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Missile Defense

1. European Views of US Missile Defense

The meetings of NATO foreign and defense ministers in December saw the first signs of a new dispute among the allies--European alarm at American plans to deploy ballistic missile defenses. Peter Rodman of the Nixon Center argues that European fears are based on a misunderstanding. Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, the US permanent representative on the North Atlantic Council, said that the "the transatlantic link [between Europe and the United States] is alive and well" but cautioned against complacency toward maintaining the alliance. Vershbow said that after "an initial period of some misunderstanding" the United States and the European side of NATO had begun consulting and listening to each other on the difficult issue of National Missile Defense.

"The Coming Brawl With Europe Over Missile Defense"

"US NATO Ambassador Says Trans-Atlantic Link is Alive and Well."

2. US Anti-Missile Test

The Scottish campaign on nuclear disarmament argues that the failure of the US Ballistic Missile Defense test may slow down US attempts to renegotiate the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty.

"Missile Defence is No Defence"

3. Laser-Armed Aircraft

The Boeing company has begun major modifications on a wide-bodied aircraft to arm it with laser weapons designed to destroy theater ballistic missiles. Under the current plan, testing in this phase of the program culminates in 2003, and a seven-plane operational fleet could exist as early as 2009.

"Airborne Laser aircraft arrives at Wichita."

Nuclear Disarmament and Arms Control

4. US-Russia START III Talks

The US and Russia held talks in Geneva last week aimed at negotiating a START III nuclear reductions treaty. Russia pushed for cutting the number of strategic nuclear warheads held by each side to 1,500, but US negotiators have held out for 2,000 to 2,500 warheads. US State Department spokesman James Rubin explained that the US military had concluded in 1997 that 2,000-2,500 strategic offensive nuclear warheads were "necessary for deterrence." The United States also urged Russia to amend the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, intimating that Russian flexibility on the ABM Treaty might influence talks on deep cuts in arsenals of nuclear warheads.

"Russia: Cut Arsenals to 1,500 Warheads"

"US Puts Floor On START III Cuts."

5. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, an alliance of 17 nuclear non-proliferation organizations and other supporters of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, praised the announcement that former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, will head a "high-level" task force on the CTBT.

"Nuclear Test Ban Debate 'Far from Over'"

6. Treaty Verification

Annette Schaper and Katja Frank of the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt evaluate verification methods for nuclear treaties. They argue that while a one-hundred percent successful verification will never be achieved, it would be wrong to conclude that a nuclear weapon free world is only acceptable in the case of perfect verification.

"A Nuclear Weapon Free World - Can it be verified?"

7. US Arms Control Policy

President Clinton's State of the Union address appealed to Congress to work for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, continue to reduce Russian and US nuclear arsenals, and help Russia to safeguard weapons and fissile material. The speech contained no proposal for US-Chinese arms control agreements. A fact sheet issued by the U.S. government in connection with the address sets the goal of achieving "a positive" Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in April. The fact sheet also claims that the Clinton-Gore Administration "has led the effort to reduce the international threat of weapons of mass destruction" and made "unprecedented progress in curbing the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the missiles that deliver them and in reducing the dangerous legacy of Cold War weapons' stockpiles."

"Clinton's State of the Union Address."

"Fact Sheet: President Clinton's Foreign Policy Initiatives"

8. Russian Nuclear Policy

The Scottish Committee on Nuclear Disarmament said that Russia's lowering of the threshold for using nuclear arms in its new National Security Concept is a response to western attempts at hegemony.

"New Cold War ?"

Non-Proliferation

9. DPRK Light-Water Reactor Project

Ono Masaaki of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) evaluates the progress of construction of two nuclear power plants in the DPRK under the 1994 Agreed Framework. Ono maintains that the project can contribute to bringing the DPRK into the international community and persuading it to commit to nuclear nonproliferation.

"KEDO as a Security Institution: A Firsthand Report"

Military Issues

10. PRC Military

In the first exercise of its kind, the Chinese People's Liberation Army/Navy (PLAN) conducted maneuvers involving several small missile craft more than 250 nautical miles from the Chinese mainland. According to Stratfor, although the PLAN has openly aspired to develop an oceangoing capacity, most of its efforts have focused on acquiring a larger number of major surface vessels capable of long-range deployments. It seems that now the PLAN may have found a way to utilize its fleet of small attack craft as an effective and less costly interim solution. Mark Burles and Abram Shulsky of the RAND Corporation's Project Air Force evaluate the PRC's military doctrine. They argue that the PRC appears to believe that it possesses tactics and methods that make it feasible to use force even when the overall military balance is very unfavorable.

"China's New Naval Strategy"

"Patterns in China's Use of Force: Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings"

11. US-Japan Military Alliance

Hisahiko Okazaki, former Japanese ambassador to Thailand and Saudi Arabia, argues in the Japan Echo that, in the twenty-first century, much will depend on the security relationship between Japan and the US. It is therefore essential that Japan assert its willingness to exercise the right to collective self-defense that is enshrined in its Constitution.

"A National Strategy for the Twenty-first Century"

International Relations

12. Taiwan Straits

Hisahiko Okazaki argues in the Daily Yomiuri that the democratization of Taiwan has made the old status quo approach to the Taiwan Straits problem untenable. Okazaki states that the US should take a more proactive stance toward the Taiwan issue. He also says that Japan's refusal to say whether or not it supports the PRC's position on Taiwan is an "honorable" stance.

"Status Quo Approach to Taiwan Needs Review"

[\(return to top\)](#)

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