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Nuclear Weapons

1. US Nuclear Program

Walter Pincus, writing in The Washington Post, reported that Stephen M. Younger, the associate director of Los Alamos National Laboratory and head of its nuclear weapons work, is suggesting that precision-guided conventional explosives could replace nuclear warheads on most, but not all, US strategic missiles. Younger has also recently supported the development of smaller, more deployable nuclear weapons, known also as "mini-nukes." Younger said that he released an unclassified paper, "Nuclear Weapons in the Twenty-First Century" to stimulate a debate on the future of US nuclear weapons because the issue has been little-discussed in the presidential campaign.

"Nuclear Expert Challenges U.S. Thinking on Warheads"

Karel Koster of PENN-Netherlands distributed a translation of answers given by Dutch Foreign Minister van Aartsen to questions put to him during a session of the foreign affairs committee of the Dutch Lower House on 6 September 2000. The minister denied that the designation of US nuclear weapons to the Dutch Air Force in wartime was a violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Van Aartsen also denied that language in NATO's updated military strategy document undercut so-called Negative Security Assurances by leaving open the possibility of use of nuclear weapons against biological/chemical weapons states.

"Report on Dutch Nuclear Policy"

2. DPRK Nuclear Program

Daniel A. Pinkston presented a paper for the 12th Pacific Basin Nuclear Conference, in which he argued that while the Agreed Framework between the US and the DPRK has frozen the DPRK's nuclear weapons development program, there are several hurdles that must still be cleared to complete the Agreed Framework and to verify that the DPRK has abandoned its nuclear weapons development program. Pinkston describes some of the issues and obligations under the Agreed Framework, and potential problems that could lead to its demise. A comprehensive "package deal" to resolve the DPRK missile program and other issues is probably also necessary for the completion of the agreement.

"Implementing the Agreed Framework and Potential Obstacles"

"Text-only"

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that the DPRK must remove lingering uncertainty about its nuclear weapons activities if efforts at accommodation with the United States are to succeed. David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington, said that peace on the Korean Peninsula "can't be achieved without verified assurances that North Korea is free of nuclear weapons." A senior US official said that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il, "is accepting the idea of serious restraint on his missile program.

"Albright Urges Nuke Plan Disclosure"

"N. Korea Mulls Curb Of Missile Program"

3. Indian Nuclear Program

India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) completed upgrades of the Russian-made Bramhos supersonic missile, which can be launched from ships and aircraft and made to carry a nuclear warhead. A senior official said, "It's in the final stages of development and could be handed over to the Navy very soon." The Bramhos has a range of 300km and can carry a half-a-ton warhead, and therefore is covered under the international Missile Technology Control Regime. The Indian Navy is likely to fit Project 17 advanced frigates and later other warships and planes with the Bramhos.

"India reworks Russian missile to make it N-capable"

4. Russia Nuclear Program

Russia may extend the service life of the Topol RS-12M intercontinental ballistic missiles by at least one year, according to a report in the Rossiyskaya Gazeta, potentially saving the country millions of rubles. The paper describes in detail the test launch of Topol missile. The article "Russia Examines Extension of Nuclear Missile Service Life" is available from World News Connection

Proliferation

1. Non-Proliferation Challenges

The meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the New Agenda Coalition Countries in September released a statement after the meeting. They expressed concern at on-going challenges to the non-proliferation regime and stressed the importance of full compliance with the provisions of the NPT and the ABM Treaty.

"New Agenda Coalition Communique, September 13, 2000"

"New Agenda Draft UNGA Resolution"

RANSAC published an excerpt of a statement by National Security Advisor Samuel R. Berger on the dangers of nuclear proliferation and the need for the next US president to pressure the US Senate to ratify the CTBT.

"A Foreign Policy For The Global Age [excerpt]"

2. Iran Missile Program

Morteza Saffari, commander of the Iran Revolutionary Guards' naval forces, said that Iran's regular army and the elite Revolutionary Guards began tests of a modified version of the PRC-made C-802 Silkworm anti-ship missile in war games. Officials from Israel and the US have said that Iran has tried to increase the range of missiles it has purchased from the PRC and DPRK.

"Iran To Test Chinese-Made Missiles"

3. Gore-Russia Nuclear Deal

US Senator Sam Brownback said in a written statement that US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had admitted in a secret letter to Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov that Vice President Al Gore promised Russia that the US would not enforce a 1992 law designed to curb the spread of dangerous technology. Eleven former high-level officials from previous administrations issued a statement saying that Gore and then-Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin agreed in 1995 that the US would acquiesce to the sale by Russia to Iran of "highly threatening military equipment such as modern submarines, fighter planes and wake-homing torpedoes" and that Gore did not inform Congress fully about the deal. Gore spokesman Jim Kennedy said the agreement was publicly announced and Congress was briefed at the time, "No member of Congress and none of these former officials complained about it then or in the years since."

"Concerns Raised in Gore-Russia Deal"

Missile Defense

1. US NMD Program

The National Security Archive at George Washington University released a report containing declassified documents regarding the history of the debate over missile defense. The NSA report states that the current NMD debate could stand to be informed by earlier debates over missile defense because the debate parallels the US-Soviet negotiations over anti-ballistic missiles during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

"Missile Defense Thirty Years Ago"

"Text only"

2. Missile Defense Technology

Space.com reported that the free-electron laser (FEL) being developed as a possible anti-missile weapon could finally overcome several obstacles that currently confound deployment. The article reports that the FEL's attributes include tunability, varying wavelengths of lased light that could be selected to better destroy a target, and the fact that laser fuel is much cheaper than anti-missile missiles. Lasers used for anti-missile systems would disrupt internal electronics or perhaps even burn through fuel tanks, but not physically destroy the missile. "A New Laser For War And Peace"

Arms Control

1. US-Russia Arms Control Talks

During talks in Moscow, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov and US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Holum reaffirmed "the importance of clear implementation of the agreed-upon plans of cooperation in the field of strategic stability." The meeting also discussed "some new promising ideas" about radical cuts in strategic offensive weapons and cooperation on ballistic missile defense. A new meeting is scheduled for November in Brunei.

The article "New Round of Arms Talks Completed in Moscow" is available from World News Connection

The Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a public statement regarding the concluded round of US-Russian preparatory arms control talks. The statement briefly reviews the proposals made by Russia to the US for cuts in nuclear weapons.

"Press Release [START Discussions]"

2. Nuclear Cities Initiative

Matthew Bunn, in a Russia Watch Bulletin for the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, writes that Russia still has ten entire cities built only for the purpose of designing and producing nuclear weapons and the nuclear material for them. Bunn argues that it is in the interest of both Russia and the world to cooperate to shrink Russia's nuclear weapons complex - and the US and Russia are attempting to do that through the Nuclear Cities Initiative (NCI). The Ministry of Atomic Energy (MINATOM) plans to reduce the 120,000 defense workers in these cities by 45,000 over the next five to seven years. Although progress in creating jobs through the joint NCI effort has been slow, some opportunities now appear to be opening up.

"Retooling Russia's Nuclear Cities"

3. Fissile Materials

The Group of Eight countries will begin full-scale talks on an international financing scheme for Russia's disposal of weapons-grade plutonium in an effort to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons. According to the government sources, Russia plans to pay about US\$1 billion, about half of the plutonium-disposal cost. The US has stated an intention to contribute US\$400 million, Britain has committed US\$100 million, and France is considering contributing US\$60 million. Japan is considering between US\$30 million and US\$40 million, but sources say Japan may face pressure from the US to contribute nearly US\$100 million.

"G-8 To Tackle Disposal Of Russian Plutonium"

Security

1. Russian Collective Security Pact

A Janes' Intelligence Digest regional analyst assesses the implications of an agreement by the presidents of the six member states of the Collective Security Treaty (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan) to lift barriers to the supply of Russian military hardware amongst all member states in exchange for low pricing by Russia. The article states that some regional analysts consider that this will merely be the first step towards the creation of what might eventually develop into a Central Asian form of NATO after an earlier deal saw the creation of a regional economic community.

"Russia's security pact"

2. NATO Force Structure

Janes reported that NATO's military staff has set a requirement for three high-level rapid reaction land corps and six lower-level readiness corps. A NATO source said, "They were looking for three high and six low and they got nine high and three low," The source attributed the offers to host the high-readiness corps as perception that such bases would have an increased "survivability" in the face of budget cuts in national parliaments. Turkish officials said that if Eurocorps were to be selected for one of the high readiness corps then it should be opened to non-EU NATO members such as Turkey. NATO officials stress that member states are not expected to participate in each of the nine corps.

"NATO offer for high-alert HQs is oversubscribed"

3. British Submarine Disposition

British Armed Forces Minister John Spellar said the British Navy's fleet of 12 Trafalgar and Swiftsure class nuclear attack submarines were docked after experts examined a leak in one of them, HMS Tireless, and determined that a fault in a nuclear reactor cooling system could affect another 11 vessels. He told parliament, "The repair of this flaw, if needed, is straightforward, but because of the stringent safety procedures that we employ for any work involving repairs to our nuclear submarines, the repair process will take some months. He added that Britain's defense capabilities will not be affected.

"British Submarines May Be Docked for Months"

"Britain: sub recall won't affect safety"

The group Voice of Gibraltar asked the Gibraltar Government to "reconsider" allowing repairs to the British nuclear submarine HMS Tireless at the British naval base at Gibraltar. The submarine suffered a reactor accident while operating off Sicily in May and sought emergency repairs at the base, and although Britain does not normally allow nuclear repairs in Gibraltar the damage was so severe that it made an exception. The Spanish government subsequently approved the repairs but British authorities have since informed Spain that a visual inspection has established that the two-millimeter crack in the reactor's primary cooling system "isn't exactly what was expected." A spokeswoman for the The Voice of Gibraltar said that the new discovery "invalidates" the basis for the Spanish government's initial decision to permit repairs at Gibraltar.

The article "Gibraltar Group Asks Government To Halt Nuclear Sub Repairs" is available from World News Connection

4. Russian Submarine Recovery

Russian divers entered the wreckage of the Kursk submarine and retrieved four bodies out of the 118 sailors who perished in August. Russian government officials warned that they don't expect to find more than a few of the bodies intact because most of the sailors were in the sections of the submarine that were almost destroyed in the accident.

"Russian Divers Pull 4 Bodies From Kursk"

A note found on the body of Kursk crewmember Lieutenant-Captain Dmitry Kolesnikov reveals at least 23 people survived the initial explosion, contradicting official Russian statements that none of the Kursk's 118 crew survived the explosions that tore through the boat's forward sections. Operating from the Norwegian Regalia diving platform, three divers at a time, two Russians and a Norwegian, are involved in each phase of the recovery operation. A remote-control TV camera is being used to study conditions inside the submarine. Divers are also keeping a close eye on radiation levels; analysis of water samples taken at the weekend showed the levels to be normal.

"Kursk victims' slow death"

US Navy experts report that the sonar and seismic data support theories that indicate two on-board explosions: one of moderate size, probably caused by the exploding fuel of a torpedo or a long-range anti-ship missile, followed about two minutes later by a devastating blast that sent the submarine to the bottom. US Defense Department experts believe that there is nothing to suggest that poor handling of the submarine contributed to its loss.

"US experts: Double blast 'sank Kursk'"

5. Russian Submarine Programs

The BBC reported on statements by Thomas Nilsen, a Bellona Foundation researcher, in which he said the Kursk disaster was precipitated by the explosion of a torpedo or torpedo fuel tank. Nilsen pointed to a danger in decommissioned Russian submarines, many of which had their missile sections removed under the START agreements and the bow and stern welded back together, that seawater could leak into reactors and cause an environmental hazard.

"Russia's nuclear submarines 'could sink'"

Russia is set to commission a new Akula class attack submarine, the Gepard, this year. The Gepard's final completion was delayed by four years because of funding problems.

"New Akula Class Sub To Enter Service After 4-Year Delay"

6. Military Balance

The International Institute for Strategic Studies published its newest Military Balance 2000/2001. The report contains an assessment of the military capabilities and defense economics of 170 countries, including detailed country-by-country listing of military organizations, weapons and equipment holdings, personnel, and relevant economic and demographic data. The report also includes essays analyzing region-by-region and transregional issues.

"The Military Balance 2000/2001"

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