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Nuclear Weapons

1. NATO Nuclear Policy

NATO's Defense Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group met in ministerial session and released a 12-point final communique. They found NATO's nuclear forces to be a credible and effective element of the Alliance's strategy of preventing war, and reaffirmed the continued importance of compliance with international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. They also expressed support for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) and urged accession and implementation of arms control regimes such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, START-II, and the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty.

"Text: NATO Defense Planning Committee, Nuclear Planning Group Meet"

2. Russian Nuclear Policy

Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeyevev said that Russia will preserve a nuclear balance with the US despite hefty cuts in its defense forces over the next five years. He said, "I think the world is ready for a steady reduction of nuclear weaponry, and we will preserve the balance of forces at the minimum sufficient level.

"Russia to Preserve Minimum Nuclear Balance, Defense Minister Says"

3. US Nuclear Briefcase

The Philadelphia Inquirer reported that this was the time of year during which the president-elect would normally begin receiving briefings on US nuclear weapons policy and other national security issues that culminates in the transfer of the "nuclear briefcase," a briefcase containing dozens of variations on launch plans for the US nuclear arsenal. The article reviews the launch process from the President's perspective and several anecdotes about the "football," as the briefcase is called.

"For the eventual winner, the nation's nuclear 'football' awaits"

4. US Nuclear Facilities

A fire destroyed two buildings at a missile command center near Plaza, North Dakota. There were no missiles at the facility that burned, though the facility does control several missiles. Missile command centers consists of above-ground structures for security and missile control personnel, and self-contained capsules located about 100 feet below ground. The capsules are staffed round the clock by two people who oversee 10 Minuteman missiles in silos scattered through the countryside.

"Fire Destroys Two Buildings in N.D."

5. Japanese Nuclear Weapons

Inside China published a Kyodo News Service (Japan) report which stated that a US State Department memo, titled "Chinese Communist Nuclear Explosion," shows that the US considered arming Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) under an arrangement comparable with the joint management of nuclear forces between the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Robert McNamara, US Defense Secretary from 1961 to 1968, denied that the idea was discussed at a high level of the government because of the possible PRC and USSR reactions and a Japanese aversion to nuclear weapons.

"Archives Show U.S. Planned Arming Japan With Nuclear Weapons"

Arms Control

1. Russian Comments on ABM Treaty

Last month, the head of the Strategic Rocket Forces General Vladimir Yakovlev said that it would be difficult persuade the US to cancel development of the national missile defense system and to avoid amending the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and he therefore proposed introducing an index of strategic weapons as a counterbalance. Russian Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyevev disavowed Yakovlev's proposal and stated that Russia would not countenance changes in the ABM treaty. Sergeyevev said, "Russia will not agree to any 'adaptation' of the ABM treaty which would allow national anti-missile defenses to be deployed and thus in fact destroy the treaty." He said, "Strong cooperation (with NATO) could possibly lie ahead in the area of setting up a European anti-missile system which should be aimed at guaranteeing that strategic and regional stability is maintained in Europe."

"Russian Defense Chief Talks Tough on ABM"

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At a meeting in Berlin of a trilateral commission that includes the heads of the international affairs committees of the Russian, French and German parliaments, Aleksandr Shabanov, a member of the Russian nationalist Liberal Democratic Party, stated that Russia would "immediately" withdraw from the START-II Treaty if the US renounces the ABM Treaty.

Leonid Slutskiy, deputy head of the international affairs committee of the Russian lower house, said that the French and Germans agreed with much of Russian reasoning.

"Russia to Abandon START Treaty if USA Pull out of ABM"

2. US-Russian Arms Control Talks

US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott held one of his last rounds of talks with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov. The talks were an attempt to generate consensus regarding the pace of nuclear weapons cuts without wrecking their defenses or upsetting the balance on international arms treaties. Russia Today reported that no breakthroughs were expected from their talks though they may meet again before the end of US President Clinton's administration. The Clinton administration wanted greater success in arms talks with Russia, but convincing Russia to agree to amend the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) of 1972 so the US can build its proposed NMD system has been a sticking point in talks. Talbott and Mamedov also discussed the PRC, the DPRK, and Iran.

"U.S., Russia Keep Arms Talks Warm for Next President"

Rose Gottemoeller, with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, stated that successful US-Russian cooperation in nuclear threat reduction in less formal ways appears to be replacing more formal negotiated arms control agreements, and is supported by unilateral reductions. However, the recent proposal by Russian President Vladimir Putin is pursuing formal reductions because the talks provide him with international and domestic legitimacy, because the inevitability of Russian reductions means they may as well negotiate to get the same reductions from the US, and, finally, because the Russian bureaucracy is structured to respond best to formal agreements.

"205 Days of Putin: Geopolitics and Nuclear Security [presentation transcript]"

A recent Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Issue Brief summarized the comments of Sergei Rogov, the director of the USA and Canada Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Rogov is a prominent specialist on arms control, and he discussed the desirable direction of US-Russian nuclear relations and the potential content of new strategic arms control agreements. Rogov proposes three principles for guiding US-Russian arms control talks and suggests several options to achieve those principles, including outright cuts, de-alerting of nuclear weapons, and a limiting, by the US, of its NMD system. "Nuclear Arms Reduction and Defense Reform in Russia [summary of Sergei Rogov's comments]"

3. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in US

The Lawyers Alliance for World Security released a white paper on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that responds to the failure of the US Senate to ratify the CTBT by addressing important issues that came to the forefront during the Senate debate. Arguments against the CTBT which this paper addresses included: the alleged inability of the US to maintain a nuclear deterrent without testing, that other states would not abide by the treaty, that some testing could not be effectively verified, and that the nonproliferation value of the treaty is overstated.

"White Paper on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)"

4. Arms Control Process

Rose Gottemoeller, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former assistant secretary of energy for nonproliferation during the Clinton administration, argues in the Washington Post that unilateral measures are central to the arms control process, but need to be strengthened. Gottemoeller suggests using clear guidelines in unilateral measures, such as ordering that missiles removed from active deployment be maintained away from active deployment areas, and confidence-building measures such as reciprocal visits to verify that unilateral measures are being implemented.

"Lopsided Arms Control"

Proliferation

1. Russian Weapons Sales to Iran

US and Russian officials began talks on arms sales, with the US concerned about the possibility that Russia is strengthening its military trade with Iran. Russia has said that it can have trade links with any state it wishes, dismissing U.S. threats of possible sanctions if it backs out of 1995 deal between Vice President Al Gore and then-Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to freeze sales of tanks and battlefield weapons to Iran. Russia hopes for US\$4.0 billion of sales to Iran this year. US officials, however, want assurances that the sales would not provide Iran with technology that could improve its Sahab-3 missile, which has a range of around 1,000 miles. Discussions concluded Thursday, but US Embassy officials could not state if they had succeeded in resolving the dispute.

"U.S. Officials Grill Russia Over Arms Sales Plans"

"U.S., Russia Complete Arms Talks"

"Russian General Rejects U.S. Sanction Threat"

2. Award for Nonproliferation Efforts

US Senator Richard Lugar and former Senator Sam Nunn jointly received the annual Excellence in Diplomacy Award presented by the American Academy of Diplomacy for their work in reducing the threat of nuclear weapons, through the creation of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. President Clinton praised their work. However, Lugar stated, "Nunn-Lugar cannot take the place of coherent and effective policy; in fact, it cannot operate without effective policy guidance. The program has often borne the brunt of criticism for ineffective policy, but as I often remark, we must not blame the shovel if the hole is dug in the wrong location."

"Former Diplomats Salute Nunn, Lugar, for Efforts to Quell Nuclear Danger"

3. Fissile Material Economics

Richard Falkenrath, Professor of public policy at Harvard University, argues in a Milken Institute Review that the US government's decision in the early 1990s to privatize its two plants for making commercial nuclear reactor fuel put the economic interests of the US Treasury above the need to dismantle post-Soviet Russia's vast stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

"Uranium Blues: Economic Interest Vs. National Security"

"Text Only"

4. New Anti-Nuclear Organization

Ted Turner is in the process of launching the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a nonprofit activist organization to tackle threats from nuclear weapons, nuclear waste and black market nuclear missiles. Former Democratic US Senator Timothy Wirth, who now heads up Turner's Washington-based United Nations Foundation, revealed Turner's plans and announced that former US Senator Sam Nunn would be joining the group as its operating head.

"Organization Would Target Nuclear Threat"

Missile Defense

1. UK Missile Defense Policy

Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev arrived in Britain for talks with his British counterpart Geoff Hoon and other officials. It has been reported in the press that, as the US is hoping to secure Russian agreement on amending the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to legalize action on NMD, the British government is working to broker a deal between the US and Russia. BASIC released a press statement that said that if NMD deployment proceeds, the United Kingdom could be party to breaking a treaty that is seen as the cornerstone of international arms control because of Britain's role in the US radar system.

"SERGEYEV VISIT SIGNALS FLAWED UK NMD STRATEGY"

2. Russian Statement on NMD

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that Russia's strategic rocket forces chief General Vladimir Yakovlev said that Russia was not prepared to allow the US national missile defense system to go ahead. He said that NMD deployment would galvanize Russian programs to create new weapons even deadlier than nuclear missiles. He said, "Unfortunately, men will always be driven to create new weapons. We expend our ingenuity inventing new systems and then have to work to find ways to eliminate them." Yakovlev said that if the US did not proceed with NMD and there was agreement on Start III, Russia was prepared to eliminate all its intercontinental ballistic missiles, with the exception of 1,500 new Topol M's with a range of 10,000 km.

"Russia ready to defy missile defence plan"

3. US Missile Defense Rationale

The US Department of Defense released a report by Franklin D. Kramer, assistant secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, which explains how the US can best prepare itself to meet the challenges of European and global security in the coming years. The full report discusses many aspects of European defense from the US perspective. In the area of arms control, the report notes continued support among European nations for the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), as well as support for the Vienna Document (updated at the OSCE Summit) and the Open Skies treaty, which permits observation flights over member states for transparency reasons. The report also reviews generally the chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons threats that face the US and Europe. The report describes specific responses to these threats through arms control agreements, nonproliferation agreements, and export controls. The report also provides the rationale for US missile defense programs and describes the NMD and TMD programs and the threats they are designed to specifically meet.

"Strengthening Transatlantic Security: A U.S. Strategy for the 21st Century."

Security

1. EU Rapid Reaction Force

US Defense Secretary William Cohen spoke to NATO defense ministers and warned that NATO could become "a relic of the past" if the European Union's plan to create its own military force, a 200,000-strong rapid reaction force for missions in which the US is not involved, was not firmly and clearly linked to the alliance. He said, "There will be no EU caucus in NATO" that might weaken or even destroy the decades-old cross-Atlantic alliance. "NATO could become 'relic' over EU force-u.s."

US Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen highlighted the importance of the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI), which calls for concrete steps and investments to make NATO forces more effective, mobile and survivable. Cohen also expressed US support for the European Union's (EU) effort to create a rapid reaction entity "that can deal swiftly and effectively with local challenges to Europe's security, where NATO itself is not engaged militarily." He emphasized "the need to support the creation of this EU rapid reaction capability provided ... that it was not seen as being in competition with NATO itself, that we should not have dual planning institutions."

"Transcript: Cohen on NATO-U.S.-EU Partnership, Joint Defense Planning"

2. US WMD Preparedness

The CATO Institute published a policy brief by Eric R. Taylor, an associate professor of chemistry at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Taylor argues that the 1996 Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Act on domestic preparedness for terrorism using weapons of mass destruction has been poorly planned and implemented. Taylor argues that personnel in more than 50 percent of the major U.S. population centers will remain untrained and unprepared for any future nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) attack, and there is also a failure to produce any educational program to prepare the public for an NBC attack.

"Are We Prepared for Terrorism Using Weapons of Mass Destruction? Government's Half Measures"

"Full Text"

Military

1. Russian Bomber Deployment

A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman reported that Russia had deployed five nuclear-capable Tu-95 "Bear" bombers to bases opposite Alaska for training that may include probing flights toward US territory. The Tu-95 bombers regularly flew toward Alaska and Britain during the Cold War to see how quickly the West could deploy fighters to respond, though the practice of regularly testing defenses tailed off in the 1990s due to better relations and fuel shortages in the armed forces. Reuters reported that Canada responded by deploying three CF-18 fighter jets to a base in the northwestern Arctic to counter possible probing by the Russian planes. Analysts are drawing connections between the new Bear deployments and the recent over-flights of the USS Kitty Hawk by Russian Sukhoi-24R reconnaissance planes.

"Russian Bombers May Test U.S. in Arctic Exercise"

"Russian Bombers May Test U.S. in Arctic Exercise"

"Russia May Test U.S. Air Defenses"

2. UK Submarine Accident

Spain's Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar urged Britain to return to the UK the damaged nuclear submarine HMS Tireless, currently moored in the British colony of Gibraltar. The Tireless suffered damage to its reactor coolant system while on patrol and is awaiting repair.

"Spain Would Like Britain to Take Back Nuclear Sub"

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