

NPP Weekly FLASH Update, August 6, 2001

Recommended Citation

"NPP Weekly FLASH Update, August 6, 2001", NAPSNet Weekly Report, August 06, 2001,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-weekly/npp-weekly-flash-update-august-6-2001/>

CONTENTS

Volume 3, #30

August 6, 2001

Nuclear Weapons

1. [Alleged Russian Missile Test](#)
2. [US Nuclear Bombers](#)

Arms Control

1. [US-Russia Talks on ABM](#)

Missile Defense

1. [US Statements on BMD](#)
 2. [US BMD Program](#)
 3. [US BMD Test](#)
 4. [US-Russia Talks](#)
 5. [US-PRC Talks](#)
 6. [Commentary](#)
-

[Security](#)

1. [US Nuclear Policy](#)
2. [Russia-PRC-US Triangular Relations](#)

[Military](#)

1. [Russian Submarine](#)
-

Nuclear Weapons

1. Alleged Russian Missile Test

The Washington Times reported that a road-mobile Russian SS-25 long-range missile with a new jet-powered last stage was launched from central Russia two weeks ago and reached its target on the Russian Far East peninsula of Kamchatka. The Washington Times said that US officials are studying the launch to decide whether new technology was used and whether the new technology is designed to overcome a proposed US missile defense system. Russia has denied the test. Alexander Bovk, spokesman for Russia's Strategic Missile Forces, said, "We had no experimental missile launches two weeks ago. To conduct them secretly is impossible: The United States continuously controls such launches through space-based and other means."

"Russia Denies Secret Missile Test"

[Return to top](#)

2. US Nuclear Bombers

Despite the apparent shortcomings of the twenty year-old B-1 bomber system, which includes vulnerability to air defense systems and an inability to fly in certain weather, the Bush administration is facing difficulties in mothballing portions of the fleet. States where the cuts to B-1's would be realized are mobilizing opposition to the cuts and may have succeeded to getting Congress to block the cuts. The B-1 was originally supposed to be replaced by the B-52 for nuclear

missions, and now the US is seeking to retire one-third of the fleet to create the savings needed to modernize the remainder of the B-1 fleet.

["House Panel Votes to Block B-1 Bomber Cuts"](#)

The Los Angeles Times reports that according to a planning document issued under his name, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld directed the Defense Department last month to look into "sub-orbital space vehicles" that "would be valuable for conducting rapid global strikes." The bomber would blast off like a long-range missile and could drop precision bombs from heights of 60 miles or more, solving a problem of how to destroy distant targets in light of the declining numbers and increasing vulnerability of US bases abroad. Defense Department officials insist such a spacecraft would not be a militarization of space because its targets would be on land and it would not make a full orbit of the planet. While still in the conceptual stages, Air Force General Ralph Eberhart, commander of US Space Command, wants the Defense Department to take over the X-33 Venture Star program, a reusable space vehicle originally seen as a replacement for the Space Shuttles currently used by NASA but canceled by NASA in March. Frank Gaffney, president of the Center for Security Policy, a pro-defense think tank with ties to Rumsfeld, acknowledged that such a spacecraft "could be used just as easily for anti-satellite purposes as for targets on the ground."

"U.S. Looking at Spacecraft as Bomber"

[Return to top](#)

Arms Control

1. US-Russia Talks on ABM

US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice stated that she had presented to Russian President Vladimir Putin the US blueprint for moving forward on cutting their nuclear weapons arsenals and for the deployment of limited missile defenses. While many Russian officials were positive on the reduction of nuclear weapons, they were much less optimistic about the deployment of missile defenses and the impact this will have upon the existing arms-control framework. The Bush administration insists that a limited ability to knock down incoming ballistic missiles will not upset the balance of nuclear power among major nations, though Russia, Europe and the PRC fear it will provoke an arms race.

["U.S. Offers Russia a Blueprint for Talks on Nuclear Weapons"](#)

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Alexander Yakovenko was interviewed on Russian television regarding the 1972 ABM Treaty. He said, "The Russian President has reaffirmed our position in support of the ABM Treaty as an inalienable component of strategic stability in the world in his talks

with George Bush in Genoa. We did not hear from Mrs. Rice any new arguments to cause us to review our fundamental approach to the 1972 Treaty." Yakovenko also stated that Russia still proposed that the US and Russia cut their arsenals to 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2008. "Answers of Official Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Alexander Yakovenko in a Live Broadcast on RTR Channel Regarding the ABM Treaty"

Bill Gertz writes in the Washington Times that US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice said the US has "a chance to get an arrangement with the Russians that would create a new strategic framework" that would replace the 1972 ABM Treaty, permit the US to build a national missile defense and address nonproliferation issues in a systematic manner. She said that the US would not enter into long negotiations to replace the ABM Treaty with another formal treaty, and indicated that US would simply withdraw from the AB treaty if Russia is unwilling to agree to another arrangement. She also said that while US Aegis-equipped warships could provide a shield against missile attack in Asia, it is premature to decide whether such a system could be deployed in a joint US-Japan-Taiwan system. "A lot frankly depends on what the Chinese do with their missile capability across the Taiwan Strait," she said.

"U.S. seeks flexible pact on ABM"

[Return to top](#)

Missile Defense

1. US Statements on BMD

US Defense Department spokesman Rear Admiral Craig Quigley reported that work on missile defense may conflict with an arms control treaty as early as this winter, though he was not specific about the timing or type of missile defense work that could violate the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty. Quigley did state that the treaty compliance review group found that no missile defense activities planned in the current fiscal year, which ends September 30, would conflict with the treaty. While the Republican controlled House of Representatives has recently approved research and development funding for missile defense, the Bush administration faces a greater fight from the Democratically-controlled Senate, where some Senators have voiced concern about approving actions that may violate the 1972 ABM Treaty.

"Pentagon: Work May Violate Treaty"

US Secretary of State Colin Powell said, in response to a question on missile defense, "America is interested in a new strategic framework that moves away from the old framework of mutually assured destruction where nations protected themselves from other nations simply by having the

ability to overwhelm them and destroy them with nuclear weapons." He added, "We would reduce the number of such strategic offensive weapons, and at the same time build defensive weapons that could defend us against those very irresponsible nations that are pursuing weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to put such weapons on." Powell stressed that the missile defense system "would be a limited defense that would threaten none of the major nuclear powers" and would "add to strategic stability."

"Transcript: Powell Discusses Korean Peninsula, Missile Defense"

US House of Representatives minority leader Democrat Richard Gephardt accused the Bush administration of an obsession with missile defense and of pursuing a unilateralist approach to world affairs that risks antagonizing Russia and undermining relations with Europe. He promised to forge a bipartisan majority in Congress to block any missile defense system that would violate the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty and defended formal arms control negotiations as essential to maintaining the nuclear peace. Speaking about Russia, Gephardt said, "This is a country that is strapped financially in the most severe way. ...Are we worried about their command and control, about something getting out of hand? So that to me is the major threat that we still face. And treating that in a sensible way is severely complicated by our obsession with going ahead with this missile defense plan, which we haven't proven can work, and we haven't developed, and that we certainly haven't worked out with the Europeans and the Russians."

["Gephardt Launches an Attack on Bush's Foreign Policy"](#)

[Return to top](#)

2. US BMD Program

The US House Armed Services subcommittee approved missile defense spending for fiscal 2002 that will total \$8.16 billion for research and development. The structure of the funding maintains the general running of the program with significant leeway in spending. Representative Duncan Hunter, chairman of the research and development subcommittee, said, "What we did today was the first step, the first passage of the president's missile defense program." The total is \$135 million less than what US President George W. Bush had requested, one area trimmed was a \$28 million increase sought for space-based laser development. House Democrats hope to cut at least \$1 billion from missile defense when the full committee meets Wednesday to complete its version of the budget, said Democratic Representative Ike Skelton.

"'First Step' Voted In Missile Defense"

[Return to top](#)

3. US BMD Test

The Ballistic Missile Defense Organization confirmed that a test warhead was destroyed by an anti-missile weapon in the recent missile defense system test partly because a beacon on the target signaled its location during much of the flight. The officials confirmed a report by Defense Week that the "hit-to-kill" weapon was guided to the vicinity of the warhead by signals from the electronic beacon. "The only thing that it (the beacon) does is help get the booster in the right direction. The weapon finds the target and hits it." said Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Rick Leonard, a spokesman for the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization. Critics of the tests have charged that they are unrealistically easy, while defense officials have said that the beacon is designed to compensate for advanced radar systems that are not yet in place.

"U.S. Anti-Missile Test Aided by Beacon -Officials"

Joe Conason writes in Salon.com that because the rocket fired from Vandenberg Air Force Base was carrying a global positioning satellite beacon that guided the interceptor towards it, "It would be fair to say that the \$100 million test was rigged." Conason states that according to reports, the interceptor was able to distinguish between the target and the decoy because only the warhead had a beacon.

["The rigged missile defense test"](#)

[Return to top](#)

4. US-Russia Talks

After a day of talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and other top Russian government officials, US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said that she was optimistic that the US and Russia could reach an agreement regarding the US deployment of missile defenses. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said that no agreement had been reached, but he added, "Our principal and conceptual approaches have been confirmed."

"Rice Expects Russian Assent On U.S. Shield"

US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and met with Vladimir Rushailo, head of Russia's Security Council, and Rice said that both welcomed the opportunity to move from confrontation to cooperation, but that both also refused to budge from their tough positions. She said that the US will proceed with tests of a new missile defense system while Rushailo, she reported, said Russia will insist on long negotiations to try to salvage the 1972 ABM Treaty that forbids such systems.

Alongside the strategic talks, Rice, US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and US Commerce Secretary Don Evans held discussions with Russian officials on boosting economic cooperation with Russia.

"Rushailo, Rice Refuse To Budge On NMD"

[Return to top](#)

5. US-PRC Talks

Michale O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, writes in the Washington Post that while US Secretary of State Colin Powell has reiterated to the PRC that the Bush administration desires only a "limited" capability to shoot down long-range missiles, he appears to be losing the debate within the Bush administration. Regardless of Powell's statements, writes O'Hanlon, the current US Defense Department budget indicates the US is seeking to ultimately deploy at least 1,000 defensive interceptors capable of shooting down long-range missile warheads and recent statements by President George Bush and his National Security Advisor, Condoleeza Rice, indicate a desire to abandon the 1972 ABM Treaty and other arms control regimes. He argues that in order to mollify the PRC and Russia, the US should promise to limit itself to fewer than 200 interceptors and should abandon plans to test Theater Missile Defense systems against long-range missiles.

"Double Talk On Missile Defense"

US Secretary of State Colin L. Powell met separately with PRC President Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Zhu Rongji in the Bush administration's highest-level talks yet, but was unable to make headway on the PRC's opposition to even a limited missile defense. Powell said, "I tried to make a comprehensive case of the president's strategy. They listened carefully. I'm sure we will have many more conversations on this subject because they have a different view of it." Powell said the administration was holding up the licensing of the sale of US communication satellites to the PRC because of the PRC's reported sale of missiles and weapons technology to other nations, though the two sides agreed to hold more talks among experts on both sides on the issue. Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. argued that if the PRC feared that its small arsenal would be undercut by missile defense, it would rapidly begin expanding it. Other senators were reportedly worried that missile modernization could be avoided if relations between the two countries were better.

["Chinese Unswayed as Powell Pushes U.S. Missile Shield"](#)

[Return to top](#)

6. Commentary

Robert E. Hunter, a senior advisor at the Rand Corp, writes in the Los Angeles Times that after the May meeting of US and Russian officials over missile defense, Russian President Vladimir Putin apparently realized that as long as the US was incapable of deploying a missile defense system that would affect the Russian arsenal within ten years, there was no point in blocking the US from beginning its work on the system. With this decision for flexibility on the 1972 ABM Treaty, Hunter argues, Putin cedes leadership on the anti-missile defense front to US allies and the PRC in order to focus on the Russian economy and other domestic issues.

"Nothing's Free in Dealing With Putin"

Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, writes in a new policy brief that while the Bush administration has rightly observed the need for missile defense and the inadequacy of the 1972 ABM Treaty, it is myopically approaching the dangers facing the US by ignoring other types of threats. To protect against other terrorist threats, O'Hanlon argues in favor of intelligence, infrastructure and border policy improvements. He states that if the Bush administration decides to pursue an ambitious system, it will drive the PRC and Russia to do things that will complicate the US

strategic outlook while also creating domestic budgetary problems. He states that a Global Protection Against Limited Strikes, or GPALS, system (as envisioned by the first George Bush administration) might cost \$120 billion to \$150 billion to develop and deploy, or, \$7 billion per year over twenty years, a \$5 billion per year increase. O'Hanlon argues in favor of spending portions of the \$5 billion increase instead on meeting other threats the US may face. He concludes, "A balanced, multi-faceted agenda for countering a variety of threats to the United States-including but not limited to defense against long-range missiles-makes more sense than an overly ambitious missile defense system."

"Beyond Missile Defense: Countering Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction"

[Return to top](#)

Security

1. US Nuclear Policy

According to US Defense Department spokesman Bryan Whitman, US President George Bush met with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and senior military leaders at the Pentagon for a briefing on US nuclear strategy details in preparation for decisions on reducing the number of nuclear weapons.

"Bush Briefed on Nuclear Arms, Strategy"

"Bush Receives Pentagon Briefing"

The US-Russia agreement in Genoa to consult on the links between offensive and defensive missile arsenals has triggered an intense debate in the US Congress about the future and meaning of strategic deterrence, according to an article in Aviation Week & Space Technology. According to legislators at a July 24, 2001, Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, the article reports, Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) and deterrence will remain the world's central strategic reality for a long time to come, whether or not the US and Russia slash their offensive arsenals to 2,500, even 1,500 nuclear warheads each.

"Genoa Hands Congress A Deterrence Riddle"

[Return to top](#)

2. Russia-PRC-US Triangular Relations

Constantine Menges, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, argues in the Washington Post that the US should be concerned about the dual-track diplomacy that Russia and the PRC use with the US and between themselves because they seek from the West vitally needed economic benefits while using political and covert means to oppose the US on security issues and to divide America from its allies. Menges further argues that the US, in reacting calmly to the recently signed Shanghai Pact, ignores the implicit promises of mutual defense among nations with thousands of nuclear weapons, a population of over 1.5 billion people, and which may soon welcome into its membership nations like the DPRK, Iraq and Lybia. Menges also points to as threatening promises by the PRC of joint military training, which it has never done, and sales of advanced weapons by Russia to the PRC.

"Russia, China and What's Really on the Table"

[Return to top](#)

Military

1. Russian Submarine

It is reported that the raising of the Kursk, a Russian nuclear submarine which sunk last August and killed all 118 people on board, is going slower than expected. There is reportedly a danger that the Kursk's torpedoes may be damaged and could explode, though officials state that the reactors themselves are not in danger of going critical or leaking radioactive materials.

"Russian Sub Work Moving Slowly"

[Return to top](#)

The NPP Weekly FLASH Update aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among nuclear weapons policy and security specialists.

We invite you to reply to this report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the

network.

Produced by [the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development](#).

Robert Brown: npp@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Hans Kristensen: npp@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Timothy Savage: npp@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Send comments to the Nuclear Policy Project at nautilus@nautilus.org

View this online at: <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-weekly/npp-weekly-flash-update-august-6-2001/>

Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:
nautilus@nautilus.org