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Nuclear Weapons

1. India Missile Program

Jane's Defense Weekly reports that India lacked an appropriate third-stage engine when it was designing the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) that achieved a satellite launch last week. Russia provided India with its KVD-1, originally designed for use on the Russian space program's L-3M lunar-lander project, to be the GSLV's third-stage. The US objected to any technology transfer and eased sanctions on India and Russia under the Clinton administration in exchange for Russia providing only finished engines. Since then, India has developed its own prototype liquid oxygen/hydrogen engine for the third stage, though the one tested in 1997 had only one ton of thrust, compared to the 7.5 tons of thrust needed to put an object into orbit. JDW argues that it is uncertain whether the GSLV will become a commercially viable launch vehicle because of the numerous other options available.

"India's GSLV reaches orbit, but can it be a contender?"

2. Minuteman IV Development

Air Force Major General Franklin J. Blaisdell revealed at a seminar on April 6 on Capital Hill that the US has begun exploration of a new "Minuteman IV" intercontinental ballistic missile. William M. Arkin, a former Army intelligence analyst and consultant, writes in the Washington Post that the US Navy is calculating the longevity of its own submarine missiles and the need for a Trident III missile. Arkin states that the Congressionally-mandated nuclear posture review and a nuclear "study" constituted by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld merely mean that if the US decides to possess nuclear weapons in the future, current systems will eventually have to be replaced. Arkin argues, though, that efforts to use this opportunity to pursue deployment of small, tactical nuclear weapons reflect a misreading the Bush administration's intentions on the US nuclear posture. Steven A. Maaranen, a Los Alamos laboratory political scientist who has been appointed chair of Donald Rumsfeld's nuclear study, has consistently advocated the importance of conventional forces and expressed approval for the "silent role" nuclear weapons have assumed since the end of the Cold War, saying that the threat posed by North Korea and Iran has been overstated.

"New Nukes"

3. Belgian Nuclear Weapons Debate

Belgian parliamentarians pledged on April 12 that they intend to introduce a resolution calling for the phase out of nuclear weapons from Belgium. The move, which was reported in the Belgium daily De Morgen, comes after the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Nuclear Notebook reported in March that the US Air Force plans to keep nuclear storage sites in Belgium and eight other NATO countries operational at least until 2018. The information was based on a document released under the Freedom of Information Act to Joshua Handler from Princeton University.

"FOIA Document Triggers Debate on NATO Nukes"

"FOIA Document: 'WS3 Sustainment Program: Program Management Review'" (2.3 Mb)

"Nuclear Notebook"

Nuclear Policy

1. Alert Status

John O. Pastore and Peter Zheutlin of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War write in the Washington Post that nuclear weapons in the US and Russia remain on alert status, and they cite incidents in 1995 and 1983 to show that mistakes, combined with the high-alert status of nuclear weapons on the other side, has nearly resulted in nuclear counterstrikes- counters to initial strikes that never occurred. They argue in favor of the bilateral de-alerting of nuclear weapons, and for the decoupling of warheads from their missiles, in order to reduce the danger of launch.

"Remove the Hair Trigger"

2. Legal Issues

New York litigator and former St. John's law professor Charles Moxley, in his recently released book, "Nuclear Weapons and International Law in the Post Cold War World," argues that "...the use of nuclear weapons under established rules of international law is unlawful, even according to official U.S. and military documentation." Moxley will discuss the results of his 10-year study on the legality of nuclear weapons as well as implications of the US administration's Missile Defense Program as keynote speaker at the upcoming meetings of the Professional's Network for Social Responsibility and the Middle Powers Initiative. Robert McNamara describes Moxley's book as "the best exposition I have seen of the irrationality of the U.S. policy in this area, the irrationality of the policies of the other nuclear weapons states, and the irrationality of the human race in permitting the potential use of these weapons to continue."

"Ten-Year Study Reveals Nuclear Weapons Unlawful According To U.S. And Military Documentation"

3. Op-Ed

An op-ed by Ellen Goodman in the Boston Globe used Earth Day as an opportunity to discuss the continuing threat of nuclear weapons. Goodman criticizes the development of tactical nuclear weapons and specifically defends the US nonproliferation programs that pay Russian scientists and help dismantle the Russian nuclear complex.

"A Mushroom Cloud Still Haunts Us"

Missile Defense

1. US Proposed MD System

The advisory committee on missile defense organized by US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is urging the Bush administration to continue funding the Clinton team's limited ground-based system, while supplementing it with anti-missile systems based in the sea, on aircraft and in space. The Clinton administration's program was expected to cost about \$60 billion and critics say the expanded system would cost taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars. Missile defense supporters contend that a large-scale system could be built on an annual budget of about \$10 billion. US Defense Department spokesman Craig Quigley downplayed the panel's findings, describing the recommendations as "the interim report of one group of individuals." The panel is one of sixteen conducting secret top-down reviews of the US military and has access to internal information on the programs. Quigley said Rumsfeld is not obliged to follow their advice and also has his own in-house team working on missile defense.

"Ambitious Plan Urged for U.S. Missile Defense"

"Pentagon Panel Urging Expanded Missile Defense Program"

The Washington Post reported that US officials said US President George Bush will announce plans for a missile defense system in a major speech next week, but he will try to reassure allies by tying the shield's deployment to reductions in the US nuclear arsenal. Bush is expected to announce steps to broaden the Defense Department's effort to develop missile defenses beyond the Clinton administration's plan. Bush isn't expected to announce a US withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in his speech, because the administration wants to devote a greater effort to bringing along major US allies. European leaders have complained that the system could relaunch an arms race by destroying the framework for nuclear disarmament and also fear that deployment of an anti-missile shield would harm relations with Russia.

"Bush to Push Missile Shield, Nuclear Arms Cuts Next Week"

"Bush Plans Missile Defense Speech"

2. US MD Diplomacy

The Danish Parliament's Foreign Policy Committee sponsored a hearing on April 25, 2001, about US plans to deploy missile defense systems and the implications of their deployment for international security. Addressing the committee, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Strategic Affairs Lucas Fischer said missile defense "must be capable of protecting allies, friends, and deployed forces overseas as well as the United States." The purpose of defenses, he added, is also to start to diminish what has been an "almost exclusive reliance on offensive weapons for deterrence." Fischer hinted that the US might withdraw from the ABM Treaty because it was incompatible with the need to deploy missile defenses against "rogue" states. Regarding Russia's tiered missile defense proposal, Fischer said, "The Russian concept would not provide for the area defense of North America or Europe," and, therefore, cannot be a substitute for the US proposal. Fischer's call for a review of deterrence and nonproliferation policy comes two years after NATO announced in 1999 that it had completed a comprehensive review of its defense and security policy aimed at meeting the new challenges of the 21st century.

"Text: Missile Defense Will Not Decouple U.S., Allies, Official says"

A US radar at Thule in northern Greenland is likely to form part of the Bush administration's expanded missile defense system, according to US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Strategic Affairs Robert Lucas Fischer. The Danish government has so far avoided taking a position on use of facilities on Danish territory in the controversial missile defense system by saying that the US had not formally said it intended to use the Thule radar. Yet in an interview with Danish newspaper Politiken, Fischer appears to have confirmed such intentions.

"US Official Confirms: Thule Radar Will Be Used in Missile Defense System"

"Original article" (Danish)

The hearing also included participants from the Russian Foreign Ministry, and various US, British, and Danish universities and institutes. The hearing did not include the PRC, which has been an outspoken opponent of missile defense systems. The Danish government, which says it has not yet been asked by the US to permit use of the Thule-radar in a missile defense system, also did not participate. English documents from the hearing are provided below.

"Missile Defense Hearing in Danish Parliament"

"Agenda and participants"

"Lucas Fischer: NMD - implications for the global order"

"John Steinbruner: The Strategic Feasibility of National Missile Defence"

"Ivo H. Daalder: Missile Defenses - The Case for a Limited Insurance Defense"

"Timothy Garden: Looking at National Missile Defence from Europe"

"Yuriy Kapralov: Missile Defence - Implications for the global order"

Proliferation

1. US Nonproliferation Programs

Richard Morin and Claudia Deane discuss in the Washington Post a report published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, written by Russian sociologist Valentin Tikhonov, which examines Russia's nuclear cities. Tikhonov argues that Russian nuclear scientists are woefully underpaid relative to what their counterparts in other countries earn. Jon Wolfsthal and Alexander Pikayev, both with Carnegie's Non-Proliferation Project, state in the report's introduction that, "Their economic hardship dramatically increases the risk that they will be forced to sell their skills or materials at hand to the highest bidder."

"Hard Times, Scary Choices in Russia"

"Russia's Nuclear and Missile Complex: The Human Factor in Proliferation"

"US Nonproliferation Programs in Russia" (NPP Weekly Flash, Vol. 3 #13)

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