

NPP Weekly FLASH Update, November 13, 2000

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Nuclear Weapons

1. Russian Sub-Critical Tests

Russian Nuclear Power Ministry spokesman Yury Bespalko reported that Russia conducted two underground subcritical nuclear tests, on October 20 and 27, at the Novaya Zemlya test site.

"Nuclear Weapons Tests"

"Two more subcritical tests at Novaya Zemlya in October"

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2. IAEA Inspections of DPRK

Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, told the U.N. General Assembly that he was hopeful that recent positive developments would soon spur the DPRK to allow inspection of its nuclear program to verify that it is not developing atomic bombs. ElBaradei said that since verification may take two to three years, investigators should begin immediately so that a nuclear reactor project agreed to by the US and DPRK can proceed as scheduled.

"Nuclear Agency Pins Hope on N. Korea"

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3. Iraqi Nuclear Program

An article in the Washington Post reported that Khidhir Hamza, formerly Iraq's chief nuclear weapons scientist, said that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein probably possesses a crude, two- to three-kiloton atomic bomb and could conceivably begin limited bomb production within two to three years if international sanctions are lifted. CIA analysts have stated that Iraq probably does not have a nuclear weapon, lacking the fissile material and the infrastructure to build one. Hamza details the story of his escape and Iraq's weapons program in a new book. He also said that Iraq could build a nuclear bomb within several months if it received fissionable material from Russia, but that its production of fissionable materials has been delayed several years by bombing.

"Iraqi Defector Says Saddam Was Near to Building A-Bomb"

"Iraqi atomic scientist details bomb building"

"Manhattan Project report aided Iraq nuke program"

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Proliferation

1. South Asia

Achin Vanaik, journalist and author on nuclear issues, writes in Disarmament Diplomacy that despite the failure of international pressure to acceptably resolve the nuclear issue in South Asia, there are still opportunities if the formally recognized nuclear-weapon states accept responsibility for their own policies, prioritizing disarmament and non-proliferation over other considerations.

["Failing The Test: International Mismanagement of the South Asia Nuclear Crisis"](#)

Indian police in Hyderabad reported seizing twenty-six kilograms of low-grade uranium, and arrested two men who were trying to sell it. Police said that the uranium was bought along with a heap of scrap from a private hospital, where it had been used to treat cancer patients.

["Indian police seize uranium"](#)

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Arms Control

1. START III Talks

The Russia Media Monitoring Agency (WPS) wrote that Russia does not see any political or military reasons why Russia and the US shouldn't each reduce their nuclear arsenals to 1,500 warheads. While it is pushing for START III, the Russian Foreign Ministry again insisted that preparations are only possible "if the ABM Treaty of 1972 is preserved." According to official information from the Russian Defense Ministry, START III will include provisions for limiting the anti-ship operations of atomic submarines, elimination of all ocean-based cruise missiles, prohibition of the design of any new types of offensive strategic weapons, and the reduction of heavy bomber forces to 50 planes. "WHEN WILL START-3 BE SIGNED?"

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2. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The Independent Commission on the Verifiability of the CTBT, convened by the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre, released their final report, which indicates that when the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is fully in place, resources will be available for verifying compliance with the CTBT. Overall verification resources will improve as more monitoring stations are installed, more research is carried out, and global communications systems continue to expand. "Independent Commission on the Verifiability of the CTBT: Final Report"

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3. UN First Committee

Russia submitted jointly with Belarus and China a draft resolution to the UN First Committee calling

for the preservation and observance of the ABM Treaty by the US and Russia. The resolution was supported by 79 member-countries of the UN, with only the US, Israel and Micronesia voting against. A second nuclear-related draft resolution stressed the further unilateral and multilateral reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons; measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems; a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk that those weapons would ever be used; and, to facilitate the process of their total elimination, the engagement of all the nuclear-weapon States in the process leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

["FIRST COMMITTEE APPROVES TEXTS CALLING FOR STRENGTHENED ABM TREATY, 'NEW AGENDA' TO ACHIEVE NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE WORLD"](#)

["DRAFT RESOLUTION ON 'PATH TO TOTAL ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS' APPROVED BY FIRST COMMITTEE, AS IT CONCLUDES CURRENT SESSION"](#)

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Security Policy

1. US Nuclear Posture Review

The 2001 National Defense Authorization Act, signed by US President Bill Clinton, impacts a wide range of military activities. The act requires the next president to complete a formal nuclear posture review (NPR) by December 2001 and also mandates research on how to defeat hardened targets. The act continues a prohibition against the US reducing its deployed strategic nuclear arsenal below START I levels of about 6,000 warheads until START II enters into force. While calling for a far-reaching review to re-evaluate all facets of US nuclear policy, the act notes that Congress feels that given the potential for further strategic arms reduction agreements with Russia, it is "in the national interest." to maintain the strategic triad and modernize all legs of the nuclear triad.

"Defense Bill Bars Unilateral Nuclear Reductions, Orders Posture Review"

Janne E. Nolan, director of international programs at the Century Foundation, argues that one reason for the absence of post-Cold War change in the nuclear force posture has been the failure of the president to challenge the assumptions driving nuclear planning, a sphere that has traditionally eluded presidential attention. Nelson reviews previous Force Posture Reviews under Presidents Bush and Clinton, and uses those experiences to identify lessons for the upcoming Review.

"Preparing for the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review"

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2. US Security Policy

Donald Kagan, professor of History and Classics at Yale University, and Frederick W. Kagan, professor of Military History, U.S. Military Academy, draw on their new book, *While America Sleeps*, in an article for Foreign Policy Research Institute. They argue that it is a natural, but dangerous tendency to neglect the military and withdraw to domestic concerns in times of peace. They draw particular parallels to Britain's situation after 1919, arguing that the absence of a peer superpower is not a time for safety, but for uncertainty, and that the current US foreign policy may be following similar mistakes.

"While America Sleeps"

The November issue of *Disarmament Diplomacy* carries an article reviewing the positions on NMD taken by the senior foreign policy advisors to presidential candidates Governor George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore. The article also reviews current public opinion on NMD, Russian statements on NMD, and recent statements by members of the Clinton administration.

["NMD Debate in Run-Up to US Elections"](#)

An editorial in the *Washington Times* by Yonah Alexander and Milton Hoenig highlights the threat that the US faces from the use, or threatened use, by terrorists of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. They argue the US must invest greater resources into mitigating this threat unilaterally and multilaterally.

"Nuclear terrorism: The next phase?"

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3. Russian Nuclear Strategy

Bruce Blair, President of the Center for Defense Information, argues that the Russian nuclear force has become so debilitated by budgetary and other problems that there are circumstances under which the limited NMD system proposed by the US would obviate the Russian deterrent force. As a result, Russia would need to increase the alert status on its missiles, increasing the danger of an accidental launch. Should the US deploy NMD, it could nonetheless reduce tensions by putting most of its nuclear weapons into long-term storage.

"The Impact Of National Missile Defense On Russia and Nuclear Security"

"Text Only"

Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Strategic Rocket Force Vladimir Yakovlev told Interfax that "despite the radical changes in the world in the past decade, the planning of the use of nuclear weapons, unfortunately, has not changed fundamentally compared to the Cold War period. The notion in planning is still that nuclear arms are the armed forces' supreme instrument." He also said, "Several versions of the form and use of strategic force in the future are being considered now - from preserving the current arsenal to developing a fully non-nuclear strategic force."

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Military Issues

1. Russian Military Reform

Russia has announced deep cuts to its military, including cutting military and civilian staff from the rolls. These cuts accompany statements confirming an increased Russian dependence upon nuclear, rather than conventional, deterrence to ensure its security. Paul Goble, publisher of Radio Free Europe's Newswire, stated that the military would resist the cuts.

["Russia proposes deep military cuts"](#)

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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.

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