

# **NAPSNET Weekly FLASH Update 26 February, 2001**

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## **Nuclear Weapons**

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### **1. US Nuclear Program**

Kenneth Bergeron writes in the current issue of the Bulletin of Concerned Atomic Scientists that since the last tritium-producing nuclear reactor in the US was shut down in 1988, the US Department of Energy has debated where to renew its supply of tritium, which will be exhausted by 2016. Though it violated existing US policy against the use of commercial reactors for the US nuclear weapons program, then-Energy Secretary Bill Richardson decided that nuclear reactors used by the Tennessee Valley Authority to produce electricity would be modified at US government expense to produce Tritium. Bergeron argues that this will lower the barriers to obtaining tritium, either through theft or duplication of the new technology for tritium production in conventional reactors.

"While no one was looking"

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## 2. Russia Missile Tests

Russia conducted test-launches of three nuclear-capable strategic missiles on February 16: a submarine fired towards the Kamchatka Peninsula, a land-based Topol intercontinental ballistic missile was launched from the Plesetsk base at the same Kamchatka target, and a Tu-95 "Bear" bomber also fired a strategic missile. The Russian military reported that all three hit their targets. A Tupolev Tu-22M "Backfire" swing-wing bomber also test-fired two tactical missiles. Statements by Colonel General Leonid Ivashov, the Defense Ministry's foreign relations chief, made it clear that while the tests may have been planned a while ago, they took place in response to recent US statements which describe Russia as a threat as part of US justifications for its missile defense system. Russia denied US claims that it shared sensitive technology with countries such as Iran, Iraq and the DPRK. Dmitry Trenin, a military analyst with the Moscow Carnegie Center, said Russia launched the missiles to show US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and others in the Bush administration they could not ignore Russian concerns. The tests occurred two days after unannounced air exercises by Russian nuclear-capable bombers near Norway and Japan prompted their air forces to scramble in response. Recent Russian statements and actions indicate a degree of inflexibility over global security issues, though analysts believe that Russia will in the end take a more pragmatic position.

"Military Flexes Its Nuclear Muscle"

"Russia tests nuclear missiles after war of words with US"

"Russia Tests Strategic Missiles"

"Russia Fires Missiles From Air, Land and Sea"

"Russian Missile Test Sends Message"

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## 3. Russian Kaliningrad Base

Three of the European Union's top foreign policy officials went to Russia for talks about Russia's Kaliningrad base, which is separated from Russia and will be surrounded by the European Union once it expands eastward, possibly within three years. The EU visit was prompted by new reports in the US-based Washington Times that US intelligence agencies had satellite evidence of tactical nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad. Swedish officials said that, in addition to concerns over possible tactical nuclear weapons there, they had concerns about Kaliningrad related to organized crime, environmental hazards, and its high rates of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev has denied that tactical nuclear weapons are stored there.

"Nuclear Arms in a Russian Enclave? EU Questions Kremlin"

"Report: U.S. Has Proof of Missiles in Kaliningrad"

Polish and Danish inspectors completed a visit to Russian military bases in the Kaliningrad enclave in January last month and concluded that no nuclear weapons were present, an official from the Russian intelligence service told Agence France Presse. In January, US and NATO officials told the Washington Times and various European papers that Russia had been seen moving nuclear weapons into Kaliningrad.

"NATO Finds No Nuclear Weapons in Kaliningrad, Says Russian Official"

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## Missile Defense

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## 1. Russian Missile Defense Proposal

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with NATO Secretary-General George Robertson in Russia to relay his proposal that NATO and Russia cooperatively build a missile defense system. Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev briefed Robertson on Russia's plan, which first calls for Russian and NATO experts to evaluate ballistic missile threats before deciding whether to design and deploy missile defense systems to cover specific areas in Europe that are most likely to be targeted in such attacks. The Russian system will be mobile and focus more on specific threats than meeting a general long-range missile threat. Russian officials argue that their plan would not violate the 1972 ABM Treaty, would be more effective by intercepting missiles in their boost phase, and would be cheaper than the \$60+ billion US plan. US Representative Curt Weldon was part of a US delegation that traveled to Russia last June regarding missile defense and he said the Russian S-400 missile defense system currently in development is "fantastically capable" and if the S-500 is even better then it would violate U.S.-Russian protocols on theater missile defense systems. Robertson agreed to have NATO review the plan, but he left little hope that the Russian maneuver would succeed in dividing NATO despite its member's doubts about the wisdom of the planned US system.

"Putin Touts Limited Shield to NATO"

"Russia Offers Plan for European Missile Defense"

"Russia Details Anti-Missile Alternative"

"Russian Anti-Missile Plan Is Broad Outline - NATO"

Russia Presses Missile Defense Plan

"NATO Chief Promises Fair Hearing for Russian NMD Counter-offer"

Though Russia has opposed recent US attempts to justify its missile defense system, analysts state that Russian officials have indicated that it is beginning to accept the idea that missile defenses may be needed. The Moscow Times reported that NATO Secretary-General George Robertson has taken the Russian proposal as acknowledgement that NMD is necessary. Robertson said, "What is important now is that we have a Russian proposal to deal with the same kind of perceived threat." The New York Times reports that the eight-page proposal given to Robertson revealed conflicting interests within the Russian bureaucracy.

"Moscow Signaling a Change in Tone on Missile Defense"

"Putin Invites West to Work on a Defense for Missiles"

"World Steps Deeper Into NMD Bog"

"Russian Anti-Missile Plan Is Broad Outline - NATO"

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## 2. US Anti-Russia Missile Defense Diplomacy

The English-daily Russia Journal published an editorial that, citing recent US statements by CIA Director George Tenet and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, argues that the US is attempting to portray Russia negatively in order to justify its missile defense plan. The editorial cites recent US claims that Russia is a proliferator of weapons technology and the leaking of reports which verify that Russia has moved tactical nuclear weapons into Kaliningrad. The editorial states that US claims are not without merit, and that the same is true for Russian counter-claims, but the problem is that US statements of this nature reinforce the perspectives of the hard-line elements of Russia's defense and foreign policy elites.

"EDITORIAL: An empty threat"

Joseph Cirincione, director of the Carnegie Endowment's Non-Proliferation Project, writes in The Globalist that US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is attempting to sell the idea of a missile defense system by driving home the threats facing the US. Cirincione quotes Rumsfeld as saying "Russia is an active proliferator. They are selling and assisting countries like Iran and North Korea and India and other countries with these technologies which are threatening ... the United States and Western Europe and countries in the Middle East."

Cirincione states that there are fewer states developing ballistic missiles than three years ago and only three countries outside the acknowledged nuclear powers have ballistic missile programs. He concludes by arguing that Rumsfeld's tactics could backfire against the US.

"Rumsfeld's Russian Assault"

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### **3. Statements on NMD**

BASIC issued two statements arguing that as the first European head of state to meet US President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair should broker an agreement on the proposed US missile defense system between Europe and the US. The first release states that Blair must focus in his meeting with Bush on whether the ABM treaty can be preserved, on insisting that NMD work before it is deployed, and on finding a balance with arms control and nonproliferation efforts. The second BASIC statement states that Blair must make Bush aware of the prevalent view in Europe that NMD is an ill-conceived and potentially destabilizing response to threats posed by nuclear proliferation. The statement said that the Bush administration's world view rejects multilateral arms control in favor of a go-it-alone US security policy, putting international arms control and nonproliferation regimes in jeopardy. The releases cite statements of European leaders that are critical of NMD as evidence of Britain's awkward position between its European and US allies.

"BLAIR MUST REPRESENT NOT JUST BRITAIN, BUT EUROPE, ON NMD"

"CAN BLAIR EMPLOY 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP FOR EUROPEAN BENEFIT?'"

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer stated that instead of focusing the missile defense debate upon the US, the debate should look at those countries responsible for proliferation missile technology, such as the PRC and Russia. Downer's statements are seen as further evidence of Australian Prime Minister John Howard's support for US plans to develop the missile defense system. There is a joint Australian-US monitoring station at Pinewood that would provide early warning in case of a nuclear attack and would presumably become a key part of a US missile defense system.

"Australia Rebuffs Shield Foes"

The National Bureau of Asia Research released a briefing which examines the how deliberations by the current US Congress will affect the Asia Pacific. The report states that missile defense development will lead to significant debate within Congress over the ramifications of NMD and TMD for the Asia Pacific. South Korean President Kim Dae-jung's commitment to his "sunshine policy" will constrain new departures in US policy while Congress and the new administration may seek a tougher line against North Korea.

"THE 107TH CONGRESS: ASIA PACIFIC POLICY OUTLOOK"

"Text Only"

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### **4. US Domestic Opinion on NMD**

US-based ABC News conducted a poll which showed that while 80 percent of Americans backed the construction of missile defense system, only half of those polled would still support missile defense if there were doubts about its ability to "fully protect" the US, and only 45 percent were for deployment when informed that the system's price tag is estimated to be \$60-100 billion dollars. Support fell to 37 percent when people were asked if a defense system should be deployed even if it would "break an existing arms control treaty with Russia."

"Americans Against Breaking Treaties For NMD"

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## **Security**

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## 1. DPRK Nuclear Program

The Korean Central News Agency, the DPRK's official foreign news outlet, carried a report by the DPRK Foreign Ministry which claimed that the US administration under President George Bush has maintained excessively tough stances to demand concessions. The DPRK threatened to discard its promise to suspend missile testing and freeze nuclear programs. According to the statement, the US has not fulfilled its end of the bargain under the 1994 Agreed Framework, which was scheduled to have two light-water reactors operational by 2003, and demanded compensation in order to keep the agreement alive. Lee Jong-seok, a senior researcher at the Sejong Institute, said that the DPRK was stressing the need for US President George Bush to maintain the "soft" engagement policy of former President Bill Clinton, and Lee said the DPRK is unlikely to act on its warnings.

"N.K. threatens to scrap missile, nuclear accords"

"N Korea threatens to scrap nuclear deal"

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## 2. US Nuclear Force Posture Review

The National Institute for Public Policy released this report which examines the process needed to fully assess US nuclear force requirements and arms control positions. The reports, originally released on January 1, states that since the potential opponents the US may face are unknown, the US must preserve a high degree of adaptability for its offensive and defensive forces. However, preserving adaptability does not preclude nuclear arms reductions or the need for a new approach to arms control.

"Rationale and Requirements for US Nuclear Forces and Arms Control"

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace published an analysis of the prospects for reductions in US nuclear forces under President George W. Bush. The analysis states that the administration may be willing and able to implement sweeping arms reductions and negotiate new agreements more effectively than the Clinton administration, but that apathy and antagonism to international non-proliferation agreements will likely result in their abrogation, deterioration of international norms against weapons of mass destruction and a net increase in new threats to the US. The CEIP states that the proposed US NMD system will be pursued despite the danger that Bush might abrogate the ABM Treaty before he realizes the limits and costs of the technology.

"Prospects for Nuclear Reductions in the Bush Administration"

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