. proposal for a nuclear "freeze" was "unacceptable."

He claimed the comments were part of a Trump administration effort to score political points ahead of the election. He added that a deal was not likely before the election should the current impasse hold. As of Thursday, there appeared to be no progress in the negotiations. Iran Ready for Arms Trade with 'Many Friends,' US left in 'Isolation' In his report to Putin, Lavrov said the two sides remain in "fairly intensive contact" on the issue and that specific proposals had been submitted.

As for the U.S., however, the top Russian diplomat said the proposals received were heavy with preconditions that were "quite numerous, were formulated both outside the framework of the treaty itself and outside of our competence." He noted that this was the last remaining bilateral treaty regarding the two countries' massive nuclear stockpiles, which have been subject to reduction, limitations and inspection measures thanks to New START.

"Everything else has either already been destroyed or is being proposed by the Americans for termination," Lavrov said. This includes the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty abandoned by the U.S. in 2002 and the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty scrapped last year by the Trump administration, which alleged Moscow violated it with a new cruise missile system. Russia, in turn, has accused the U.S. of seeking a global missile shield through the instalment in Eastern Europe of missile defenses using similar technology to mid-range missile launchers long banned by the INF.

Putin has cited this breakdown in arms control agreements as his motivation to press forward with the development of state-of-the-art nuclear-capable weapons such as the RS-28 Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile, the Avangard hypersonic boost-glide vehicle, the Kinzal air-launched cruise missile, the Poseidon nuclear-powered unmanned underwater vehicle and the Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile.

Worries the U.S. was seeking to undermine Russia were also earlier expressed by Moscow's ambassador to Washington Anatoly Antonov in [remarks sent to Newsweek](#), in which he warned "of a deep crisis of confidence in relations between the two leading nuclear powers." Russia 'Ready to Immediately' Extend Nuclear Treaty, Says U.S Won't Answer He said advancing arms control measures should be common ground for Moscow and Washington, and warned the U.S. not to exploit the situation to strengthen its hand against Russia in terms of military power.

"We need to remember that strategic issues have always been the cornerstone of our relations under any circumstances," Antonov said. "We hope that the United States will carry out a policy that does not seek military advantage over Russia." He emphasized Russia's concern that the U.S. was seeking unfair advantages through these negotiations. "In order to meet the interests of the USA and the Russian Federation," Antonov said, "there should be no place for any attempts to get significant unilateral advantages in the military political sphere."

While U.S. officials agree on the importance of establishing comprehensive non-proliferation measures, they have insisted on a broader agreement involving new weapons systems and additional countries, such as China. Amid the misunderstanding between the U.S. and Russian sides over

progress of the talks, Secretary of State [Mike Pompeo](#) touted the hard work that went into negotiations, and attempted to bring China into the discussion.

He said he hoped "that the Chinese Communist Party will also come to see that this kind of work, this kind of diligent work, to decrease risk, to take instability out of the entire world from these very dangerous weapons, these nuclear weapons that can proliferate so easily." Beijing has repeatedly rejected such overtures, arguing its far smaller arsenal should not be subject to the kind of bilateral measures governing the stockpiles of the U.S. and Russia.

"On the so-called trilateral negotiations proposed by the U.S., China has on numerous occasions reiterated its position, that is, given the huge disparity between the Chinese nuclear arsenal and that of the US and the Russian Federation," Fu Cong, director-general of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's Arms Control Department told Russian daily Kommersant in an interview Thursday, "we simply do not believe that there is any fair and equitable basis for China to join the U.S. and the Russian Federation in a nuclear arms control negotiation."

He did, however, propose one potential path for Chinese inclusion. "Of course, if the U.S. commits itself to reducing its nuclear arsenal to a level comparable to the Chinese nuclear arsenal, we'll be happy to join," Fu said. "But frankly speaking, that is something that we do not foresee happening in the near future, maybe not in my lifetime."

#### **Putin proposes one-year extension of nuclear arms treaty**

<https://www.upi.com/Defense-News/2020/10/16/Putin-proposes-one-year-extension-of-nuclear-arms-treaty/3321602863892/>

By: [Ed Adamczyk](#) for UPI to Defense News // Oct. 16, 2020 / 1:04 PM

Oct. 16 (UPI) -- Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday proposed a one-year extension of the New START nuclear arms agreement with the United States, which is set to expire in February.

"It would be extremely sad if this treaty ceased to exist and was not replaced by another fundamental document of this kind," Putin told members of Russia's Security Council in a [Friday videoconference](#). "During all the previous years, the New START [the current treaty, initiated in 2010] worked and worked properly, performing its fundamental role as a constraint curtailing the arms race and a tool of arms control," Putin said. "In this regard, I have a proposal, namely, to extend the Treaty now in effect unconditionally for at least a year in order to have a chance to hold substantive talks on all the parameters of problems that are regulated by treaties of this kind."

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, known as START, is the only remaining nuclear arms treaty left between the United States and Russia. RELATED [China enters arms trade treaty after selling drones to Serbia](#) The United States withdrew from the Open Skies Treaty, [meant to reduce](#) the chances of an accidental nuclear war, earlier this year. Negotiations regarding the treaty have been ongoing, [but intensified](#) last week.

Chief U.S. arms negotiator Marshall Billingslea met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in Helsinki on Oct. 6, after discussions in Vienna in August. The United States has not received Russian support [in broadening](#) the 2010 terms of the treaty. RELATED [Russia says using new](#)

[U.S. warheads would provoke nuclear retaliation](#) Earlier this month, a senior U.S. official said the outlines of a deal had been reached, but Russian officials quickly said there was no agreement. Russia had earlier called for a five-year extension.

In the videoconference, Russian Foreign Minister [Sergei Lavrov](#) referred to numerous U.S. proposals as "conditions, or rather preconditions" which are "outside our frame of reference."

### **Russia ready to work with US on new arms control treaties, says Lavrov**

<https://tass.com/defense/1213053>

*The US side's conditions were formulated outside the framework of the New START Treaty and outside the framework of the parties' competences, Lavrov said*

From Russia Defense News TASS // 16 Oct, 09:17 2020

MOSCOW, October 16. /TASS/. Russia is ready to work with the United States on new strategic stability and arms control treaties, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a meeting of President Vladimir Putin with permanent members of Russia's Security Council on Friday. "Dear Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin], on your instruction we have been in quite intensive contact with our American colleagues on the entire range of strategic stability issues, in particular, we are stressing your initiative that remains in force and is becoming increasingly important on making a decision on extending the current New START Treaty [the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms], which expires in February, without any preconditions. Meanwhile, we confirm that we will be ready to continue work on new accords," Lavrov said.

"With your consent, we put forward specific proposals on developing a comprehensive approach towards strategic stability that were transferred to the US side. In response, the Americans gave us their proposals that were presented as preconditions of extending the New START Treaty. Moreover, these preconditions are quite numerous," the Russian foreign minister said. The US side's conditions were formulated outside the framework of the treaty and outside the framework of the parties' competences, Lavrov said.

"To a certain extent, a critical situation has developed as I have already said that the treaty expires in early February. It expires, if there is no consent of both parties in compliance with the treaty-stipulated procedures on its extension. That is, in actual fact, the work on the treaty's immediate extension without conditions unstipulated in it has actually not begun yet," Russia's top diplomat said.

The Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (the New START Treaty) was signed in 2010 and it entered into force on February 5, 2011. The document stipulates that seven years after its entry into effect each party should have no more than a total of 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) and strategic bombers, as well as no more than 1,550 warheads on deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs and strategic bombers, and a total of 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers and strategic bombers.

The New START Treaty will remain in force during 10 years until 2021, unless superseded by a subsequent agreement. It may be extended for a period of no more than five years (i.e. until 2026) upon the parties' mutual consent. Moscow has numerously called on Washington not to delay the issue of the Treaty's possible extension.

### **Hype Train or Doomsday Device: Meet Russia's Avangard Hypersonic ICBM?**



**Key point:** The hypersonics arms race is on. How does Russia's Avangard stack up?

Exactly how serious a threat Russia's Avangard hypersonic intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) is to the United States isn't entirely clear. The ICBM is reported to have both hypersonic speed and an ability to fly a “maneuvering” flight path through the atmosphere. Such a combination would make it considerably difficult to counter. It can reportedly cruise at twenty-seven times the speed of sound and its ability to maneuver could make it almost impossible to correctly predict its trajectory, which provides the ICBM with the ability to protect itself from air and ballistic missile defenses that try to impede its path.

“The United States has practically no chances to resist the Avangard, since, in the event of large-scale hostilities, Russia will attack a potential enemy with all available weapons,” Maj. Gen. Vladimir Popov, honored military pilot of the Russian Federation and candidate of technical sciences, was quoted by [the Eurasian Times](#) earlier in the year. “In this case, the defensive complexes will not be able to identify all targets,” Popov added. “Among the attackers, there will be false missiles without charges as well as electronic interference due to electronic warfare.

Among the many attacking missiles, some will still reach their destination.” The news outlet, which suggested that Beijing has praised the fact that Russia’s nuclear-tipped hypersonic ICBMs, could “devastate” U.S. defenses, also noted that the United States and Russian Federation remain very much in parity, while other nations cannot yet catch up. The Avangard is still just one component of [Russia’s large arsenal](#) of such weapons, which include 528 land- and submarine-based ICBMs, plus nuclear weapons on bombers.

America’s missile defenses have only focused on intercepting a handful of ICBMs launched by a small power like North Korea. “The air and missile defense system of the United States is very strong,” Popov added. “It cannot be written off and underestimated; we are talking about a deeply echeloned engineering network. It is thought out and protects the most important regions of the country.”

### **U.S. Response**

The development of such weapons may not give America's adversaries a significant advantage, however. Should U.S. nuclear launchers, ICBMs or even land-launched, nuclear-armed strategic bombers be rendered ineffective or destroyed, the United States still has available options with [which to retaliate](#); including measures via the U.S. Navy’s nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarines.

In addition, the United States is continuing to develop weapons that could be seen as a deterrent against the use of the Avangard and other ICBMs. Earlier this month, the U.S. Air Force announced that it had [awarded Northrup Grumman](#) a \$13.3 billion Engineering and Manufacturing Development contract for the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) intercontinental ballistic missile program.

Moreover, in June, President Donald Trump addressed the fact that the United States military has its own hypersonic missile. “We are building new ships, bombers, jet fighters, and helicopters by the hundreds; new tanks, military satellites, rockets, and missiles; even a hypersonic missile that goes

seventeen times faster than the fastest missile currently available in the world and can hit a target one thousand miles away within fourteen inches from center point,” the president said [during his address](#) at the 2020 United States Military Academy at West Point Graduation Ceremony.

While the president’s description of the accuracy of the United States’ hypersonic missiles has been called into question, it remains very much true that the U.S. military won’t allow any nation to gain such an upper hand when it comes to ICBMs.

**Peter Suci** is a Michigan-based writer who has contributed to more than four dozen magazines, newspapers and websites. He is the author of several books on military headgear including [A Gallery of Military Headgear](#), which is available on Amazon.com. This first appeared earlier and is being republished due to reader interest.

### **Satellite images indicate Russia is preparing to resume testing its nuclear-powered cruise missile**

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/satellite-images-indicate-russia-is-preparing-to-resume-testing-its-nuclear-powered-cruise-missile/ar-BB1admbT?ocid=uxbndlbing>

By Zachary Cohen, for CNN // 18 hrs ago

New satellite images obtained by CNN indicate [Russia](#) is preparing to resume test flights of its nuclear-powered cruise missile at a previously-dismantled launch site near the Arctic Circle, according to experts who have analyzed the photos.

The images, captured by Planet Labs in September, show high levels of activity at a site known as Pankovo, previously used by Russia to test its Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile, according to Michael Duitsman and Jeffrey Lewis, researchers at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. Russia appeared to pause testing of the missile after 2018, when it dismantled the launch site but "the new satellite photographs indicate that the pause is over," they added.

"The activity and new construction are consistent with a resumption of test flights of the Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile," Lewis and Duitsman wrote in a new report, noting that the images show Russia has rebuilt the site's launch pad and reveal "large numbers of shipping containers at two support areas, including the probable missile checkout building." Russia conducted at least one test flight of the nuclear-powered cruise missile from the same site near the Arctic Circle in November 2017.

It reportedly carried out multiple other tests in the months that followed, though none were considered to be successful, according to Lewis and Duitsman. In March 2018, Russian President Vladimir Putin released a video of a nuclear-powered cruise missile test, which allowed open-source researchers including analysts at the Middlebury Institute to identify the location, they added. Two US officials told CNN that they are aware that Russia has been preparing to test missiles as part of its advanced weapons program.

Earlier this month, the Kremlin said it successfully [test-fired a hypersonic cruise missile](#) from a naval ship in the White Sea. And on Tuesday, Russia's Ministry of Defense posted [a video of Oniks cruise missile launch](#) conducted from a military base in the Arctic. MoD did not respond to CNN's request for comment about whether there is an upcoming test of the Burevestnik missile.

Evidence that Russia may now be preparing to resume testing of its nuclear powered cruise-missile comes as Washington and Moscow are working to extend the New START treaty, a key arms control agreement that is set to expire in coming months.

The top US negotiator, Marshall Billingslea, [suggested in a tweet Friday](#) that talks between the two countries had reached an impasse. But on Tuesday, [Russia's Foreign Ministry said it is willing to agree to freeze its nuclear arsenals](#) in order to extend New START if the US does not pose

any other requirements -- an offer that the State Department spokesperson welcomed with urgency saying the US is "prepared to meet immediately to finalize a verifiable agreement."

Trump has been urging his national security team to secure a nuclear deal with Russia before the November election, sources familiar with the efforts tell CNN. He had initially wanted to bring China into the deal, but China has repeatedly rejected partaking in any discussions. While Russia has previously stated that its nuclear-powered cruise missile is not covered by the New START treaty, failure to extend the agreement could lead to the emergence of an arms race between the two countries, according to Lewis.

"The arms control framework that secured the post-Cold War has completely disintegrated. If and when the New START treaty expires in a few months, there will be no limits on US and Russian nuclear forces for the first time in fifty years. In its place is a burgeoning arms race as Russia develops one doomsday weapon after another to defeat US missile defenses," he told CNN. "The United States and Russia seem to be stumbling into a new arms race.

This is one of a number of dangerous and destabilizing weapons right out of science fiction that Russia is developing to defeat US missile defenses," Lewis added, referring to the nuclear-powered cruise missile. For now, however, nuclear-powered cruise missile development is a way Russia can skirt the terms of New START and achieve intercontinental range that can pose a challenge to national missile defenses, according to Vipin Narang, a nuclear proliferation expert and associate professor at MIT.

"A nuclear powered cruise missile gives a low-flying, radar-evading, nuclear-capable missile intergalactic range that can pose a challenge to national missile defenses," he told CNN, adding that indications Russia may be preparing another test show "how much our missile defenses drive their developments and how scared they are of them, not today, but tomorrow." They are also highly controversial "because it's crazy to put an unshielded nuclear reactor on a missile to power it," Narang added, noting that the consequences of testing this type of weapon can be catastrophic if something goes wrong.

That appeared to be the case in 2019 when, [Russian state media said](#), five nuclear agency workers were killed in an explosion at a military test site in northern Russia. The blast was detected by seismic stations and occurred during tests on a liquid propulsion system involving isotopes, the Russian Defense Ministry said. In other words, the test most likely had some nuclear dimension. And the reflexive secrecy of Putin's government has only further fueled speculation about the cause of the accident.

At the time, Lewis told CNN that satellite imagery suggested that the incident might have been related to the testing of a nuclear-powered cruise missile.

#### **Putin: Russia-China military alliance can't be ruled out**

Associated Press, 22 Oct 20 Vladimir Isachenkov

MOSCOW -- Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday there is no need for a Russia-China military alliance now, but noted it could be forged in the future.

Putin's statement signaled deepening ties between Moscow and Beijing amid growing tensions in their relations with the United States. The Russian leader also made a strong call for extending the last remaining arms control pact between Moscow and Washington.

Asked during a video conference with international foreign policy experts Thursday whether a military union between Moscow and Beijing was possible, Putin replied that “we don't need it, but, theoretically, it’s quite possible to imagine it.”

Russia and China have hailed their “strategic partnership,” but so far rejected any talk about the possibility of their forming a military alliance.

Putin pointed to the war games that the armed forces of China and Russia held as a signal of the countries' burgeoning military cooperation.

Putin also noted that Russia has shared sensitive military technologies that helped significantly boost China's military potential, but didn’t mention any specifics, saying the information was sensitive.

“Without any doubt, our cooperation with China is bolstering the defense capability of China's army," he said, adding that the future could see even closer military ties between the two countries.

“The time will show how it will develop,” the Russian president said, adding that “we won't exclude it.”

Russia has sought to develop stronger ties with China as its relations with the West sank to post-Cold War lows over Moscow's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea, accusations of Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and other rifts.

Putin on Thursday emphasized the importance of extending the New START treaty that expires in February, Russia's last arms control pact with the United States.

Earlier this week, the United States and Russia signaled their readiness to accept compromises to salvage the New START treaty just two weeks ahead of the U.S. presidential election in which President Donald Trump faces a strong challenge from former Vice President Joe Biden, whose campaign has accused Trump of being soft on Russia.

New START was signed in 2010 by then-U.S. President Barack Obama and then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. The pact limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance.

Russia had offered to extend the pact without any conditions, while the Trump administration initially insisted that it could only be renewed if China agreed to join. China has refused to consider the idea. The U.S. recently modified its stance and proposed a one-year extension of the treaty, but said it must be coupled with the imposition of a broader cap on nuclear warheads.

The Kremlin initially resisted Washington's demand, but its position shifted this week with the Russian Foreign Ministry stating that Moscow can accept a freeze on warheads if the U.S. agrees to put forward no additional demands.

Putin didn't address the issue of the freeze on warheads, but he emphasized the importance of salvaging New START.

“The question is whether to keep the existing treaty as it is, begin a detailed discussion and try to reach a compromise in a year or lose that treaty altogether, leaving ourselves, Russia and the United States, along with the rest of the world, without any agreement restricting an arms race,” he said. “I believe the second option is much worse.”

At the same time, he added that Russia “wasn’t clinging to the treaty” and will ensure its security without it. He pointed at Russia's perceived edge in hypersonic weapons and indicated a readiness to include them in a future pact.

“If our partners decide that they don’t need it, well, so be it, we can’t stop them,” he said. “Russia’s security will not be hurt, particularly because we have the most advanced weapons systems.”

Despite indications earlier this week that Russia and the U.S. were inching closer to a deal on New START, the top Russian negotiator said that “dramatic” differences still remain and strongly warned Washington against making new demands.

Sergei Ryabkov cautioned the U.S. against pressing its demand for more intrusive control verification measures like those that existed in the 1990s and aren’t envisaged by the New START. The diplomat argued that new control mechanisms could be discussed as part of a future deal, saying firmly that Russia will not accept the demand that amounts to “legitimate espionage.”

“If it doesn't suit the U.S. for some reason, then there will be no deal,” Ryabkov was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying.



## CHINA:

### **China revises national defence law to enhance security**

[https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3106684/china-revises-national-defence-law-enhance-security?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%2010.23.20&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3106684/china-revises-national-defence-law-enhance-security?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.23.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

- Main areas of concern are cybersecurity, space and technologies related to electromagnetics, document says
- Changes ‘urgently needed’ to reflect heightened state of strategic rivalry around the world, defence minister says

By: [Wendy Wu](#) for the South China Morning Post // Published: 8:00pm, 22 Oct, 2020

China has issued a draft revision to its national defence law as it seeks to enhance security in key areas like cyberspace, and improve communication between the government and the

[military](#) The document, which has been under deliberation for almost two years, was released by the Standing Committee of the [National People's Congress](#) on Wednesday and will remain open for public comment until November 19.

Under the draft, a “coordination mechanism” for discussing important defence matters will be established between the State Council – China’s cabinet – and the Communist Party’s Central Military Commission. The areas of primary concern were cybersecurity, space and technologies related to electromagnets, it said. The document said also that China would “take part in global security governance and support global efforts to international arms control”.

It also highlighted the need for more research into defence technologies and encouraged investment by companies and organisations from outside the military sector. China’s Defence Minister Wei Fenghe said last week that the changes incorporated in the draft, which has been under discussion since January 2019, were “urgently needed” given the heightened state of strategic rivalry around the world.

The revised legislation was necessary to “defend the nation’s sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and development interests” and “safeguard [its] overseas interests”, he was quoted by state media as saying. China was “facing increasingly complicated security threats and challenges” and “adjustments to the defence policy regime” were necessary to address them, he said. Song Zhongping, a military commentator based in Hong Kong, said the revision was based on Beijing’s assessment of the external security situation.

China was facing “huge strategic pressure” from the US, in areas like [Taiwan](#) and the [South China Sea](#), he said. The release of the draft comes after [US Defence Secretary Mark Esper](#) last week appealed for greater US spending on defence to counter the “challenges we face, especially from China”, which he described as a “near-peer rival”. John Mearsheimer, an international relations scholar at the University of Chicago, said last week that the US would not tolerate China becoming a “peer competitor” and said “there is a real possibility that there will be a war between those two countries”.

### **China threatens retaliation over US-Taiwan arms sale**

[https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/22/china-threatens-retaliation-over-us-taiwan-arms-sale?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%2010.23.20&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/22/china-threatens-retaliation-over-us-taiwan-arms-sale?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.23.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

*China says US move sends 'a very wrong signal to separatist forces advocating for Taiwanese independence'.*

From Al Jazeera News Bureau // 22 Oct 2020

China has threatened to “make legitimate and necessary responses” after the United States approved the potential sale of \$1.8bn worth of advanced weapons systems to Taiwan, a self-ruled island that Beijing claims as its own.

The Chinese foreign ministry on Thursday said the US – in [approving](#) the arms sale – was violating agreements signed in the 1970s that established diplomatic relations between the two countries. The weapons sale includes 135 air-to-ground missiles that Taiwan’s defence ministry said would build its combat capabilities amid increasing threats by China to annex the territory by force if necessary.

The US move is “sending a very wrong signal to separatist forces advocating for Taiwan independence, and seriously damages China-US relations”, Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for the Chinese foreign ministry, said at a regular news briefing. Zhao said China would “make a legitimate and necessary

response depending [on] how the situation evolves”. Beijing has ramped up diplomatic and military pressure on Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China, since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, who views the island as a de facto sovereign nation and not part of the “One China” policy.

Chinese fighter jets and bombers have entered Taiwan’s air defence zone with increasing frequency in recent months, while propaganda films have shown simulated attacks on Taiwan-like territories. China has also launched a diplomatic offensive aimed at courting Taiwan’s few official allies, and Taipei now has diplomatic relations with just 15 national governments globally. Taiwan’s Minister of National Defense Yen De-fa [welcomed](#) the latest US arms sale earlier on Thursday, saying while Taiwan did not want to get involved in an arms race with China, it needed a credible military.

Speaking to reporters, Yen said the sales were to help Taiwan improve their defensive capabilities to deal with the “enemy threat and new situation”. “This includes a credible combat capability and asymmetric warfare capabilities to strengthen our determination to defend ourselves,” he added. Previous US administrations have been wary of big-ticket arms deals with Taipei for fear of fuelling anger in Beijing, but President Donald Trump has made a tough stance against China a central theme of his campaign for re-election on November 3.

As well as seeking closer ties with Taiwan, the US has [tightened restrictions](#) on Chinese media and imposed sanctions on Chinese officials, companies and government agencies for their actions in Tibet, Hong Kong and the disputed South China Sea.

### **Video Surfaces of Chinese Bomber Apparently Carrying Monster Hypersonic Missile**

Popular Mechanics, 20 Oct 20 Kyle Mizokami

A video recorded in China appears to show a People’s Liberation Army Air Force bomber equipped with a hypersonic weapon system. The H-6N bomber, filmed coming in for a landing at a base in central China, is carrying a large missile with the telltale nose shape of a weapon that can travel faster than Mach 5. The weapon may even be nuclear-armed, making the blazing-fast projectile particularly deadly.

A civilian recorded the bomber as it was landing at Neixiang Ma’ao air base in central China. The bomber is seen carrying a long, missile-shaped object on its centerline. The missile itself appears to have a sharp, wedge-like nose similar to those seen on a new Chinese hypersonic weapon system.

According to *Defense News*, the weapon bears a strong resemblance to the ground-based DF-17 hypersonic weapon system. Observers first spotted the DF-17 in October 2019 at a parade celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China.

The DF-17 combines a DF-16 medium range ballistic missile with the DF-ZF hypersonic glide vehicle. Launched from a truck-like vehicle, the DF-17 quickly accelerates to a top speed of Mach 5 to 10, or between 3,836 to 7,672 miles per hour. The DF-ZF glide vehicle separates from the spent missile and glides on to the target.

*Missile Threat* estimates the DF-17’s range at between 1,118 and 1,553 miles, while *The Diplomat* says the weapon is highly accurate, striking within “meters” of its intended target in tests. At the October 2019 parade, witnesses described the DF-17 as being armed with a conventional warhead. In



addition to the warhead, a weapon—or any object, for that matter, traveling at Mach 5+—also packs a considerable kinetic punch.

China originally designed the DF-17 as a ground-to-ground weapon capable of evading modern ballistic missile defenses by flying underneath their high-altitude detection radars while giving regular air defense systems less time to respond. The DF-17 would be the ideal platform for destroying Taiwan's Patriot PAC-3 anti-ballistic missile systems, opening the door for conventional ballistic missile strikes launched from the mainland.

The H-6N bomber is the latest version of the H-6 series bomber. Originally introduced in the 1960s, the Chinese bomber is roughly equivalent to the American B-52. Like the B-52, the H-6 has been steadily upgraded over the decades. The H-6 carries a smaller payload and has a shorter range than its American cousin. A new, modern stealth bomber, the Xian H-20 is reportedly under development and could be revealed within the next year or two.

Placing the DF-17 on a bomber hints at broader capabilities for the weapon. A H-6N bomber could fly around Taiwan and launch an attack from the east, complicating China's ability to shoot it down. The combination of the H-6N and DF-17 would also put America's bases in Japan, Korea, and the U.S. territory of Guam within striking range. Depending on the weapon's guidance package and China's ability to detect and track ships at sea, the DF-17 could even hit moving targets like a U.S. aircraft carrier.

One concerning detail in the new footage is the location of the bomber. The base, Neixiang Ma'ao, is home to H-6 nuclear-capable bombers of the 160th Aviation Brigade. That hints the hypersonic weapon may no longer be strictly conventional and might carry a nuclear warhead. However, another explanation is the aircraft is operating at a nuclear base due to the base's heightened security and secure facilities.

### **American hostility means China can't come clean on its nuclear arsenal, Beijing official says**

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3105862/american-hostility-means-china-cant-come-clean-its-nuclear>

- *To ensure the effectiveness of its nuclear strategy, 'China maintains a certain degree of ambiguity' regarding numbers of warheads, head of the foreign ministry arms control department says*
- *Beijing will only join Washington and Moscow in arms limitation talks if 'US commits to reducing its nuclear arsenal to a level' similar to China's, he says*

By: [Kinling Lo](#) for the South China Morning Post // Published: 7:00pm, 16 Oct, 2020

The [United States](#) 'hostile policies' mean China must retain some ambiguity regarding its nuclear arsenal, and expecting Beijing to engage in arms control talks under the current circumstances is "unreasonable and unrealistic", according to a senior foreign ministry official.

In an interview with Russian newspaper Kommersant – an English translation of which was published by Beijing on Thursday – Fu Cong, the head of the Chinese foreign ministry's arms control department, defended China's lack of transparency on the issue. To ensure the effectiveness of its nuclear strategy, "it is important that China maintains a certain degree of ambiguity in terms of its numbers", he said.

"Especially given the fact that the US, which regards China as its biggest competitor, is adopting such hostile policies towards China and maintains such a huge nuclear arsenal, of 6,000 [warheads]." The US Department of Defence said in its annual [report to Congress on China's military power](#) last month that the Asian giant's nuclear arsenal was set to at least double over the next decade.

Fu said China's nuclear capacity building was a necessary "deterrent" amid America's expansion of its nuclear arsenal and plans to deploy land-based intermediate-range missiles in territories neighbouring China. "Under all these circumstances, you can't expect China to be both transparent in



doctrine and transparent in numbers,” he said. Nuclear disarmament could become a new front in the deepening rift between China and the US, after [Beijing refused to join talks with Washington and Moscow](#) in June to extend the 2010 [New Start accord](#) , which is set to expire in February.

The US has pushed for China to be brought into any future deal, saying its nuclear and missile capabilities pose a growing threat to the US and its allies. Fu, however, rejected the idea of China joining such talks, calling them “unfair, unreasonable and unrealistic” on the grounds that the US and [Russia](#) were much larger nuclear powers. “China has on numerous occasions reiterated its position [on the three-way talks] that given the huge disparity between the Chinese nuclear arsenal and that of the US and the Russian Federation, we do not believe there is any fair and equitable basis for China to join,” he said.

“[But] if the US commits to [reducing its nuclear arsenal](#) to a level comparable to the Chinese nuclear arsenal, we’ll be happy to join.” According to the defence department’s report last month, the US has about 6,000 nuclear weapons, including retired warheads, while China’s total is in the low 200s. China does not publish figures on how many nuclear warheads it has, but according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute it was one of six countries – along with

[India](#), Britain, Pakistan, Israel and [North Korea](#) – that increased their arsenals in 2020. Fu said in the Kommersant interview that in nuclear arsenal terms, China should be classified together with France and Britain. Despite six nations increasing their nuclear capacity, global inventories have been falling, mostly as a result of the US and Russia dismantling retired stocks, according to the Stockholm report. America had 1,750 deployed warheads – placed on missiles or located on bases with operational forces – and 4,050 in reserve or retired, while the equivalent figures for Russia were 1,570 and 4,805, the report said

### **Chinese military beefs up coastal forces as it prepares for possible invasion of Taiwan**

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3105953/chinese-military-beefs-coastal-forces-it-prepares-possible>

- Missile bases have been upgraded and equipped with the most advanced hypersonic missile the DF-17, according to one military source
- Build-up of forces comes as the PLA continues with a series of exercises designed to keep up the pressure on the island

By: [Minnie Chan](#) for the South China Morning Post // Published: 8:06am, 18 Oct, 2020

Beijing is stepping up the militarisation of its southeast coast as it prepares for a possible invasion of [Taiwan](#) , military observers and sources have said.

The People’s Liberation Army has been upgrading its missile bases, and one Beijing-based military source said it has deployed its most advanced hypersonic missile the DF-17 to the area. “The DF-17 hypersonic missile will gradually replace the old DF-11s and DF-15s that were deployed in the southeast region for decades,” the source, who requested anonymity, because of the sensitivity of the topic. “The new missile has a longer range and is able to hit targets more accurately.”

Beijing regards Taiwan as a breakaway province which it has vowed to take back, by force if necessary. Relations between Beijing and Taipei have deteriorated since Tsai Ing-wen from the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was elected as president in 2016 and refused to accept the one-China principle. The deployment of missiles on the coasts of Fujian and Zhejiang provinces previously peaked during the presidency of Tsai’s DPP predecessor Chen Shui-ban.

Ties have come under further strain this year as Taipei moved closer to the United States and signed a series of arms deals, including for Patriot missiles and an upgrade to its F-16 Viper jets. “Every rocket force brigade in Fujian and Guangdong is now fully equipped,” he said. “The size of some of the missile bases in the Eastern and Southern theatre commands have even doubled in recent years, showing the PLA is stepping up preparations for a war targeting Taiwan.”

Chang said one base in Puning, a city in Guangdong, had been upgraded and now housed a new type of ballistic missile, but declined to say what type because of the sensitivity of the topic. “The missile base in Puning is responsible for attacking southern Taiwan, but the DF-11 and DF-15 do not have a long enough range to fly over the Central Mountain Range to hit the island’s airbases in Taitung and Hualien [both in eastern Taiwan],” he said.

Chang also said the PLA had deployed its Russian-built S-400 Triumf air-defence system that could detect and shoot down missiles, drones and jets from up to 600km away to defend against any attack by the Taiwanese air force. “The S-400’s radar system is very sophisticated and is able to cover the whole of Taiwan,” he said. “It is able to shoot Taiwanese military aircraft once they take off.”

The PLA’s coastal defences also include 20 air force brigades – some of them armed with the country’s first stealth warplane, the J-20. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps – the only wing of the armed forces that has continued to grow during President Xi Jinping’s extensive overhaul of the military – has been earmarked to play a key role in any invasion and 10 of its 13 brigades are now based along the southeast coast.

The Marine Corps headquarters had been based in Chaozhou in Guangdong since 2017 and would play a key role in any attack on a Taiwanese naval base in Kaohsiung, the Beijing-based source said. Beijing has sought to keep up the pressure on Taiwan with a series of exercises around the island, including a [large-scale invasion drill last weekend](#) and [multiple air sorties](#) that saw almost 40 fighters crossing the median line in the Taiwan Strait in a single day last month.

On Monday, retired major general Wang Zaixi, who once led the mainland’s semi-governmental organisation for managing ties with Taiwan, described the recent exercises as “unprecedented”.

“Until today, the possibility of peaceful reunification was slim,” he told Chinese news site Guancha.cn. “The live-fire military exercises showed it is just one step away to actual combat.”

### **China Media Plays Down 'Speculations' That Beijing Moved Hypersonic Missiles Closer to Taiwan**

Newsweek Online, 20 Oct 20 John Feng

Chinese state media played down as “mere speculations” reports that Beijing had moved hypersonic missiles closer to Taiwan, though it also offered an explanation for how the weapons would be used.

Chinese Communist Party newspaper Global Times published the lengthy article in response to claims in Hong Kong’s South China Morning Post—citing an anonymous source—that the People’s Liberation Army had deployed its Dongfeng-17 hypersonic missiles to China’s southeastern coastline.

The DF-17 is China's most advanced hypersonic missile, capable of a maximum range of over 1,500 miles and said to be more accurate than its predecessors, SCMP's report stated.

Tensions in the Taiwan Strait have risen in recent months as the PLA conducts live-fire landing exercises and Taipei responds with its own anti-landing drills in the narrow body of water.

However, state-run Global Times quoted a military expert as saying it would be "a waste" to use the missiles on Taiwan given their range capabilities.

The DF-17 hypersonic missile, which was first unveiled at last year's National Day military parade in Beijing, is said to have a range more than 10 times the width of the 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait.

"The close distance between the island and the mainland makes the bombing mission against Taiwan military targets very easy," the newspaper said, adding that the weapons, if deployed, "are meant for targeting the more powerful enemies that try to intervene in the Taiwan question during the PLA's operation, and other threats that undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

"The military targets on Taiwan are totally within the reach of the PLA's rocket launchers and air-launched missiles carried by military aircraft, so using advanced missiles to strike against Taiwan would be a waste," the article said, citing an unnamed military expert.

Commenting on the deployment of DF-17s near the island, Taiwanese defense analyst Su Tzu-yun also disagreed with SCMP's report on the missiles' potential uses cases.

Su, a senior analyst at the government-funded Institute for National Defense and Security Research, said the hypersonic ballistic missiles would be for the purposes of "anti-access" and "area denial" should foreign military powers attempt to intervene in a potential Taiwan Strait conflict, Taiwan's Liberty Times reported.

With a potential range of up to 1,550 miles, the missiles could in theory hit Taiwan, but that would be "a waste of DF-17's range capabilities," Su was quoted as saying.

He suggested the weapons would instead be used to target U.S. military bases and carrier battle groups in order to surround Taiwan and strike any U.S. forces attempting to assist Taipei.

Su noted that the DF-17, which has the potential to avoid anti-ballistic missile defense systems by entering the atmosphere, "has a low hit rate."

"Although they would cause a nuisance to the U.S. military, the U.S. will already have relevant countermeasures in place," Su added.

According to Liberty Times, Su pointed out contradictions in the SCMP article, saying the Chinese army had already prepared short-range Dongfeng-15 missiles along its eastern coastline as its main form of attack against Taiwan.

"If the PLA wanted to use DF-17s on Taiwan, it would only need to set them up in central China. The fact that the Chinese military has chosen the east coast for its missile installations is a 'clear' indication that it has U.S. forces in mind," the newspaper, which is regarded as holding a pro-independence stance, wrote.

Finally, the defense analyst said Taiwan's missile early warning system would be able to detect any DF-17 launch and subsequent climb into the upper atmosphere, with the island's Patriot and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense—THAAD—systems then able to quickly intercept.

Su noted that the U.S. would also be able to locate and destroy any mobile launchers or fixed installations with the help of its satellites and reconnaissance aircraft.

With military pressure from Beijing mounting on Taiwan ahead of the November elections, Global Times said reunification by force was now a question of "when and how."

"Based on the development of the current situation, whether to use the reunification-by-force option is no longer a question; the only question is when and how to use it," it said, citing unnamed Chinese analysts.



## **NORTH KOREA:**

### **Kim Jong Un's October 10 Speech: More Than Missiles**

<https://www.38north.org/2020/10/kjuspeech101320/>

BY: [38 NORTH](#) // OCTOBER 13, 2020

For his speech at the October 10 celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Korean Workers' Party, Kim Jong Un seems to have decided that the best path was to walk (relatively) softly and carry a big stick. Apparently, the key for Kim was to demonstrate that not everything had failed during the year, and that the country had made truly remarkable progress in its military capabilities. At the same time, it was clear he wanted to use the party anniversary to reassure the population that the worst is over, and that things will begin to get better soon.

### **Military Focus**

One thing Kim Jong Un didn't have to say in his speech was "I told you so"—it was clear from the new missile systems rumbling through the square that he had followed through on his declaration last December that the world would witness a new DPRK strategic weapon. In fact, this year's parade

was the culmination of a series of signals Pyongyang had sent throughout the year that the weapons program was ongoing and a continuing priority for the leadership.

Underlining that point, at the gala nighttime parade, Kim was flanked on the reviewing stand by two newly minted marshals, one of whom—[Ri Pyong Chol](#)—has played a key role in the development of the North’s nuclear and missile forces and steadily rose to the highest ranks of the party over the past nine months. There seems no doubt that the rise of Ri’s status reflected Kim’s continuing focus on the North’s WMD programs.

Indeed, that priority had been made clear when a few months ago, Kim made a point of being photographed at an [unusually small group meeting](#) of the Central Military Commission talking to leading officials in charge of developing the WMD programs, including the director of the Nuclear Weapons Institute. Despite the heavy symbolic message driven home by the new missiles at the parade, Kim’s rhetoric was carefully chosen to smooth the rough edges off his warnings of plans for a continued military buildup.

The speech, for example, avoided the more abrasive language Pyongyang has employed over the past ten months to suggest that the North’s self-proclaimed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests was over. In fact, in his description of a mature—and still growing—“deterrent” force, Kim seemed to imply those pledges were so far in the rearview mirror that he had no need to mention them.

Underlining that the nuclear force—though he didn’t call it as such—had grown significantly over the past five years, Kim made very clear that there was more to come. Whereas last December he had declared that development of the force would depend on US actions, that position was diluted over the year, and now any sort of rhetorical brake has disappeared. Kim’s new formulation is that “Our military capability is changing in the rate of its growth and in its quality and quantity in our own style and in accordance with our demands and our timetable.”

There are new, “upgraded” targets for development, he said, and these are being “steadily” met. In terms of the threat its nuclear arsenal poses, the North has long sought to portray its force as defensive and primarily a deterrent. Pyongyang has played with the concepts of “no first use” and “no preemptive use,” but even when pledging one or the other, has always in the next sentence diluted the pledge and made it conditional, as one would expect of a country not sure that its deterrent was ironclad. Kim did the same in his October 10 speech.[\[2\]](#)

Our war deterrent, which is intended to defend the rights to independence and existence of our state and safeguard peace in the region, will never be abused or used as a means for preemptive strike. (Note: the vernacular might more accurately be translated as “will by no means be misused and will never be used preemptively.”) But, if, and if, any forces infringe upon the security of our state and attempt to have recourse to military force against us, I will enlist all our most powerful offensive strength in advance to punish them.

In his speech, Kim portrayed the main reason for the country’s difficulties as the weather and COVID-19, making virtually no mention of sanctions. Kim made no explicit reference to the US, speaking only in passing of unnamed “hostile forces.” He kept his references to external threats vague, giving him considerable flexibility in choosing a diplomatic path in the coming months. (Pyongyang undoubtedly took special note of a Yonhap interview with an advisor to Joe Biden’s presidential campaign[\[3\]](#) that put some distance between US President Barack Obama’s North Korea policy and the what a potential Biden approach would be, even going so far as to say that a President Biden would be prepared to meet with Kim Jong Un.)

## **South Korea**

Kim's brief comment on the possibility of reengaging South Korea appears well-calculated to fit in line with an unfolding approach over the past month. According to the Blue House, on September 12, Kim sent a letter in reply to ROK President Moon Jae-in—not previously reported by either side—saying, “I look forward to the days when these hours of this terrible year have quickly gone by and good things await us one after another.”[\[4\]](#)

That more positive tone was then included in a message from the party's United Front Department (UFD) to the Blue House in response to the September 22 incident in the West Sea (Yellow Sea). The UFD message, not carried by DPRK media, ended by citing Kim directly: Comrade Kim Jong Un, chairman of the State Affairs Commission, has asked to deliver the message that he feels very sorry to President Moon Jae-in and to compatriots in the South—who are suffering from the threat of COVID-19—for adding great disappointment by the unsavory incident that unexpectedly happened in our territorial waters, let alone helping [the South Koreans suffering from COVID-19].[\[5\]](#)

A day later, in an authoritative Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) report, Pyongyang tiptoed toward publicly lifting the veil on Kim's more positive position, noting that: We also took more necessary security measures in order to make sure that no more incident spoiling the relations of trust and respect between the north and the south would happen in any case, true to the intention of our Supreme Leadership.[\[6\]](#)

## **Slipping Past the Past**

October 10 was a major anniversary of the Workers' Party, yet in his speech, Kim Jong Un made almost no reference to either of whom have traditionally been portrayed as the essential, central figures in the history of the party—Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. Neither name appears, and then only cursorily, until the second half of the speech. Reinforcing the impression that this treatment was very deliberate, there were no reports in DPRK media of Kim Jong Un making the obligatory visit to the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun to pay respects to either of his predecessors on the anniversary.

All of this fits with mounting evidence that for over a year, Kim Jong Un has been moving to upgrade his own, separate identity as the leader, no longer standing on the shoulders of his father or his grandfather. Indeed, from early in his rule, Kim has been indicating it was time to turn the page, not to be wedded to the past but to look ahead, meaning an ability to accept new policies suited to the “new reality.”

Kim has often before openly acknowledged personal shortcomings, but the humility and candor of his party anniversary speech marked a step beyond that. At one point, while mentioning the army's contribution to recovery from the multiple typhoons that hit the country over the summer, Kim visibly choked up. Even in a system where the leader is expected to demonstrate fatherly concern and warmth toward the people, this open display of emotion is extremely unusual.

## **North Korea's tyrant threatens Trump with new ballistic missile capable of targeting U.S.**

Washington Times Online, 18 Oct 20 Bill Gertz

North Korea's rollout last week of an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of targeting the U.S. with a nuclear warhead showed that Pyongyang continues to expand its illegal weapons arsenal despite increased sanctions and diplomatic pressure from the Trump administration.

The communist regime of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un unveiled the road-mobile ICBM during a massive military parade in Pyongyang that U.S. experts said was clearly designed to send a message to Washington and its allies in the region, including South Korea.

“This parade was orchestrated to show that despite the sanctions and hardships, [North Korea] has continued to advance its capabilities across the spectrum, from nuclear weapons and missiles to conventional systems to individual soldier equipment,” said David Maxwell, a former U.S. Special Forces colonel focused on North Korea.

“Most important, it laid the foundation for continued blackmail diplomacy with the South and the U.S.,” said Mr. Maxwell, a senior fellow with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

He circulated his comments via email as U.S. officials scrambled to gauge the technical implications of what they had seen over the weekend on North Korean state-controlled TV broadcasts.

The ICBM that rolled through a parade marking the 75th anniversary of the Kim regime’s ruling Workers’ Party appeared to be a significantly ramped-up version of the Hwasong-15 missile that Pyongyang test-launched in 2017.

The ICBM, which had not been shown before in public, was rolled onto a transporter-erector launcher with 11 axles, two more than the Hwasong-15 — also known as the KN-22. It marks the fourth ballistic missile that the North Koreans have developed in a class that also includes the Taepodong, KN-20 and KN-22.

The parade in Pyongyang also showcased the KN-20 and a submarine-launched ballistic missile called the KN-11. The larger, newer ICBM is expected to have a longer range than the others, with a potential capability of flying some 7,000 miles — notably farther than the distance from Pyongyang to Washington.

National security sources have predicted for months that North Korea might use the Workers’ Party anniversary parade for a missile reveal, delivering an “October surprise” to capitalize on perceived policy uncertainty in Washington surrounding the impending U.S. presidential election.

A senior Trump administration official expressed frustration over the reveal.

“It is disappointing to see the DPRK continuing to prioritize its prohibited nuclear and ballistic missile program over working towards a brighter future for the North Korean people,” the official told Reuters, using the acronym for North Korea’s official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The development appears to fly in the face of the Trump administration’s pursuit of a major denuclearization deal with the Kim regime. Talks toward such a deal have been stalled since the breakdown of the February 2019 Hanoi summit between President Trump and Mr. Kim.

Mr. Trump said he walked away from the summit early because Mr. Kim demanded sweeping sanctions relief in exchange for only a limited

commitment to destroy part of his nuclear arsenal.

The period since has been marked by on-again, off-again provocations from Pyongyang, including months of short-range missile launch tests that the Trump administration has largely ignored.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly pointed out that, despite the tests, the Kim regime has thus far held to a promise he said Mr. Kim made at the first summit between the two men in June 2018 in Singapore: not to carry out any more ICBM or nuclear launches. This weekend's action was considered a parade rollout, not a test launch.

While the Trump administration remains eager to resume dialogue with the North Koreans, it has gradually increased sanctions on the Kim regime. U.S. officials have vowed to maintain a "maximum pressure" campaign until Pyongyang denuclearizes. But Washington has struggled to get a full buy-in for the sanctions from China, which shares a border with North Korea and is Pyongyang's main strategic and economic backer. Hawkish foreign policy advisers in Washington have called on the Trump administration to level sanctions directly against Chinese banks doing business with the Kim regime.

The regime, meanwhile, has shown an ongoing ability to produce nuclear bombs and increasingly sophisticated missiles, exposing the limitations of U.S. and international sanctions.

North Korea has been under United Nations-backed sanctions and a nuclear embargo for more than two decades and has repeatedly violated past diplomatic nuclear agreements with the wider international community.

A U.N. panel of experts reported several years ago that North Korea's mobile missiles were built on transporter-erector launchers converted from Chinese lumber-carrying vehicles exported in the early 2000s.

The display of missile force over the weekend was the first since 2018, when the Trump administration began its push for diplomacy with the Kim regime.

Video of the Saturday parade in Pyongyang showed Mr. Kim opening the proceedings with a midnight speech.

"We will continue to strengthen war deterrence for self-defense to deter, control and manage all dangerous attempts and threatening acts, including ever-growing nuclear threats, from hostile forces," said the North Korean leader, who was dressed in a light-gray suit, according to South Korea's Yonhap News Agency.

North Korea uses the term "war deterrence" in referring to nuclear arms.

Mr. Kim also said North Korean military power would not be used preemptively. "But," he said, "should anyone undermine our national security and mobilize military power against us, I will retaliate by using the most powerful offensive force at our disposal and in a preemptive manner."



North Korean long-range missile development in recent years has forced the Pentagon to reevaluate its strategic missile defenses.

“I believe we have the capability today to deter North Korean aggression, but given where we think the North Korean capability might be in terms of their missiles in the next five years, I think we must continue to explore, improve and resource our entire missile defense capabilities,” Adm. Philip Davidson, commander of the military’s Indo-Pacific Command, said in 2018.

Upgraded defenses include Theater High-Altitude Area Defenses (THAAD) in Guam and South Korea, missile defense ships in the Pacific and near Japan.

“I support planned improvements to the [ballistic missile defense] of the homeland architecture via the new Homeland Defense Radar for Hawaii, additional purchase of Ground Based Interceptors, and a detailed study that ascertains the efficacy of positioning interceptors in Hawaii,” Adm. Davidson said.

The admiral also said he wanted to see improvements in the capabilities and numbers of ballistic and cruise missile interceptors that he said would “further enhance homeland defense capabilities and protect key regional nodes from North Korea’s aggressive action against the United States.”

Richard Fisher, a military affairs specialist with the International Assessment and Strategy Center, said the new North Korean ICBM unveiled over the weekend appears to have the same diameter as the previously revealed KN-22, “but is longer, to accommodate a new warhead bus and possible third stage.”

“The warhead bus is large enough to carry multiple warheads, but how many would depend on their size, something not clear from North Korean sources,” Mr. Fisher said.

The new 22-wheeled ICBM vehicle, a transportor erector launcher (TEL), appears to be a variant of the 16-wheel transporters that China sold to North Korea in 2010.

“With 22 wheels, this new ICBM has the largest mobile TEL in the world, exceeding the previous record of the HS-15’s 18-wheel TEL,” Mr. Fisher said.

“It is either made in China or assembled in North Korea with substantial Sanjiang Space Group/China Science and Industry Corp. assistance,” he said. “It is safe to conclude this is yet another massive Chinese violation of the North Korea sanctions regime.”

### **North Korea’s New Missile Appears Designed to Overwhelm US Defenses**

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/north-koreas-new-missile-appears-designed-overwhelm-us-defenses>

By William Gallo for Voice of America News // Updated October 16, 2020 10:13 PM

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA - North Korea's [new intercontinental ballistic missile](#), unveiled at a military parade last week, appears designed to overwhelm U.S. missile defenses, security analysts say, a development that may spur the U.S. to add costly new interceptors.

The massive ICBM, the largest ever displayed by North Korea, is likely the “new strategic weapon” promised by the country’s leader, Kim Jong Un, at the beginning of the year. The missile has not been flight-tested and its range is unknown, but North Korea has little need to prove its missiles can go farther; it already tested an ICBM in 2017 that can reach anywhere in the continental United States. Instead, analysts say, North Korea is likely trying to show it can fit multiple nuclear warheads on a single ICBM, making it much more difficult and costly for U.S. missile defense systems to intercept.

### **Cost imbalance**

“If you have multiple warheads coming out of that single missile, you now have to have multiple interceptors for each incoming warhead,” said Melissa Hanham, who closely tracks North Korea’s weapons program and is deputy director of the Vienna-based Open Nuclear Network. The new ICBM, Hanham said, appears large enough to not only fit multiple warheads but also decoys, known as penetration aids, which could confuse missile defense systems.

“It’s not cheap to make missiles like this, but it’s a lot cheaper than what the U.S. is now going to spend on missile defense,” Hanham added. Missile defense has always been risky, as it is cheaper and easier to build a new missile than create a missile defense system involving sensors for detection and multiple interceptors for each missile, Hanham said. To keep up with the changes in North Korea’s growing force, the U.S. will have to spend “hundreds of millions [of dollars] adding interceptors,” said Ankit Panda, a nuclear policy specialist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

“North Korea, meanwhile, even under economic sanctions, appears fully capable of continuing to expand its ICBM capabilities,” Panda added. The United Nations expanded sanctions against North Korea in 2017 following a series of nuclear and ICBM tests by Pyongyang. The U.S. and North Korea engaged in nuclear negotiations in 2018 and 2019, but North Korea eventually walked away, angry at the U.S. refusal to relax the sanctions and provide other security guarantees.

### **100% confidence?**

U.S. officials have dismissed concerns that North Korea’s rapidly evolving missile program could produce a weapon capable of evading ground-based U.S. missile defenses, based in the U.S. states of Alaska and California. In January, General John Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he had “100% confidence” in the ability of U.S. missile defense systems against North Korea.

Independent defense analysts are much more skeptical about U.S. missile defense capabilities, especially if North Korea deploys ICBMs with multiple warheads. “It is hard to see how Americans could be confident that a finite number of U.S. missile-defense interceptors would be sufficient to stop an attack by a volley of North Korean ICBMs with multiple warheads each,” wrote Markus Garlauskas and Bruce Perry, two former members of the U.S. intelligence community. “Even if the United States were to attempt to build more interceptors to keep up, the costs could be prohibitive,” the analysts said.

## Missile not perfect

North Korea's new ICBM, which will presumably be named the Hwasong-16, does have strategic drawbacks. Though the ICBM is technically road mobile, it is not as versatile as it may seem. The missile is carried by a transporter erector launcher with 22 wheels. Depending on its turning radius, the launcher vehicle may be too large to travel on many North Korean roads, which are often in poor repair.

The large size of the missile also means it likely must travel with a team of fuel trucks and a crane to help erect it, Hanham said. "If you were thinking about fueling that missile after it's erected, it would take several hours," she said -- which could allow U.S. reconnaissance sources to observe the missile's setup. Another drawback is that the missile remains untested, but that could soon change, analysts say.

In January, Kim said he no longer felt bound by his self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests. However, he may be reluctant to conduct a major test before the Nov. 3 U.S. presidential election. U.S. President Donald Trump has warned Kim against any big provocations before the vote. "What I would expect is to see that ICBM tested next year," said Bruce Klingner, a North Korea specialist at the Heritage Foundation.

"North Korea tends to ... do something very provocative in the first year of a new U.S. or South Korean administration," he said. Hanham said while North Korea may watch to see what happens in the U.S. election, "they certainly have a powerful way of signaling their dissatisfaction now by testing this missile."

## **North Korea's Pukguksong-3 SLBM: A Step Towards Second-Strike Capability?**

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/north-koreas-pukguksong-3-slbm-step-towards-second-strike-capability-171008>

*Could this, along with the Pukguksong-4, form the basis of a second-strike maritime force?*

by [Mark Episkopos](#) for The National Interest // October 20, 2020

[North Korea](#) unveiled its latest submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), the [Pukguksong-4](#), at a military parade earlier this month. The National Interest recently discussed the new missile as a major potential boon to North Korea's nuclear capabilities, but the Pukguksong-4 isn't North Korea's first foray into nuclear-capable, long-range SLBM's. One of the most advanced displays of North Korean missile technology to date, the older Pukguksong-3 remains a potent addition to the DPRK's otherwise bloated and unwieldy strategic arsenal.

## **What We Know:**

Pyongyang's state media first suggested in the summer of 2017 that North Korea's military-industrial complex is working on a successor to the Pukguksong-1, a solid-fuel SLBM that drew heavy design inspiration from--and shared some common weaknesses with--the 1960's liquid-fuel Soviet [R-27 Zyb](#). The Pukguksong-3 was intended not as an iteration of this aging Soviet design, but as a fresh platform for a new generation of North Korean ballistic missile technology.

The missile was finally tested in October 2019, reaching a peak altitude of 950 km and traveling 450 km before landing within the maritime borders of Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). At roughly 2,000 km, The Pukguksong-3 doubles its predecessor's maximum operating range; this means that it can strike not only South Korea, but the entirety of Japan, without leaving port. It can also threaten South Korean, Japanese, and US assets

operating all across the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and Sea of Japan. As [highlighted](#) by defense analyst Ankit Panda, this vast performance improvement is possibly driven by a new booster or a significantly lighter airframe.

As opposed to North Korea's liquid-fueled land-based ICBM arsenal, the Pukguksong-3 is a solid-fuel missile. Whereas liquid-fuel systems can take as long as the better part of a day to be fully deployed, solid-fuel missiles can be fired at a moment's notice. This not only translates into more reliable second-strike capabilities, but could potentially make a decisive difference in a preemptive strike scenario.

The 2019 test was likely conducted from a submersible barge, a typical way to minimize collateral damage in case of catastrophic malfunction. As with the newer Pukguksong-4, the Pukguksong-3 is designed to be fired from the North Korean Navy's upcoming Sinpo-C (also known as ROMEO-Mod) line of diesel-electric ballistic missile submarines. Three Sinpo-C vessels are planned, but none seem to be in active military service as of the time of writing; widespread [predictions](#) of a celebratory Pukguksong-3 launch from a fully operational submarine at the October 10 parade were not borne out.

### **The Challenge:**

The Pukguksong-3's biggest challenge lies not with the missile itself, but with its broader transportation and deployment system. North Korea will need at least three, but possibly up to five, Sinpo-C vessels to maintain the constant at-sea presence that's required for an effective sea-based nuclear deterrent. Constructing all of these submarines poses a massive time and resource commitment that is sure to strain the DPRK's [relatively modest](#) financial means.

The Pukguksong-3 marked a major milestone in North Korea's ongoing efforts to acquire a survivable second-strike nuclear force, and remains one of the most sophisticated missiles in the DPRK's strategic roster. It is not yet clear just how wide a technical gap there will be between the Pukguksong-3 and its Pukguksong-4 successor, but early [design comparisons](#) point toward an incremental update. With these two missiles, North Korea now has the SLBM's for a survivable, second-strike maritime force; the only question left is whether or not it can field a sufficient number of modernized submarines to carry them.

Mark Episkopos is a frequent contributor to The National Interest and a PhD student in History at American University.



## **SOUTH KOREA:**

### **NSTR**



## IRAN:

### **Iran says UN arms embargo lifted, allowing it to buy weapons**

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/iran-says-un-arms-embargo-lifted-allowing-it-to-buy-weapons/ar-BB1a8Cnm?ocid=msedgdhp>

From /dj (AFP, Reuters) // dw.com 19 hrs ago

Iran has announced that it is now free to purchase weapons on the basis of its defense needs, as a United Nations conventional arms embargo imposed on the country expired on Sunday.

"Today's normalization of Iran's defense cooperation with the world is a win for the cause of multilateralism and peace and security in our region," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Twitter. Zarif's comments were accompanied by a statement by the Foreign Ministry, which said that "as of today, the Islamic Republic of Iran may procure any necessary arms and equipment from any source without any legal restrictions and solely based on its defensive needs." It also added that Iran could "export defensive armaments based on its own policies."

### **A 'momentous day'**

The UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on Iran in 2007. The restrictions were due to expire on Sunday, in line with conditions agreed to under the 2015 nuclear deal among Iran, Russia, China, Germany, Britain, France, and the United States. The objective was to keep Iran from developing nuclear capabilities in exchange for economic sanctions relief. However, Donald Trump's presidency in the US has led to an escalation of tensions between Washington and Tehran. In 2018, he unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal.

Read more: US-Iran relations and upcoming presidential elections After the Security Council [rejected the Trump administration's attempt](#) to expand the arms embargo on Iran in August this year, the US [unilaterally reinstated the UN sanctions](#) that were lifted under the accord. Calling this "a momentous day for the international community," Zarif said the world has defied "malign US efforts" to protect the Security Council resolution and the nuclear deal. However, the country also stressed that "unconventional arms, weapons of mass destruction and a buying spree of conventional arms have no place in Iran's defense doctrine."

### **Iran - Dissident group presents evidence of possible nuclear site**

[https://washingtontimes-dc.newsmemory.com/?token=79d3106e4afbb246a942309df128a9b1\\_5f8d64f5\\_d3019ac&selDate=20201019](https://washingtontimes-dc.newsmemory.com/?token=79d3106e4afbb246a942309df128a9b1_5f8d64f5_d3019ac&selDate=20201019)

*Adds another layer of tension between U.S., Iran*

BY LAUREN TOMS for THE WASHINGTON TIMES // 19 Okt 2020

Iran has developed a new nuclear bomb-making facility, potentially adding a heightened level of fuel to skyrocketing tensions between the U.S. and Iran, according to an exiled dissident group which has exposed parts of Tehran's covert nuclear infrastructure in the past.

Citing what it said were sources within the Iranian government, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), a French- and Albanian-based group that advocates for the overthrow of Iran's government, said Friday it had uncovered details of a previously unknown weapons development facility in the northeast region of Sorkheh-Hesar. "New information received from sources within the Iranian regime reveals that a new center has

been built to continue its work for the weaponization of the Iranian regime's nuclear program," said Alireza Jafarzadeh, deputy director of the NCRI-U.S. Representative Office.

The claims could not be verified independently, but Iran's Islamic regime has taken measured steps to exceed limits imposed in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal after President Trump renounced the deal in 2018 and moved to reinstate economic sanctions on Iran and its trading partners. The exile group, which was once on the U.S. list of official terrorist groups but now has supporters high in the U.S. government, says it has sources inside the Iranian nuclear bureaucracy that supply information Western intelligence sources cannot get.

Most notably, the NCRI revealed in August 2002 the existence of two major covert sites at Natanz and Arak that exposed for the first time the extent of Tehran's effort to develop a nuclear capability. Mr. Jafarzadeh said that the exact location of the new site is on Damavand Highway, east of Tehran, just over a mile into the exit road to Sorkheh-Hesar where a military-style checkpoint stands before the facility.

Mr. Jafarzadeh told The Washington Times that his group believes the newest facility is fully operational and is controlled by Iran's shadowy Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research, also known by its Farsi acronym SPND. The U.S. last year imposed sanctions on 14 people and 17 entities connected to the research agency. According to the dissident group, the site also conducts work related to underground nuclear testing, focused on "preliminary explosions to build nuclear weapons and record results by seismometers."

It also claimed that Iran "engaged in the secret and illicit purchase of military-grade sensitive seismometers from Russia." The weapons center will likely open the door to Iran's Ministry of Defense obtaining some of the last capabilities needed to build a nuclear weapon, the organization said. U.S. and regional officials have expressed concern that Iran's recent nuclear moves bring it closer to the breakout point where it could develop and deploy a nuclear bomb.

Satellite imagery, obtained by NCRI and displayed Friday, appears to show that the facility was built near other weapons-development centers including Khojir. Khojir, the largest complex manufacturing ballistic missiles for two missile development companies and the command headquarters of Iran's military aerospace branch, was the site of a stillmurky explosion in June that Iranian officials blamed on a gas leak but which was widely believed to be an Israeli missile strike.

"Tehran has built its new site for SPND in the area of the complexes involved in building missiles, which would also provide a safe cover for its nuclear activities," Mr. Jafarzadeh said. "What we have found out is that this site and the area surrounding it is completely controlled by the IRGC," he added. "Locals are not allowed in the area. The State Department, which with the Treasury Department has led the way on imposing sanctions on Iran and pressuring other countries to break commercial ties, has yet to confirm the group's allegations.

The Trump administration earlier this month announced a sweeping new round of sanctions on Iran, a financial blockade that cuts off virtually all of the few remaining Iranian lenders able to work with international banks to finance deals. Critics say the move could spark a cutoff of humanitarian aid at time when Iran is dealing with one of the deadliest outbreaks of COVID-19 in the Middle East.

But U.S. allies and adversaries alike largely ignored a Trump administration push to “snap back” trade bans and a weapons embargo set to be lifted under terms of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Although the group did not provide extensive evidence that nuclear activity was being conducted at the new facility, Mr. Jafarzadeh argued that the 2015 nuclear has failed to constrain Tehran. “Our revelation today once again proves the fact that the [nuclear deal] did not prevent the mullahs’ activities to acquire nuclear weapons and even the regime has reneged on its commitments stipulated” in the agreement, the group said



## **INDIA:**

### **BrahMos test-fired: List of missiles India has tested in last two months**

<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/other/brahmos-test-fired-list-of-missiles-india-has-tested-in-last-two-months/ar-BB1a8W48>

Edited by Shankhyaneel Sarkar for the hindustantimes.com // 21 Okt 2020 2 days ago

India on Sunday tested a naval version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. The missile was fired from the indigenously-built stealth destroyer, INS Chennai.

With the successful testing of BrahMos, India has now tested [11 missiles within a period of two months](#). The test-firing of these missiles comes at a time when India is involved in a bitter row with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh. The standoff also led to clashes in [Ladakh's Galwan Valley](#) in June in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed. India has test-fired a new version of the surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile BrahMos and anti-radiation missile Rudram-1. It has also test-fired Shaurya which is a laser guided anti-tank guided missile and nuclear capable hypersonic missile. India has also deployed a sizeable number of BrahMos supersonic missiles at the LAC.

Here is a list of [missile](#) and [weapons system](#) India has tested in the last two months:

- **September 7:** Indigenously-developed [hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle](#) (HSTDV), which is essential to power cruise missiles and long-range missile systems, was tested off the coast of Odisha.
- **September 22:** [ABHYAS - High-speed Expendable Aerial Target \(HEAT\) vehicles](#) - were tested off the coast of Odisha. These can be used as target for evaluation of various missile systems.
- **September 23:** DRDO test-fires indigenously developed [laser-guided anti-tank guided missile](#) at Ahmednagar in Maharashtra. It can be used to defeat “armoured vehicles protected by explosive reactive armour (ERA)", according to DRDO.
- **September 23:** [Prithvi-II test fired from Balasore](#), Odisha. It is an indigenously developed nuclear capable surface-to-surface missile which uses an advanced inertial guidance system with maneuvering trajectory to hit its target, according to DRDO.
- **September 30:** Extended range of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile tested from a land-based facility in Odisha.
- **October 1:** Laser-guided [Anti-Tank Guided Missile](#) (ATGM) fired from a MBT Arjun Tank in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra.



- **October 3:** India successfully test-fires new version of nuclear-capable [Shaurya missile](#) off Odisha coast.
- **October 5:** India develops anti-submarine warfare and successfully test-fires indigenously developed [SMART torpedo system](#) which is essential for anti-submarine warfare (ASW) operations far beyond the torpedo range.
- **October 10:** India successfully test-fired [Rudram-1, its first indigenous anti-radiation missile](#) which can detect enemy radars on the ground.
- **October 18:** A naval version of the [BrahMos supersonic cruise missile](#) fired from the indigenously-built stealth destroyer INS Chennai.



## PAKISTAN:

### Pakistan: A Nuclear Weapons Nightmare

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/pakistan-nuclear-weapons-nightmare-170831>

*It's a dangerous situation.*

by [Kyle Mizokami](#) for The National Interest // October 18, 2020

**Here's What You Need To Remember:** Pakistan is clearly developing a robust nuclear capability that can not only deter but fight a nuclear war.

It is also dealing with internal security issues that could threaten the integrity of its nuclear arsenal. Pakistan and India are clearly in the midst of a nuclear arms race that could, in relative terms, lead to absurdly high nuclear stockpiles reminiscent of the Cold War. Sandwiched between Iran, China, India and Afghanistan, Pakistan lives in a complicated neighborhood with a variety of security issues.

One of the nine known states known to have nuclear weapons, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and doctrine are continually evolving to match perceived threats. A nuclear power for decades, Pakistan is now attempting to construct a nuclear triad of its own, making its nuclear arsenal resilient and capable of devastating retaliatory strikes. Pakistan's nuclear program goes back to the 1950s, during the early days of its rivalry with India.

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

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



Outside countries eventually dropped out as the true purpose of the program became clear, but the clandestine effort continued. Exactly when Pakistan had completed its first nuclear device is murky. Former president Benazir Bhutto, Zulfikar Bhutto's daughter, [claimed](#) that her father told her the first device was ready by 1977. A member of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission said design of the bomb was completed in 1978 and the bomb was “cold tested”—stopping short of an actual explosion—in 1983.

Benazir Bhutto later claimed that Pakistan's bombs were stored disassembled until 1998, when India tested six bombs in a span of three days. Nearly three weeks later, Pakistan conducted a similar rapid-fire testing schedule, setting off five bombs in a single day and a sixth bomb three days later. The first device, estimated at twenty-five to thirty kilotons, may have been a boosted uranium device. The second was estimated at twelve kilotons, and the next three as sub-kiloton devices.

The sixth and final device appears to have also been a twelve-kiloton bomb that was detonated at a different testing range; a U.S. Air Force “Constant Phoenix” nuclear-detection aircraft reportedly detected plutonium afterward. Since Pakistan had been working on a uranium bomb and North Korea—which shared or purchased research with Pakistan through the A. Q. Khan network—had been working on a uranium bomb, some outside observers concluded the sixth test was [actually a North Korean test](#), detonated elsewhere to conceal North Korea's involvement although. There is no consensus on this conclusion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Babur-2 is deployed on both land and at sea on ships, where they would be more difficult to neutralize. A submarine-launched version, [Babur-3](#), was tested in January and would be the most survivable of all Pakistani nuclear delivery systems. Pakistan is clearly developing a robust nuclear capability that can not only deter but fight a nuclear war. It is also dealing with internal security issues that could threaten the integrity of its nuclear arsenal. Pakistan and India are clearly in the midst of a nuclear arms race that could, in relative terms, lead to absurdly high nuclear stockpiles reminiscent of the Cold War. It is clear that an arms-control agreement for the subcontinent is desperately needed.

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



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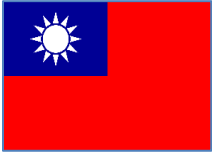
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**U.S. State Department approves \$1.8 billion in potential arms sales to Taiwan - Pentagon**

[https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-taiwan-arms/u-s-state-department-approves-1-8-bln-in-potential-arms-sales-to-taiwan-pentagon-idUSKBN27638I?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%2010.22.20&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-taiwan-arms/u-s-state-department-approves-1-8-bln-in-potential-arms-sales-to-taiwan-pentagon-idUSKBN27638I?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.22.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)  
By [David Brunnstrom](#), [Mike Stone](#) for Reuters // OCTOBER 21, 2020 10:54 PM - UPDATED 8 HOURS AGO

**WASHINGTON (Reuters)** - The U.S. State Department has approved the potential sale of three weapons systems to Taiwan, including sensors, missiles and artillery that could have a total value of \$1.8 billion, the Pentagon said on Wednesday.

Flags of Taiwan and U.S. are placed for a meeting between U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce speaks and with Su Chia-chyuan, President of the Legislative Yuan in Taipei, Taiwan March 27, 2018. REUTERS/Tyrone Siu/Files Reuters reported last week that the White House was moving forward with five separate sales of sophisticated military equipment to Taiwan with a total value of around \$5 billion as the Trump administration ramps up pressure on China and concerns rise about Beijing's intentions toward Taiwan.

Among other weapons systems, Wednesday's formal notifications to Congress by the State Department were for 11 truck-based rocket launchers made by Lockheed Martin Corp called a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), for an estimated cost of \$436.1 million. The notifications also covered 135 AGM-84H Standoff Land Attack Missile Expanded Response (SLAM-ER) Missiles and related equipment made by Boeing Co, for an estimated \$1.008 billion, and six MS-110 Recce external sensor pods made by Collins Aerospace for jets, at an estimated cost of \$367.2 million.

Further congressional notifications are expected to follow Wednesday's including drones made by General Atomics and land-based Harpoon anti-ship missiles, made by Boeing, to serve as coastal defense cruise missiles. Sources have said the 100 cruise missile stations and 400 missiles would have a cost of about \$2 billion. Reuters was first to report in September that sales of major weapons systems to Taiwan were making their way through the U.S. export process.

The formal notification gives Congress 30 days to object to any sales, but this is unlikely given broad bipartisan support for the defense of Taiwan. The defense and foreign ministries in Taiwan welcomed the news, saying the weapons would help improve defensive capabilities. “This arms sale shows that the United States attaches great importance to the strategic position of the Indo-Pacific region and the Taiwan Strait, and is actively assisting our country in strengthening our overall defense capabilities,” Taiwan’s Defense Ministry said.

Beijing considers Taiwan a wayward province it has vowed to bring under control, by force if necessary. Washington considers it an important democratic outpost and is required by law to provide it with the means to defend itself. The Chinese embassy did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but China’s foreign ministry said last week that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan severely damaged China’s sovereignty and security interests.

It urged Washington to cancel the planned sales and warned that China would “make a legitimate and necessary response according to how the situation develops.” The U.S. administration has stepped up pressure on Beijing in the run-up to the Nov. 3 U.S. presidential election, in which President Donald Trump has made a tough approach to China a key foreign policy theme. Washington has been eager to see Taiwan bolster its defensive capabilities in the face of increasingly aggressive Chinese moves toward the island.

Last week, the U.S. national security adviser, Robert O’Brien, said that while China probably was not ready to invade Taiwan for now, the island needed to “fortify itself” against a future attack or any bid to isolate it through non-military means, such as an embargo.

Reporting by Mike Stone and David Brunnstrom in Washington, D.C.; Additional reporting by Ben Blanchard in Taipei; Editing by Chris Reese, Tom Brown and David Gregorio



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