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Nuclear Weapons

1. Russian Nuclear Policy

Russian President Vladimir Putin fired six top generals, several of whom reportedly sided with Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev in his opposition to a plan floated by Chief of the General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin that would radically reduce the Strategic Missile Forces and merge them with other branches of the services. The Russian newspaper Izvestia said that the firings mean Putin has sided with Kvashnin, and Kvashnin is now "half a step away" from winning Sergeyev's post. However, military analysts said that Putin may use the conflict to ditch both and name a civilian to run Russia's Defense Ministry.

"Putin Fires 6 Generals: Step May Weaken Defense Chief"

"Putin May Name Civilian Defense Minister"

"Russian Military Quarrel Winds Down"

Jane's Online reported that Kvashnin's position is probably supported due, in part, to a shift in Russian military doctrine in the aftermath of the Kosovo conflict. Putin's enthusiasm for a conventional military operation in Chechnya also appears to favor Kvashnin's position. Sergei Rogov, director of the U.S. and Canada Institute said that if Kvashnin's plan is implemented, "Russia could prove incapable of striking a retaliatory blow before or after the U.S. strike. Russia is dependent on its nuclear arsenal more than other countries, because the might of its conventional forces has dropped dramatically following the disintegration of the USSR."

"Russian army games"

"Political Scientist Criticizes Planned Reform Of Russian Missile Forces"

2. Implementation of START-II

Russian President Vladimir Putin has confirmed that his government intends to fully implement the START-II treaty.

"Putin Pledges Implementation Of START-2"

3. Russian Plutonium Disposition

At the July meeting of the G-8 countries in Okinawa, Japan, Britain pledged to commit 70 million pounds (about US\$106 million) for financing Russian plutonium disposition. The contribution covers a 10-year period, and was accompanied by a commitment of 12 million pounds (about US\$18 million) over three years for the destruction of Russia's chemical weapons stockpile.

"UK Pledges \$100m To Russian Plutonium Disposition Effort"

The 7th Annual International Nuclear Materials Policy Forum will meet September 5-8 in Alexandria, Virginia on the theme "The US-Russia Plutonium Disposition Pact ... a catalyst for future fissile material covenants?" The conference is intended to provide a forum to assess initiatives between and within the nuclear states to address fissile materials.

"Notice of the Seventh Annual International Nuclear Materials Policy Forum; The Disposition, Stewardship & Utilization of Pu, HEU & Other Fissile Materials"

4. Kazakhstan Nuclear Test Site

Kazakhstan completed destruction of the ex-Soviet nuclear test site at Degelen Mountain near Semipalatinsk. During the five-year US-Kazakh program, 181 tunnels have been closed and 13 boreholes destroyed at Semipalatinsk. The US financed the program, which was carried out with the aid of US specialists.

"Kazakhstan destroys nuke arms test site"

"Kazakhstan taken off list of nuclear-capable nations"

5. US Nuclear Tests

The Wall St. Journal reports that there are only about 50 people in the US who know how to design nuclear-weapons tests, and that due to attrition, half of them are likely to retire within a few years. The labs are now making an effort to recruit replacements, an effort which had fallen off in 1992 with the cessation of testing, but there are obstacles external to the labs to overcome. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for August 2, 2000.]

"Los Alamos Lab Tries To Stem The Decline Of Bomb Know-How"

6. Israeli Nuclear Weapons

Jane's Online raised questions about the completeness of Israel's triad of nuclear capabilities, particularly regarding reports that Israel has developed a sea-based deterrent. Reports claimed that Israel had test-fired conventionally armed cruise missiles from its newly acquired Dolphin-class submarines off Sri Lanka, which would provide Israel with a 'second-strike' capability, were rejected by a spokesman at the Defense Section of Israel's London embassy who stated that it would have been impossible for the test to have happened as the submarines had not left Israeli waters. Israel's current systems are primarily anti-shipping systems of comparatively short range, while the 930 mile range claimed for these cruise missiles would allow a submarine operating in the Mediterranean to strike against Baghdad or Damascus but probably not Tehran.

"Claims about Israel's nuclear capability questioned"

Missile Defense

1. Australian Involvement in US NMD

Duncan Cambell writes that US intelligence officials have won a secret battle to keep Australians from learning basic information about the purpose of the Joint Defence Facility at Pine Gap. Cambell cites a top secret letter from 1995 sent from the State Department to the then director of the National Security Agency, Vice-Admiral Mike McConnell, warning that were the US Government to admit that it runs electronic eavesdropping satellites in space, there would be "undesirable repercussions" in host nations such as Australia.

"Duncan Cambell: Veil drawn around base's role"

"Text-only version"

Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer distanced himself from comments made by US Defense Secretary William Cohen portraying Australia as supporting U.S. plans to build a missile defense system. Downer stated, "It is not a proposal we are putting forward." An editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald said that Downer was right to be "noncommittal," predicting that the "relatively minor role" would be presented as a necessary down payment on the US technology needed for other Australian defense programs, but the diplomatic price would be significant, and Australia's disarmament credentials would be badly compromised.

"Australian Foreign Minister Comments on Missile Defense"

"Sydney Morning Herald Editorial: Anti-missile anxieties"

2. Effect of NMD on PRC

A report in the Sydney Morning Herald said that Australia's support for the US missile defense research threatens to undermine the Australian government's carefully nurtured ties with the PRC at a time of increasing regional instability. An editorial in the Australia paper The Age comments on a claim by former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser that the US national missile defense system is more directed against the PRC than against "rogue" states. The editorial reminds of the regional implications of a missile defense system and says that Australian diplomacy will be sorely tested.

"Canberra's stance puts ties with Beijing at risk"

"The Age Editorial: Star Wars reactions"

The US National Missile Defence program is a dark cloud hanging over the Asia-Pacific region, writes Ren Xiaoping from the PRC Embassy in Australia. A missile shield is a threat to international peace and China will be forced to react to it, Xiaoping warns.

"Chinese Canberra Embassy: Dark nuclear cloud from the West threatens region"

"Text-only version"

3. NMD Deployment Decision

US Defense Secretary William Cohen appears to be leaning toward a recommendation that President Clinton take the first step toward deploying a national missile defense system, but he is likely to take another week or two. If Cohen were to determine that 2006 or 2007 is a more reasonable target date than 2005, he might proceed with the first phase of construction in Alaska to better the odds of meeting that timetable.

"Cohen May OK Missile Defense System"

The Council for a Livable World published the respective platforms of the Democratic and Republican parties on the US proposed National Missile Defense (NMD) programs. The draft of the Democratic platform has eliminated a point-blank endorsement of development of a limited national missile defense system, and now endorses "the development of the technology" of a system and says that the four criteria of threat, technological feasibility, cost, and impact on national security should be considered before a deployment decision is made. The Republican Party's adopted platform calls for deploying at the earliest possible date a defense system which can protect from missile attack all fifty states, US forces overseas, and US allies. It continues that a Republican president would withdraw the US from the 1972 ABM Treaty if Russia does not permit it to be amended.

"Democratic and Republican Platforms on NMD"

4. European Views of TMD

The Center for Defense Information reported that the European Union has been unable to arrive at a common position on the US proposed National Missile Defense (NMD). European countries will likely seek resolution of their differences with the US on a bilateral level or through NATO. The EU is unlikely to adopt a position on NMD installations on the European continent because three countries are involved directly or indirectly in the actual NMD architecture--Britain, Denmark, and Norway--and of the three only Britain is involved in EU defense policies and it has resisted discussing NMD in the EU for domestic reasons.

"The European Union: Silent On NMD"

5. Motivation for Missile Defense

An editorial by Philipp C. Bleek, a research analyst with the independent Arms Control Association, in The Boston Globe argued that the proposed US National Missile Defense (NMD) program is not being designed to counter threats from "rogue" states, but is being designed to allow the US to not be deterred from intervening militarily in support of an ally in the face of a ballistic missile threat. He argued that, even with the most positive assumptions, NMD will never be good enough to make any difference in our actions toward other nations.

[Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for August 2, 2000.]

"Missile Defense Is A Pipe Dream"

Security

1. US-PRC Relations

The Pentagon announced that the cruiser USS Chancellorsville (CG 62) would visit Qingdao in the PRC on August 2-5 2000. PRC naval vessels are scheduled to visit Hawaii and Seattle in the near future.

"U.S. Cruiser To Visit China"

"Text-only version"

The Australia Financial Review (AFR) reported that Republican presidential nominee George W Bush has described the PRC as "a competitor, not a strategic partner." Bush and Condoleezza Rice, his lead foreign policy adviser, agree on an internationalist foreign policy that strengthens the US military, scales back foreign commitments, and focuses on the PRC and Russia. The article said that Bush would almost certainly be more confrontational and less accommodating towards Beijing than the Clinton Administration.

"Candidate Bush sizes up the China threat"

2. US-Russia-Japan Security Statement

A joint statement on arms control and international security was issued by the United States and Russian during the G8 meeting in Japan.

"Joint U.S.-Russia Statement From G8 Meeting"

3. Ukrainian Defense Reform

As a result of NATO encouragement, the Ukraine conducted a series of seminars to promote open discussion of Ukrainian defense reform. The first seminar covered general changes faced by the Ukraine after eight years of independence. This second seminar concentrated on the more practical problems of Ukrainian defense transformation, such as curriculum reform, civil-military relations, recruitment, and the legal-constitutional framework within which the military needed to operate.

"Seminar II: Armed Forces, Society and the State (overview report)"

"Full report"

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