



NAPSNET Weekly FLASH Update 7 November, 2000

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Nuclear Weapons

1. US Nuclear Policy

TRW, Inc reported the successful test of the first remanufactured production Minuteman III stage 1 solid rocket motor. This motor delivered under the Low Rate Initial Production phase of the US Air Force's Propulsion Replacement Program (PRP), which allows the Air Force to begin accepting production stage 1 motors to replace the aging motors in the Minuteman III missile force. The PRP replaces the motors in launch stages in the Minuteman III force with new remanufactured motors to maintain the alert readiness status of the force until 2020.

"TRW Reports Successful Test of First Production Minuteman III Remanufactured Solid Rocket Motor"

Chuck Hansen, the editor of Swords of Armageddon, reported on a select number of nuclear- and nuclear weapons-related accidents that have occurred in the US. Hansen related the accidents to support his argument that while handling accidents have been reduced, secrecy about past accidents is unnecessary and increases suspicion that other accidents may have occurred, causing undisclosed radiological contamination in some country that hosted US nuclear forces during the Cold War.

"Nuclear weapon accidents: 'The Oops List'"

2. Russian Launch Vehicle Conversions

Russian Strategic Rocket Forces General Vladimir Yakovlev stated that he planned a large-scale campaign to raise cash for the armed forces by selling en masse the opportunity to use decommissioned missiles to lift civilian or military satellites into orbit. Yakovlev said that about 250 Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles, scheduled to be removed from service because of US-Russian disarmament accords, would be available for conversion to take commercial payloads. He reported that using these missiles would cost one-sixth that of a standard rocket, and estimated total proceeds from the program could equal about \$700 million.

"Russia Offers Old Nukes to Launch New Satellites"

The Russian Strategic Rocket Forces test-fired an SS-19 missile on 1 November, after a spokesman said that the missile is likely to be removed from service to join the SS-18 rocket as a booster for commercial satellites. Under the START-2 treaty, both the SS-18s and SS-19s are to be decommissioned.

"Russia Test-Fires Another Old Missile"

The first Russian RS-20 missile silo was decommissioned on November 2 near Aleysk, Altay Territory, as part of Russia's implementation of the START I treaty. A total of 30 heavy ICBMs with multiple warheads are to be taken out of commission in the area also known as the Kulunda steppe.

The article "Russia Begins Demolition of Missile Silos" is available from World News Connection

3. Russian Nuclear Forces

Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Ivanov also said that the Strategic Rocket Forces will remain a separate branch of the armed forces for at least another six years.

"Strategic Rocket Forces To Retain Present Status Till At Least 2006"

Sergei Ivanov, secretary of the Security Council, said in an interview released Thursday that there would be no change of status before 2006 for Russia's strategic rocket forces.

"No Status Change for Russia Rocket Forces till 2006"

Unidentified sources in the Russian Defense Ministry stated that the size of reductions in the armed forces personnel will be finalized at a session of the Security Council in November.

"November Security Council Meeting Expected To Determine Force Cuts"

4. Nuclear Weapons in South Asia

The Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute for International Studies announced the publication of a book which explores the nuclear development of India and Pakistan, arguing that nuclear escalation in the region has been a part of the process of nation building. "The Roots of Rhetoric: Politics of Nuclear Weapons in India and Pakistan," was written by Haider K Nizamani, a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Monitoring Proliferation Threats Program at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

"The Roots of Rhetoric: Politics of Nuclear Weapons in India and Pakistan"

5. India Nuclear Policy

One day after the Indian Atomic Energy Commission highlighted the country's increased nuclear weapons capability in the wake of the "completely successful" nuclear tests in 1998, several scientists involved in the Indian program said that India needed more tests to prove its nuclear might conclusively. AEC chairman R. Chidambaram said earlier that the five "carefully planned and completely successful" tests in May 1998 had given India "the capability to design and fabricate nuclear weapons from low yields up to around 200 kilotons."

"Indian Scientists Call For More Tests"

"Text only"

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"

6. Israeli Nuclear Program

During a visit to Japan to improve Iranian-Japanese relations, Iranian President Seyed Mohammad Khatami told Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori that the Israeli nuclear arsenal poses a serious threat to regional peace and security.

The article "Iran Tells Japan That Israel's Nuclear Arsenal Poses 'Serious Threat' to Region" is available from World News Connection

Der Spiegel reported that sources close to the German manufacturers of Israel's newest submarine class have said that the submarine is to be adapted with a nuclear land-attack capability. The magazine repeats rumors that the Israeli Navy may want to equip US-supplied Harpoon missiles with nuclear warheads or that Israel may eventually develop its own cruise missile.

The article "Germany Proves 'Massive Support' To Israel's Nuclear Weapons Program" is available from World News Connection

Arms Control

1. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

An international panel of scientists, established by independent arms control group VERTIC, said in a report issued on Monday that a global nuclear test ban can be reliably verified with existing technology, creating a powerful deterrent against any attempt to cheat. The commission, established after the US Senate last year refused to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty because of concerns over verification, found that a combination of resources made it nearly impossible to evade detection of an underground nuclear test.

"Science Panel Says Nuclear Test Ban Is Verifiable"

2. US-DPRK Missile Talks

The US and the DPRK concluded a round of talks designed to curb the DPRK's missile program and improve global security. Extensive coverage of the US-DPRK missile talks was made available through the NAPSNet Daily Report and NAPSNet Week In Review.

"U.S., N. Korea Missile Talks Resume"

"US-DPRK Missile Talks (NAPSNet Week In Review, November 3)"

Nicholas Kristoff, writing in the New York Times, argues that compared to Cuba, another state ostracized by the US, the DPRK receives attention and aid because of the success in using first its nuclear program and now its missile program to blackmail the US. Kristoff states that Kongdan Oh and Ralph C Hassig, in their new book "North Korea: Through the Looking Glass," review the policy options and state that part of the problem is that any payoff that blocks the DPRK weapons program also supports an undemocratic regime.

"Working Nuclear Blackmail"

"Text Only"

3. US Presidential Election

An article by John Fleck in the Albuquerque Journal reported that presidential candidates Vice President Al Gore and Governor George W. Bush do not differ significantly on the issue of nuclear weapons, both supporting large cuts and aid to Russia to help it dismantle its nuclear arsenal. However, Gore supports the US becoming a signatory to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty while Bush supports the Republican proposition that the treaty is flawed because verification is impossible. Fleck states that nuclear weapons development will remain a major industry in New Mexico.

"Bush, Gore in Sync on Nuke Weapons"

Proliferation

1. Iran Weapons Program

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said that Iran was developing missiles on its own and that help from the DPRK was not necessary. Kharrazi's statement came after Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono expressed concern during Kharrazi's visit to Japan about the similarity between Iran's ballistic missiles and those of the DPRK.

"Iran Denies North Korea Helped With Missiles"

An article in The Washington Post argues that Iran's recent test firing of the Shahab 3 intermediate-range missile has demonstrated that Iran understands that nuclear-tipped missiles will go a long way toward neutralizing the naval power of the US. The article argues that backed by such weapons, Iran or Iraq could threaten violence with reasonable assurance that the US would not eagerly "play nuclear poker" over oil wells, and that the Clinton administration has not said how it intends to cope with this threat. The article concludes that unless the US is ready to deploy theater anti-missile defense systems by the time Iran developed a nuclear missile, then the US, and the less religious Middle Eastern states, will face a radically altered strategic calculus.

"Iran and the Bomb"

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2. Russia-Iran Weapons Deal

Two subcommittees of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a joint hearing to discover whether the Gore-Chernomyrdin agreement permitting Russian arms sales to Iran violated a law sponsored by Gore as a US Senator. The law states that the US must bring sanctions against any country that sells weapons to Iran if the president determines that the sale would destabilize the region. US Senator Joseph Biden said it was important for the Clinton administration to work with Russia, in secret if necessary, to limit Iran's access to advanced weapons. He said, "We can't control arms sales to areas of concern if we don't include Russia in that [arms-control] regime. After all, Russia has lots of weapons to sell, and they need the money." Several State Department officials supported the argument that the US Congress had been lawfully notified about the agreement and that only very sensitive details were withheld.

"Senators Question Deal on Arms Sales to Iran"

Ten senior US Republican senators have ordered the US State Department to turn over "all the relevant documents" relating to a secret 1995 agreement that Vice President Al Gore made with then-Russian Prime Minister Viktor S. Chernomyrdin exempting Russia from a law requiring that economic sanctions be imposed on countries that sell arms to nations that sponsor terrorism, including Iran.

"State Told to Turn Over Data on Deal"

3. US WMD Policy

A new study, written by Amy Smithson, an expert on chemical warfare and the director of the center's program on stopping the spread of chemical and germ weapons at the Henry L Stimson Center, concludes that the US government should stop initiating emergency preparedness training programs and abolish the expensive National Guard teams established to help states and cities in the event of a chemical or germ warfare attack. This recommendation is based upon their analysis that the threat of terrorism involving chemical and germ weapons has been highly overstated. The study says the government has "grossly underfunded" programs to convert Russian weapons factories and scientists to peaceful purposes, and has done little to strengthen the public health infrastructure that would be overwhelmed in a chemical or germ terrorist attack.

"Threat of Unconventional Terrorism Is Overstated, Study Says"

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Security Policy

1. UK Sub Accident

British officials have resisted pressure from the Spanish government to either remove the crippled HMS Tireless, a nuclear submarine with a damaged reactor, from Gibraltar, or allow Spanish experts aboard to survey the damage. The issue also provides the Spanish government with the opportunity to put the issue of Gibraltar's sovereignty on the table at discussions between Spain and Britain. British Prime Minister Tony Blair had expected his talks with Spanish Premier Jose Maria Aznar to focus on an agenda for economic reform in Europe.

"Nuclear sub sparks row with Spain"

The reactor accident that crippled the British nuclear submarine HMS Tireless last May while operating off Sicily was much more serious than previously reported, according to a report in the Guardian. What the UK Ministry of Defense initially said was a "minor defect," instead involved cracks in the reactor's main cooling pipes that "could not be in a worse position" and that the Tireless reactor was "at the very point of failure." The Guardian said that the incident represented a serious failure of the Royal Navy's inspection monitoring system.

"Nuclear sub was hours from meltdown"

The UK Ministry of Defence admitted that seven out of Britain's twelve nuclear-powered attack submarines are either defect or show signs of flaw. Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said that although five of the Royal Navy's 12 submarines have been found to be clear of the problem, six others had been shown to have "signs of a flaw" and would need further investigation.

"Seven of Twelve UK Subs Have Reactor Problems"

"Text-only"

The article "Half of Hunter-Killer Submarine Fleet Withdrawn Over Nuclear Flaw" is available from World News Connection

2. Submarine Proliferation

Nicholas Berry, Senior Analyst at the Center for Defense Information, discusses a Jane's Defense Weekly report that highlighted the acquisition of submarines by countries throughout Asia. Berry states that the article attributes the rush to add submarines to Asia's recovery from its 1997 financial crisis, the availability of used boats at good prices, and the spurring catalyst of rivalries. Berry argues that the acquisition of submarines also destabilizes security conditions and increases the chances of accidents.

"Subs For Sale: Eager Buyers in Asia and Elsewhere"

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3. EU Rapid Reaction Forces

Responding the European Union proposal that it develop a series of rapid reaction forces, Russia has expressed an interest in joining the force to create a counter-balance to an expanded NATO. Sergei Ivanov, head of the increasingly influential Kremlin Security Council, said, "We see this as one outlet of possibly joining forces on security issues in Europe, because many European countries are not in fact NATO members." Ivanov also reiterated Russian objections to US proposals to amend the 1972 ABM Treaty so it can build NMD, and also underlined plans to cut Russia's military and launch a major restructuring of its Soviet-era command structure.

"Russia Talks Up Military Cooperation with Europe"

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"NATO Force Structure (NPP Flash V.2 #36)"

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